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A Cultural Resources Survey for the Donna Independent School District's Aquatic Center and Walking Trail Project, Donna, Hidalgo County, Texas

Herbert G. Uecker and James E. Warren

Prepared for Donna Independent School District

April, 2015

Archaeology Consultants, Inc.
P. O. Box 163
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Report Number 832

Texas Antiquities Permit 7163

Herbert G. Uecker
Principal Investigator

Abstract

In late April, 2015, Archaeology Consultants, Inc., performed a cultural resources survey for the Donna Independent School District Aquatic Center and Walking Trail Project in Hidalgo County, Texas. About 6.65 acres was surveyed. The location of the project area within public school district property and within a region known to contain numerous archeological sites prompted the Texas Historical Commission to recommend the survey for compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas. The Commission issued Texas Antiquities Permit 7163 for the survey.

The survey included a search of the Commission's *Texas Archeological Sites Atlas* for previous surveys and recorded archaeological sites in the vicinity, pedestrian surface examination, survey-level subsurface testing, and reporting. The background search revealed that apparently no archaeological resources were previously found or recorded within or adjacent to the project area. No cultural evidence, as defined in the Antiquities Code of Texas, was found during the survey, and nothing was collected or curated.

The investigating archaeologists believed that the project as planned should not affect any cultural resources worthy of listing in the National Register of Historic Places or designation as State Antiquities Landmarks or Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks. Therefore Archaeology Consultants, Inc., recommended to the project sponsors and consultants, and to the Commission, that the project should proceed without further work for Antiquities Code of Texas compliance, except in the event of finds of cultural evidence during construction. It was further recommended that if any cultural evidence was found during project-related disturbances, per applicable antiquities statutes and regulations work should immediately be halted in the vicinity until such finds were examined and evaluated by Archaeology Consultants, Inc., by another qualified archaeological consultant, or by the Commission's Archeology Division staff.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology Consultants, Inc., was assisted in coordinating and performing its investigation of the project area by several persons whose help is gratefully acknowledged: Mr. Jesus Rene Reyna with the Donna Independent School District; Ms. Leslie Salinas with Fulcrum Consulting Services, Harlingen, Texas; Project Archeologist James E. Warren; Principal Investigator Herbert G. Uecker; archaeological technicians Brandon ("Charlie") Burton and Tyler Burton; and Texas Historical Commission Archeology Division reviewer David Camarena Garcés.

INTRODUCTION

On April 23, 2015, Archaeology Consultants, Incorporated (ACI), performed fieldwork for a cultural resources survey for the Donna Independent School District's (DISD) Aquatic Center and Walking Trail Project in Donna, Hidalgo County, Texas (Figure 1). The project consisted of planned construction of approximately 1.5 miles of walking trails within a trail corridor 30 feet wide, and of an aquatic center within about 1.2 acres. Therefore the total acreage of the area of potential effects (APE) to archeological resources for the project was about 6.65.

