



INDEX OF TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGY

Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State

Volume 2016

Article 111

2016

City of San Antonio Fire Station 53 Project Cultural Resources Survey Investigations, Bexar County, Texas

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City of San Antonio Fire Station 53 Project Cultural Resources Survey Investigations, Bexar County, Texas

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City of San Antonio Fire Station 53 Project

Cultural Resources Survey Investigations,
Bexar County, Texas
City of San Antonio

Principal Investigator: Laura Acuña
Authors: Laura Acuña, C. Russ Shortes

June 2, 2016

City of San Antonio Fire Station 53 Project Cultural Resources Survey Investigations Bexar County, San Antonio, Texas

Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7607

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Laura I. Acuña

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Document No. 160019

June 2016

Management Summary

Project Name: City of San Antonio Fire Station 53 Project

Atkins Project No.: 100049886

Texas Antiquities Permit: 7607

Sponsor: City of San Antonio (COSA)

Project Location: Southern Bexar County, Texas

Type of Investigation: Intensive survey

Regulatory Trigger: Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT), COSA's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article VI 35-630 to 35-634)

Principal Investigator: Laura I. Acuña

Crew Members: C. Russ Shortes, Ruben Castillo

Date(s) of Work: April 22, 2016

Person-Days: 2

Area Surveyed: 2.8 acres

Newly Recorded Sites: none

Revisited Sites: none

Curation: Records only, Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at Austin

Comments: No significant cultural resources encountered, Atkins recommends no additional investigations.

Abstract

On behalf of the The City of San Antonio (COSA), Atkins North America, Inc. (Atkins), completed an intensive pedestrian survey for the Donop Road Fire Station 53 Project in southern Bexar County, Texas. COSA intends to construct a new fire station with a large vehicle bay within a 3-acre parcel of land near the intersection of Donop Road and Interstate Highway 37 in southeastern Bexar County, Texas. The work will consist of land clearing and grading across the entire 2.8-acre parcel, with depth of impacts up to 1.8 meters (6 feet) for utilities. Thus, the area of potential effects (APE) is 2.8 acres and 1.8 meters (6 feet) deep. COSA contracted Atkins to conduct a cultural resources investigation for the parcel. As the proposed project will occupy land owned or purchased by COSA, a political-subdivision of the state, it is subject to evaluation under the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT) and COSA's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article VI 35-630 to 35-634). All work was performed under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7607.

As part of the investigations, Atkins completed a background literature review and pedestrian survey with shovel testing. The background review determined that no previously recorded cultural resources or previously conducted surveys are within the proposed project area. A historic resources desktop review determined there are no historic-age resources within the project area boundaries. Per Texas Historical Commission survey standards, six shovel tests are recommended for a project this size. A total of eight shovel test were excavated within the project area, exceeding the proposed standards. All shovel tests were negative for cultural material, and no cultural resources were encountered.

Atkins has made a good faith effort to locate cultural resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or for designation as a State Antiquities Landmark. Based on the findings, no such resources were encountered, and no additional investigations are recommended. Atkins proposed a noncollection survey and as no significant cultural materials were encountered, no artifacts were collected. All project documentation will be housed at the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

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Introduction

On behalf of City of San Antonio (COSA), Atkins North America, Inc. (Atkins) conducted a cultural resources investigation for the Donop Road Fire Station 53 Site Plan Project located in southern Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1). The project area is south of the intersection of Southton Road and Donop Road, west of Interstate Highway 37 (IH 37). The proposed project will involve the construction of a new fire station facility, bay areas for vehicles, parking lots, and associated utilities. The project area will be approximately 2.8 acres in size. The proposed depth of impacts is anticipated to be 1.8 meters (m) (6 feet [ft]) for utility installations and bay areas. Thus, the area of potential effects (APE) is 2.8 acres and 1.8 m (6 ft) deep. The investigations consisted of a background literature review and an intensive pedestrian survey with shovel testing. The goals of the investigation were to locate, describe, document, and assess all existing cultural resources that would be affected by the proposed project.

The project will be within COSA-owned property and is subject to review under the Antiquities Code of Texas and COSA's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article VI 35-630 to 35-634). The investigations were performed in compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT) (Title 9, Chapter 191, Texas Natural Resources Code of 1977) under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7607. Project methodology conformed to the standards set forth by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Council of Texas Archeologists (CTA).

