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## Archaeological Survey of Memorial Park, Leona River Project, Uvalde County, Texas

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## Archaeological Survey of Memorial Park, Leona River Project, Uvalde County, Texas

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF  
MEMORIAL PARK, LEONA RIVER PROJECT,  
UVALDE COUNTY, TEXAS**

**H. Ray Smith**

**Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 887**

**Center for Archaeological Research  
The University of Texas at San Antonio®  
Archaeological Survey Report, No. 195**

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- 3. County: Uvalde;**
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## **ABSTRACT**

During April 1990, the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, under contract with the City of Uvalde, Texas, conducted a 100% pedestrian archaeological survey at the Uvalde Memorial Park. The area is located adjacent to the Leona River between East Nopal Street and the city golf course. U.S. Highway 90 West runs through the survey area.

In the Memorial Park area south of Highway 90, no cultural materials were observed on the surface. The survey area along the banks of the Leona River north of Highway 90 yielded a thin lithic scatter of prehistoric material. Shovel tests in the area failed to produce any significant subsurface cultural material.

The cultural resources found within the survey area are determined not to be significant, and therefore not eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places or to be listed as a State Archeological Landmark. We recommend that no further work is needed.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr. Walter Heard of Groves and Associates, consulting engineers, and Mr. James Thurmond, city manager of Uvalde, Texas, were helpful in providing maps and other information essential to complete this survey. Mr. Bill Dillahunty, a long-time resident of Uvalde, provided history and information regarding early land development in the survey area.

The field work was accomplished by H. Ray Smith, technical staff assistant, Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, with assistance by Mr. Bill Dillahunty from the Southern Texas Archaeological Association, and the Uvalde County Historical Commission. I am grateful to the Center for Archaeological Research office staff for their aid in preparing this manuscript.





## INTRODUCTION

During April 1990, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), conducted a 100% pedestrian surface survey of Memorial Park, Uvalde, Texas. The area is located within the Uvalde city limits, along the Leona River between East Nopal Street and the golf course. U.S. Highway 90 West intersects the survey area (Fig. 1). The survey was done under contract between the City of Uvalde and the CAR-UTSA (letter dated February 15, 1990). The archaeological survey was part of the process of submitting an application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a grant to improve Memorial Park and the Leona River.

The field work was conducted by H. Ray Smith, CAR technical staff assistant, and Bill Dillahunty, Southern Texas Archaeological Association. Overall supervision was provided by Jack D. Eaton, acting director of the CAR and principal investigator.

The work was done in order to assess eligibility qualifications of any cultural resources for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and Executive Order 11593. The survey was conducted under Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 887.

## METHODOLOGY

Research methodology for the 100% pedestrian surface survey and assessment of Memorial Park followed the Council of Texas Archeologists' performance standards (CTA 1981) and *Field Methods in Archaeology* (Hester, Heizer, and Graham 1975).

Field operations consisted of a series of transects spaced to give effectively 100% coverage across the property with emphasis on identification of any cultural resources and the recording and collection of diagnostic or significant material. USGS 1:24,000 scale topographic maps were used, along with project map drawings prepared by Groves and Associates, consulting engineers, and supplied by the City of Uvalde. The survey recorded elevation, soil type, area vegetation, and distance to water source, and other specific area information.

One archaeological site (41 UV 166) was located in the northeast corner of the survey area and consists of a thin surface lithic scatter (Fig. 1). Several shovel tests revealed no substantial subsurface cultural material. The lithic scatter was mapped. Field notes are on file at the CAR-UTSA laboratory.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Uvalde County area has been utilized by hunting and gathering Indian groups for over 10,000 years. The chronological cultural sequence recognized for this area is as follows: the Paleo-Indian (10,000 B.C. to 6000 B.C.), the Archaic (6000 B.C. to A.D. 1000), the Late Prehistoric (A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1600), and the Historic (after A.D. 1600).