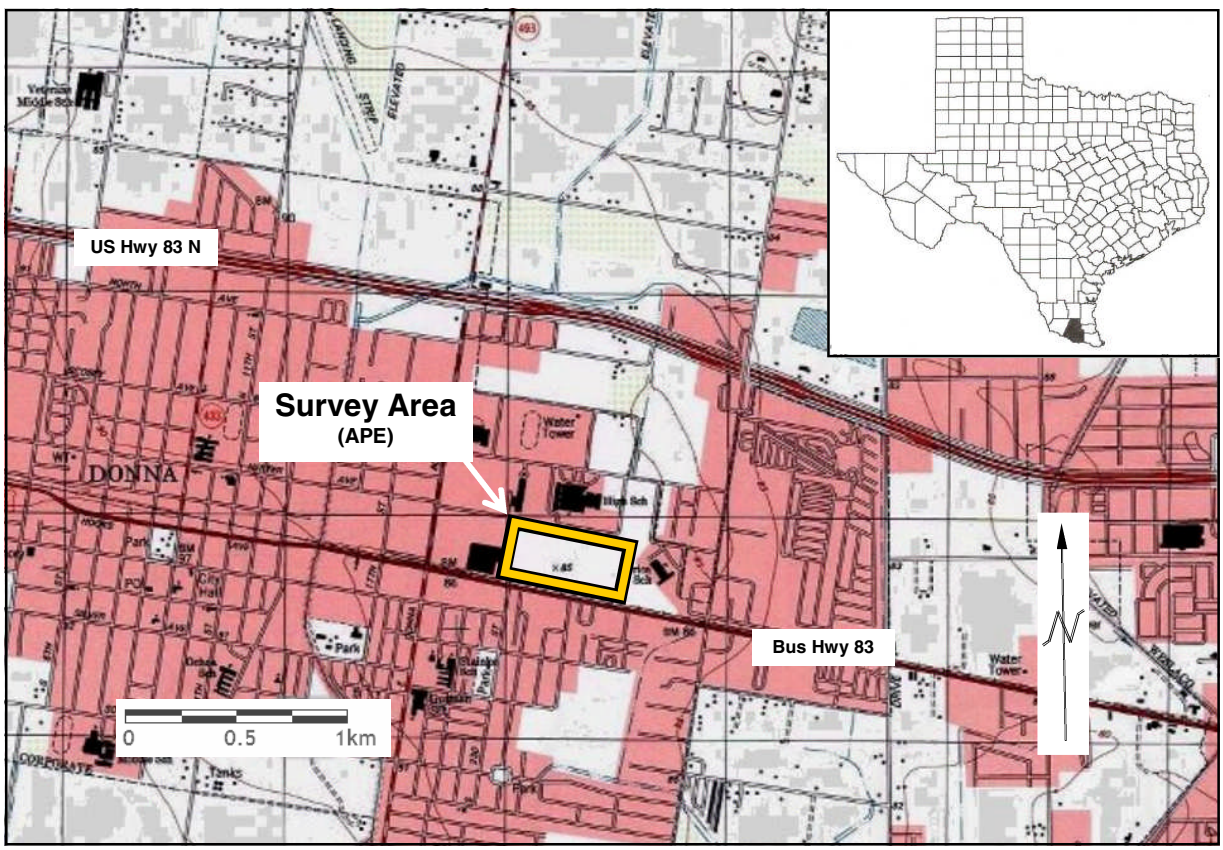

Figure 1. Location of area surveyed (APE) as plotted within yellow outline on segment of *Donna, Texas*, 7.5'-minute quadrangle United States Geological Survey topographic map (2698-114). Inset shows location of Hidalgo County.

The location of the project area within DISD property and within a region known to contain numerous archeological sites prompted the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to recommend the survey under the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT). The THC is the state agency for historic preservation responsible for administering the ACT in Texas, and issued Texas Antiquities Permit 7163 for the survey.

The survey focused on discovery, identification, and survey-level assessment of archaeological resources and was conducted according to *Archeological Survey Standards for Texas, Minimum Survey Standards* and a scope of work (SOW) reviewed and approved in advance by the THC. The SOW included a search of the *Texas Archeological Sites Atlas* (Atlas; THC 2015) for previous surveys and recorded archaeological sites in the vicinity, pedestrian surface examination, survey-level subsurface testing, and reporting. Work was led by ACI owner James E. Warren and Principal Investigator Herbert G. Uecker. Archeological technicians Brandon J. Burton and Tyler Burton assisted during fieldwork. This report conforms to the *Council of Texas Archeologists Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management Reports* as it applies to surveys with negative findings.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Johnson (1931) includes the project area in the South Texas Plains, a southern extension of the Great Plains of the United States, and describes the area as an eroded plain marginal to the Rio Grande River. Hatch et al. (1990:13) include the area in their South Texas Plains Vegetation Area, which is described as a rolling to moderately dissected plain. Blair (1950:98) places the project area in the Tamaulipan Biotic Province, which is described as a moisture-deficient region extending northward to the Balcones Fault zone and southward into Mexico. Larkin and Bomar (1983) classify the climate as Modified Marine and Subtropical Steppe. The region is generally characterized by thorn scrub vegetation such as mesquite, huisache, and acacia, and numerous varieties of cacti are also abundant (cf. Gehlbach 1993:13; Taylor et al. 1999). Readers interested in further information about the environmental setting of Hidalgo County and the project area are encouraged to examine those references.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This Section is adapted from, and closely follows the accounts in the *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association 2015a, 2015b).