The pedestrian survey was conducted on April 22, 2016. Laura I. Acuña functioned as the Principal Investigator, and field efforts were conducted by staff archaeologists Russ Shortes and Ruben Castillo. Approximately 1 person-day was spent conducting the field survey. This project had a noncollection policy; project records will be curated at the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Project Setting

The project, located within south central Texas, is in an upland setting approximately 400 feet north of an unnamed drainage that empties into a tributary of the San Antonio River (Figure 2). The northeastern section of the project is within an existing parking lot and the southwestern half is within an undeveloped, cleared pasture area with short grasses. Geologically, the project area is mapped as Wilcox Group, undivided. These deposits are approximately 1,000 ft thick and consist of mudstone with various amounts of sandstone, lignite, and ironstone (Brown et al. 1983). The soils of the project area are mapped as 100 percent Laparita clay loam with 1 to 3 percent slopes. The Laparita soil series consists of deep, moderately permeable soils that formed in loam and clay alluvium. The upper 20 centimeters (cm) consists of dark gray loam, followed by dark gray to pale brown clay loam down to 117 cm. These soils occur on headslopes, toeslopes, and footslopes of interfluvies (United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service 2016).

Report Organization

This report is organized in accordance with the CTA guidelines for a short report. The report contains six sections including: the abstract; introduction with project setting and report organization; methods of investigation for background review and the survey methods; the results detailing the background review and the field survey; summary and recommendations; and finally references.

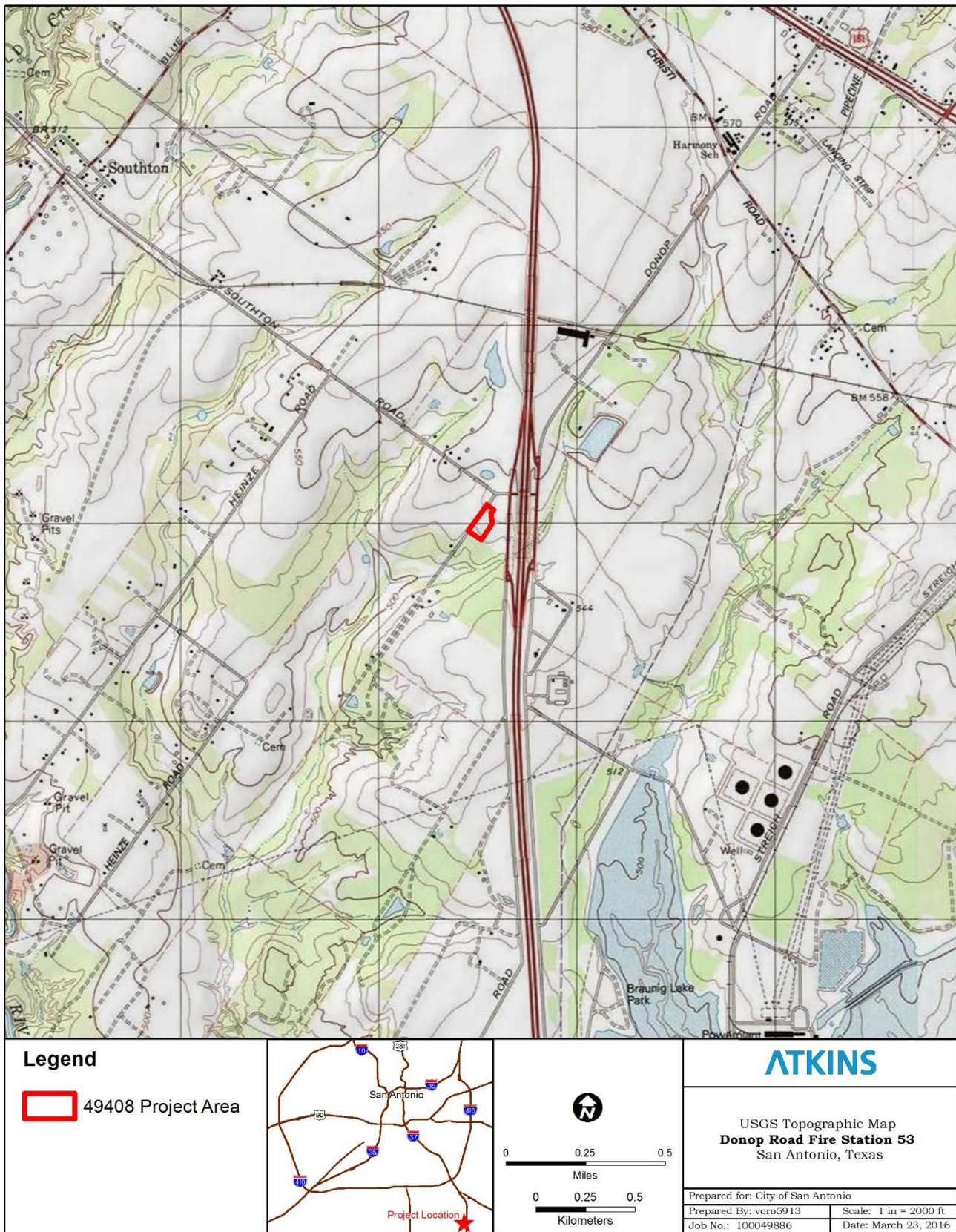


Figure 1. Location of the project area on a USGS topographic map.