The sites investigated in Uvalde County include Montell rockshelter (41 UV 3; Evans 1947) in the northwestern part of the county and Kincaid rockshelter (41 UV 2; Suhm 1960) in the eastern part of the county. Both shelters revealed Paleo-Indian and Archaic materials. In the Montell rockshelter there is a painted panel of images approximately 2-1/2 m high by 16 m long. Portions of the pictographs have been recorded by T. R. Hester and by the author (notes on file, CAR-UTSA). The "G" rockshelter (41 UV 121) is located in the same area. The Blewett mines rock art site (41 UV 129) is located approximately 22 miles west of Uvalde and contains a series of circular images (pectoglyphs) pecked into the bedrock. Southwest of Uvalde along the Nueces River is the "Bee Bluff" rockshelter (41 ZV 332). The rockshelter contains historic Indian pictographs and prehistoric pectoglyphs. Several isolated prehistoric Indian burials have been investigated in the area. Two of these include the Kincaid Ranch burial site (41 UV 131) and the Smythe Ranch burial site (41 UV 130).

This page has been redacted because it contains restricted information.

Burned rock middens and open campsites are recorded in all areas of the county. The La Jita site (41UV21; Hester 1971), a Middle Archaic site near Utopia, Texas, and the Anthon site (41 UV 60; Weir and Doran 1980) are to the west of Uvalde on the Nueces River. Significant Late Prehistoric and Archaic occupations were recorded at the Anthon site. Along the Leona River drainage north of Uvalde, open campsites, middens, hearths, and lithic concentrations were recorded by Hall (1974) and Lukowski (1987). Excavations revealed that this area was occupied almost continuously from the Late Paleo-Indian period through the Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods (41 UV 75; Nelson 1982). Historic sites in the area include two Spanish missions, Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria and San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz (Tunnell and Newcomb 1969) on the upper Nueces River. Fort Inge (41 UV 75; Nelson 1981) located one mile south of the survey area is being investigated by the Uvalde County Historical Commission. Nelson's 1982 report contains a summary of Spanish and French activities in the Uvalde area from 1535. A detailed account of early military occupation in the area has been documented by Smith (1981).

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The survey area is located within the Gulf Coastal Plain near the southern limits of the Balcones Fault Zone in Uvalde County. The majority of the survey area lies atop a Pleistocene fluvial terrace that is part of the Leona formation consisting of calcareous silt and clay. These sediments were deposited by streams during the middle and upper Pleistocene epoch (ice age). The soils that formed in the survey area are dominantly those of the Castroville series (Stevens and Richmond 1976).

Uvalde County has a subtropical climate characterized by dry winters and hot, humid summers. The average annual rainfall is 24 inches. The native flora of the area is mainly grasses, but large live oak, pecan, mesquite, elm, and hackberry trees grow in motts. Also present are thorny brush, whitebrush, and prickly pear cactus. The main fauna of the area include whitetail deer, coyote, fox, armadillo, javelina, squirrel, dove, quail, turkey, cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits, raccoons, and the diamondback rattlesnake.

### HISTORICAL SETTLEMENT

The first European exploration into the Uvalde area occurred in 1535 when Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca wandered across Texas. From that year to 1762, there were over 15 Spanish and French expeditions in the Uvalde region. In 1762-1764, the Spanish founded the two missions, San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz and Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, on the Nueces River north of Uvalde. From the 1760s to the late 1840s, many frontiersmen and military men traveled through what is now Uvalde County. Because of the Indians and hostile conditions none of them were able to tame this country for settlement. On February 14, 1849, men of the 1st U.S. infantry, Companies D & I, established a camp on the Leona River two miles south of the present city of Uvalde. This camp would become the site of Fort Inge. With some protection from the Indians, settlement was now possible.