Hidalgo County

Hidalgo County, in south Texas, contains 1,596 square miles of the Rio Grande delta. The county seat is Edinburg. Other communities of note in Hidalgo County are McAllen, Weslaco, Mission, Peñitas, and San Juan. The county's climate is subtropical and subhumid. Temperatures range from an average low of 47° F in January to an average high of 96° in July; the average annual temperature is 73°. Rainfall averages 33 inches a year, and the annual growing season lasts for 320 days. Elevations in the county range from 40 to 200 feet. The northern part of the county has sandy and light loamy soils over deep reddish or mottled, clayey subsoils. In some areas, limestone lies within 40 inches of the surface. The southern part of the county has moderately deep to deep loamy surfaces over clayey subsoils. Along the Rio Grande, brown to red clays occur.

Blair (1950) includes Hidalgo County in the Tamaulipan Biotic Province. The county is in the South Texas Plains Vegetation Area, featuring grasses, mesquite, live oaks, and chaparral. Native plants, reduced in recent years by extensive farming, include chapote, guayacan, ebony, huisache, Brazilwood, and yucca (cf. Everitt and Drawe 1993; Gehlbach 1993:13).

In 1982, 91 percent of the county was in farms and ranches and 51 to 60 percent of the county was considered prime farmland. Fifty-two percent of the farmland was under cultivation and 85 percent was irrigated. The primary crops were sorghum, cotton, corn, and vegetables. Hidalgo County led Texas counties in the production of cabbage, onions, cantaloupes, carrots, and watermelons. The primary fruits and nuts grown in the county were grapefruit, oranges, and pecans. Cattle, milk cows, and hogs were the primary livestock products. Natural resources included caliche, sand, gravel, oil, and gas. In 1982, oil and gas production totaled 98,487,211,000 cubic feet of gas-well gas, 139,995 barrels of crude oil, 1,101,666 barrels of condensate, and 15,784,000 cubic feet of casing head gas.

Indiginous peoples have called the area home for 11,000 years. Artifacts of the Archaic Period found in the region suggest it was occupied by prehistoric hunters and gatherers who practiced no agriculture and kept no domestic animals except a few dogs. Some forms of agriculture, such as raising maize, were later introduced. Several Indian groups of the Historic period called the lower Rio Grande valley home, including the Coahuiltecans and Karankawas (cf. Ricklis 1996; Salinas 1990:27-70, who describes over four dozen groups within the Rio Grande Delta area). The Coahuiltecans hunted a wide variety of animals; fished; gathered berries, fruits, and roots; and used mountain laurel for its narcotic effects. The Lipan Apaches, having been forced out of Colorado and New Mexico by the Comanches, entered Texas in the 1700s and gained control of South Texas by about 1775. The Comanches followed them and arrived in south Texas in the early nineteenth century.

Some historians believe Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca traversed the area after his 1528 shipwreck. In search of Dutch sailors reported on the Texas coast, Jacinto García de Sepulveda entered the area by crossing the Rio Grande at the site of Mier in August, 1638. In 1687, the second expedition of Alonso De León also followed the river route in search of Fort St. Louis. In 1747, Miguel de la Garza Falcón inspected the northern bank of the river in search of land suitable for settlement. He found the land unsuitable even for stock raising and condemned it as uninhabitable.

Despite his judgment, the area again drew the attention of the Spanish crown, and in 1749, José de Escandón was assigned the task of colonizing the area. He established four towns on the southern banks of the Rio Grande including Reynosa (1749), which was originally located across the river from the site of present-day Peñitas. He founded Camargo, Mier, and Revilla (now Guerrero) in 1749, 1750, and 1752, respectively. Settlers from these colonies later crossed the Rio Grande and settled the northern banks of the river. About eighty *porciones* in about nineteen grants were issued in the future Hidalgo County by the Spanish and Mexican governments. Colonization was left in the hands of the grantees, who established settlements along the river and to the north.

In 1774 a settlement called La Habitación, also known as Rancho San Luis or San Luisito, was established north of the river at the site of present-day Hidalgo, Texas,. Because the land was suitable for cattle and sheep raising the grantees became successful ranchers. Among the first settlers was Juan José Ynojosa de Ballí, who was issued the Llano Grande grant on May 29, 1790. José Manuel Gómez received the Santa Anita grant in 1798. In 1797, he established the Santa Anita Ranch, which was still in operation in 1995 under the name McAllen Ranch. Most of the other grantees also managed to settle their land and become successful ranchers.