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Figure 2. Aerial view of the project area.

Methods of Investigation

The primary goals of this investigation were to (1) locate any cultural resources that may exist within the area of potential effect; (2) assess their potential for State Antiquities Landmark (SAL) eligibility; (3) assess the effect of the proposed construction on the located resources; and (4) provide site-specific recommendations for mitigation of adverse impact to any SAL- or National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible properties or properties of unknown eligibility.

Background Review

Atkins archaeologists conducted a preliminary cultural resources background review of the area within a 1.6-kilometer (km) (1-mile) radius of the APE using the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Archeological Sites Atlas and Texas Historic Sites Atlas database (Atlas) to identify previously recorded cultural resource sites, NRHP-listed properties, NRHP districts, cemeteries (including historic Texas cemeteries), Official Texas Historical Markers (including Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks), SALs, as well as any other potential cultural resources such as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), National Monuments, National Memorials, National Historic Sites, and National Historical Parks. In addition, a review of additional resources was performed including the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) historic overlay and TxDOT's database of NRHP-listed and -eligible bridges. San Antonio-specific resources such as the COSA Municipal Archives maps and the Stoner System Map sheets were also consulted. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, historic aerial photographs and topographic maps were examined to review the historic development of the project area.

Field Survey

Atkins archaeologists conducted an intensive archaeological survey of the proposed project area that was of sufficient intensity to determine the nature, extent, and, if possible, significance of any cultural resources located within the APE. The archaeological field crews visually inspected the ground surface, and judgmentally employed shovel testing to probe for subsurface cultural materials. THC survey standards require a minimum of two shovel tests per acre for projects 1–10 acres in size, or six shovel tests for the current project area. Shovel tests were typically placed at 100-m (328-ft) intervals along transects spaced 30 m (98.4 ft) apart. Shovel tests were excavated in 20-cm (7.8-inch) arbitrary levels to a depth of 100 cm (39.4 inches) or to culturally sterile deposits, whichever was encountered first. The soil matrix was screened through ¼-inch mesh, unless it was dominated by clay; clay soils were hand sorted and visually inspected for the presence of cultural materials. Atkins plotted each shovel test location using a submeter Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver, and recorded each test on appropriate project field forms. Photographs were taken of the general project area and disturbances and recorded in a photographic log. Shovel testing depth and location fluctuated depending on the nature of the disturbances, soils, topography.

Should an archaeological site be discovered during any of the proposed investigations, Atkins would assess the extent of the resource within the APE, document and photograph the findings, and record the site in accordance with state guidelines. Site documentation would follow the THC standards for site recording and include additional shovel testing to define the site boundaries. The site would be documented on standard field forms, photographed, and plotted on U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic map(s) using a standard submeter accurate, handheld, Trimble Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. The site would be assessed for potential significance to determine if nonavoidance, additional work, or avoidance strategies are required to proceed with the project. The State of Texas Archaeological site data form would be completed for each site encountered during investigations and would include a detailed map of the site.

Atkins is proposed a noncollection survey for all of the work performed. Any artifacts encountered during investigations would be analyzed, documented, and tabulated in the field. Diagnostic artifacts would be described in detail and photographed in the field, then reburied. However, if a significant or rare diagnostic artifact or resource was found, Atkins would consider the collection of the artifact to assess the site's significance after consultation with COSA. Project records will be curated at the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at Austin.

Results

Background Review

The results of the background review determined that the project area has not been previously surveyed, and no previously recorded sites or resources are within or adjacent to its boundaries. Approximately three previously recorded sites and three previously conducted surveys are within a 1.6-km (1-mile) radius of the project area. In addition, a review of the TxDOT historic overlay and San Antonio-specific resources did not identify any historic-age properties within the project area.

Approximately 1.58 km (0.98 mile) south of the project area, sites 41BX684, 41BX685, and 41BX691 were recorded during a CPS Energy survey in 1985 by J. Jameson with Espey, Huston, & Associates (Atlas 2016). Recorded as prehistoric lithic surface scatters, the sites were reported to have little to no research value, with no further work recommended. Site 41BX691 was revisited in 2011 by SWCA Environmental Consultants during a subsequent transmission line survey on behalf of CPS Energy for the Braunig to Toyota Project (Galindo and Stotts 2013). The site was reevaluated during the investigations and recommended as not eligible for SAL designation, and no further work was recommended. In addition to the linear surveys, a survey investigation for the Henze Road low water crossing project was conducted within 1.6-km (1-mile) radius west of the project area. No cultural resources were encountered during that investigation.