In 1853, at age 22, Reading W. Black entered this country. On April 14, 1853, Black bought "an undivided half of a league and a labor" in Bexar Survey 71, near the head of the Leona River. A large part of Uvalde is built upon this land. A traveler who visited the Leona River in the summer of 1855 said of the spot (Moore 1934):

The head of the Leona . . . is in a wide flat of rich land, overgrown with thickets of small live oak, hackberry, and pecan trees . . . Mr. Black has built a substantial stone building at the head of the river, and has laid out a town, which he calls Encina. A forest of small elms . . . and live oaks throws a shadow over the town, grateful in a country where, except on the rivers, one will hardly find trees with foliage heavy enough to afford a shade. Situated as it is on the great thoroughfare to Mexico, and the last suitable situation on good water, it will become an important place.

Black's first building was a temporary two-room picket house just west of the Leona River and north of the road at the site of the Uvalde Athletic Park, which is now the Civic Center (Hollingsworth 1912). This house soon became a store where he sold wares to travelers along the road.

As soon as his business affairs were well established, Black built a permanent home. The site was across the road and about 300 yards west of the picket house. He began work on the new house August 14, 1854, and moved into it the following January. It was a two-story stone structure and faced north at the southeast corner of present Main and East Streets, just east of the City Hall (Moore 1934).

Black continued to purchase land in the immediate area, and in 1855, finally employed the services of William C. A. Thielepape, a German surveyor and lithographer of San Antonio, to lay out the town of Encina. In 1856, the county was organized, and the name was changed to Uvalde.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### SOUTHERN SECTION

The southern section of the survey area encompasses the Leona River south of the Highway 90 bridge to the golf course and Memorial Park. The channel of the Leona River in this area has been mechanically cleaned and widened many times, and the river banks have been cut and shaped many times, wherein there is no area of the original bank that has been left intact. Visual inspection of the modern ground surface shows all types of modern trash and rubble. No prehistoric or historic cultural resources were found in this area.

Memorial Park is located on the west bank of the Leona River between Highway 90 and the golf course. It is bordered on the west side by South Wood Street. The entire park is shaded by numerous large oak trees. Very little grass grows in this shaded area, resulting in good ground visibility. The ground cover is mainly black soil. Though there is some modern trash, the surface is generally kept clean. No prehistoric or historic cultural resources were found in this area on the surface. However, it is possible that subsurface cultural resources may exist. Any digging activity should be monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

### NORTHERN SECTION

The northern section of the survey area encompasses the Leona River north of the Highway 90 bridge to East Nopal Street and the city block that contains the Civic Center. The channel of the Leona River in this area has also been mechanically cleaned and widened many times and the river banks cut and reshaped to where there is no original area that has been left intact. Shovel testing revealed no subsurface material. No cultural resources were observed in the channel. On the upper east bank of the river, along East Nopal Street, a prehistoric site (41 UV 166) was located. Shovel testing in this area revealed little cultural material to a depth of 20 cm. The site was recorded as a thin lithic scatter. The vast majority of the site is across the fence on private property and out of the survey area. No improvement work is scheduled in this area.

The Civic Center city block is bordered on the east by the Leona River, the south by Highway 90, and the west by North Wood Street. The majority of the ground surface is covered by buildings, sidewalks, or asphalt. The area between the Civic Center and the Leona River channel is covered with grass and has the highest potential for subsurface cultural resources. Of special interest is the location of Reading Black's two-room picket house. No cultural resources were observed on this block; however, any digging activity should be monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During this archaeological survey, the channel of the Leona River, Memorial Park, and City Block 45 were carefully examined. The survey area produced one archaeological site (41 UV 166) in the northeast corner and on the east bank of the river channel. The site is characterized by a light lithic scatter, but shovel tests failed to produce any significant subsurface cultural materials.

Memorial Park and City Block 45 produced no cultural deposits on the surface. Because of the extent of disturbance in the river channel and the lack of any potentially significant cultural deposits, no further work is recommended. In accordance the historical context of these two properties and the possibility of subsurface historic deposits, suggest that we recommend that prior to any disturbance the Texas Antiquities Committee be notified, and any alterations to the ground surface be monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

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