By 1836, area farmers had a thriving economic base that allowed them to export their cattle and cattle by-products into Mexico. Goods were moved by wagon and mule trains, whose owners were so organized that they kept boats off the Rio Grande until after 1840. With the outbreak of the Texas Revolution the area became disputed territory, Mexico considered it part of Tamaulipas, and Texas claimed it as part of its southern border. During the Mexican War, Zachary Taylor established the Old Military Road to supply his men in northern Mexico. In 1849, the area became a popular stopping point for gold seekers from the United States on their way to California. The military road had become part of the Gila Route to the West Coast.

By 1850, about 39 ranches were in operation in what later became Hidalgo County . Mexico was the main market for goods from the area. Residents grew a variety of fruits and vegetables, including squash, citrus fruit, and corn. After 1849, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate periodically visited the ranches between Brownsville and Laredo. Hidalgo County was part of the disputed territory during the Mexican War. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, the area became part of San Patricio County. In the same year the region was further subdivided and became part of Cameron County.

Hidalgo County was formed in 1852 and named for Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who gave the "cry for Mexican independence" from Spanish rule. By 1852, the county had about 40-45 ranches. As land was parceled out from one generation to the next the ranches located along the river developed into villages. In this way, ranches gave rise to the communities of La Habitación, Relampago, and Peñitas. Ranches away from the river included Laguna Seca Ranch, founded in 1867, Mora Relámpago Ranch (1875), and San Manuel Ranch (1876). Generally, inhabitants of the area, especially those in the north, made a living by stock raising, while those along the river were involved in transportation, agriculture, and trade with Mexico.

In 1852, La Habitación was renamed Edinburgh and made county seat. The first county court convened on September 2, 1852, and issued licenses to ferries at Hidalgo, San Luis, Peñitas, and Las Cuevas. José M. J. Carbajal was an early court reporter. County residents were isolated from each other and from the population center of Brownsville in neighboring Cameron County. Because of their sense of neglect by state and federal governments, residents adopted the name "Republic of Hidalgo." Isolation and ineffective law enforcement led to general chaos and lawlessness, mostly in the form of cattle raids and shootouts. The "Cortina Wars" also caused disturbances, especially when Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, on his way to a robbery, was intercepted by a force of Texas Rangers. The skirmish known as the battle of La Bolsa occurred on February 4, 1860, in El Zacatal, south of Progreso in southeast Hidalgo County.

Despite difficulties, ranching dominated the economy in 1860, when 10,695 cattle and 3,330 sheep were counted. The latter produced 10,900 pounds of wool. Rustling also thrived. In December 28, 1862, armed Mexican bandits crossed into Los Ebanos, captured a Confederate wagon train, and killed three teamsters. Mexican rustlers would cross into Texas to steal as many cattle as possible. Hidalgo County did not prosper from the Civil War as did Cameron County, but instead battled cattle rustlers, who were joined by both Union and Confederate deserters. In 1870, rustlers were attracted to a county with 18,141 cattle and 11,270 sheep and a population of only 2,387. From 1872 to 1875, Sheriff Alex J. Leo repeatedly wired Washington requesting troops to curtail cattle rustling and end the "Cattle Wars," but his efforts were in vain. On April 2, 1875, Capt. Leander H. McNelly and a band of Texas Rangers arrived to help.

Hidalgo County had become a haven for outlaws from both sides of the river by the middle of the nineteenth century. Politically it had become a battleground, as various groups vied for dominance of county politics. Party affiliations, especially with the Reds and Blues, were firmly entrenched by 1869. Members of the Democratic party, known as the Reds, included Thaddeus Rhodes, Ben Kidder, Pete Champion, W. P. Dougherty and James Dougherty. The Republican party members, the Blues, included John McAllen, Jesse Bennett, and Dr. Alexander M. Headley. The Reds ruled the county for most of the last third of the nineteenth century. Their ineffective government was blamed for the county's having eight sheriffs between 1869 and 1876. It was alleged that the Reds kept control of the county by using the *pachanga* or block vote, which entailed rounding up men, filling them with food and liquor, and paying their poll tax. In Hidalgo County, Martin "Big Drunk" Norgraves, who served as first county clerk, was credited as organizer of block voting.