No historic-age resources were identified during the review of TxDOT historic overlay maps dating to 1871, 1887, 1903, 1927, and 1953 (Foster et al. 2006). A review of the Stoner Map System Sheet 1002 identified the project area within the Alex Mair No. 1 parcel, with no evidence of standing structures. Historic aerial photography dating from 1955, 1963, 1966, 1973, and 1986 depict the project area within an agricultural setting that has been continuously plowed and cleared (National Environmental Title Research 2016). There is an existing facility located along the northeastern boundary of the project area that was developed in 2004.

Field Survey

On April 22, 2016, two Atkins archaeologists completed a 100 percent pedestrian survey of the APE (Figure 3). The project area is located south east of Donop Road and southwest of a gas station. At the time of the survey, the majority of the area was vegetated primarily with knee-high pasture grasses and weeds. The western and southern edges of the parcel were lined with mesquite and live oak. Ground surface visibility was limited to less than 10 percent due to the dense pasture grasses (Figure 4).

The entire APE exhibited evidence of previous disturbances related to land-clearing activities and grading. As the historic map review indicated, the area has been continuously impacted for vegetation removal for over 50 years. The western portion of the project area appeared to be extensively impacted by mechanical activity and erosion (Figure 5.)

Eight shovel tests were excavated within the APE (see Figure 3; Table 1), which exceeds the THC survey standard minimum of six shovel tests for a parcel of this size. Shovel test results indicated that soils within the western half were generally shallow, approximately 10–30 cm in depth over large limestone cobbles. The soils along the eastern half were deeper, approximately 30–50 cm in depth over subsoil. Most of the soils were saturated due to recent rains, and areas inundated with water were common. A single fragment of burned rock was encountered in shovel test (ST) RC 3. The burned rock fragment was documented in the field and not collected. An additional shovel test was excavated for delineation; others were attempted, but the soils were deflated to rocky cobbles. The additional shovel test was negative, and the burned rock was determined to be related to land-clearing activities and not culturally significant. No significant cultural materials or features were encountered during the investigations.



Figure 3. Shovel test locations within the project area.



Figure 4. Project area overview, facing northeast.



Figure 5. Evidence of recent disturbances within the project area, facing southwest.

Table 1. Shovel Test Results

Shovel Test No.	Level (10 cm)	Depth (cmbs*)	P=Pos N=Neg	Munsell Soil Color	Soil Texture	Description (Area, Vegetation, Location, etc.)	Comments Reason for Termination
RS1	1-3	0-30	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	Rock
RS2	1-3	0-30	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	Subsoil
RS3	1	0-10	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	
	2-3	20-30	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay		Rock
RS4	1	0-10	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	
	2-3	20-30	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay		Rock
RC1	1-5	0-50	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	Subsoil
RC2	1-5	0-50	N	10YR 4/1 Dark Gray	Clay loam/Clay	Pasture Grasses	Subsoil
RC3	1-3	0-30	N	10YR 5/3 Brown	Clay	Pasture Grasses	
	4-5	30-50	N	5YR 4/2 Dark Reddish Gray	Clay		Subsoil
RC4	1-2	0-20	N	10YR 5/3 Brown	Clay	Pasture Grasses	
	3	20-30	N	5YR 4/2 Dark Reddish Gray	Clay	Pasture Grasses	Subsoil

*cmbs = centimeters below the surface

Summary and Recommendations

On behalf of COSA, Atkins completed a 100 percent intensive pedestrian survey of the Donop Road Fire Station 53 Project. The investigations were completed in compliance with the Historic Preservation and Urban Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article VI 35-630 to 35-634) and the Antiquities Code of Texas, under Texas Antiquities Permit 7607. A background literature review was completed as part of the investigations, and determined no previously recorded sites or previously conducted surveys are within the project area. Eight shovel tests were excavated within the project area, exceeding the THC survey standards. One shovel test contained a piece of burned rock that appears to have resulted from modern clearing activities. All other shovel tests were negative for prehistoric or historic cultural materials, and no significant cultural resources were encountered within the project area.

Atkins has made a good faith effort to locate significant cultural resources eligible for listing in the NRHP or for designation as an SAL. Based on the findings, no such resources were encountered, and no additional investigations are recommended. Atkins proposed a noncollection survey, and no artifacts were collected. All project documentation will be curated at the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

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