By 1880, the population was 4,347, and all except women and the 114 African Americans were fair game for the parties looking for votes. Not until 1882, when John Closner was elected deputy sheriff, was control over cattle rustlers achieved. Closner became sheriff in 1890 and shortly afterward, under the protection of James B. Wells, became the county's political boss. During his rule he brought peace to the county and was seen as such an effective leader that he was nicknamed the "father" of Hidalgo County. In the process, however, he made many enemies. During the 1890s, his rivals tried to have him assassinated twice and brought a ranger investigation against him. He was accused of mistreating prisoners, and he later admitted that he could have gone a little too far in pressuring suspects to confess to crimes.

Though Closner's Reds were effective in bringing law and order to the county, the rivalry with the Blues did not abate. It came to a head in August, 1890, when the Blues set up their polls and judges while the Reds held elections. This effectively gave the county two sets of officials. The Blues wanted to stop the Reds' use of the *pachanga*, which gave undocumented aliens access to the polls. Consequently, Dr. Headley and a company of 150 Blues took over Edinburgh and ruled the town for several days under the moniker "Independent Republic of Hidalgo." United States officials ended Headley's "republic" when he attempted to collect customs at the border.

Despite political turmoil and cattle rustling, the county population grew to 6,534 by 1890. Ranching reached its peak that year with 71,176 cattle; 20,906 sheep gave 41,074 pounds of wool. The Garza War came to an end in 1891, when Catarino Erasmo Garza and his men were defeated at La Joya in southwest Hidalgo County. In 1886, Edinburgh was washed away by a severe flood, after which it was moved to another flood-prone site about two miles north of the river. The county population was estimated at 6,837 in 1900. The *Hidalgo Advance*, the county's first newspaper, went into publication in March, 1903. It was published for the sole purpose of advertising the county and attracting a railroad. When it arrived in 1904, the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway made a big difference. In 1903, land sold for 25 cents an acre, but by 1906 it was selling at $50 an acre, and by 1910, the price had increased to as much as $300 an acre.

Farming in Hidalgo County was not practiced on a large scale until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Citrus fruits were among the first products cultivated. By 1878, Carlota Vela at the Laguna Seca Ranch had a small orange grove that was known for the quality of its fruit. Later, the primary crops were cotton and sugarcane planted on large plantations for export. The first attempt at growing cane on a large scale was made in 1883 by John Closner, who established a plantation and mill near the site of present-day Pharr. Attempts to irrigate rice were unsuccessful, but citrus fruits and vegetables were produced on a commercial basis starting around 1907, when W. A. Fitch planted a commercial-scale grapefruit orchard near Mercedes.

Chapin, a community established in 1908, was soon made county seat and renamed Edinburgh. The old county seat, Edinburgh, was moved away from the river and renamed Hidalgo. With the introduction of the railroad and the influx of settlers wishing to establish farms during the first decade of the twentieth century, the county's economic base shifted toward farming. The primary crops were corn and cotton. The population was estimated at 13,728 in 1910. In 1911, the San Benito and Rio Grande Valley Railway made junction with the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway at San Benito. The Texas and New Orleans built into the Valley in 1927.

In 1920, the county’s population was 38,110, more than double what it had been in 1910, and the number of farms had increased to 1,727, seven times the number of farms in 1890. John H. Shary, who became a successful land developer and promoter, arrived in Hidalgo County in 1912. Shary, who developed the citrus industry, was selling his grapefruit by 1919.

In 1924, a regional Texas Agricultural Experiment Station was established in Weslaco. Thriving towns sprang up across the southern part of the county east to west along U.S. Highway 83, which by 1930 was described as the "longest main street in the world." Race relations in Hidalgo County during the nineteenth century were fairly amicable even as the number of Anglo-Americans moving to the area increased.

With the advent of the railroad Hidalgo County became a magnet for settlers from the Midwest and the East. These settlers, unlike their ranching predecessors, were not willing to adapt to Hispanic culture and considered themselves superior to Mexican Americans.

Consequently, all the new towns that developed along the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway during the first 20 years of the twentieth century were fully segregated. The two best known for their segregation were Weslaco and McAllen, but most of the other towns along U.S. 83 were segregated, unlike the old towns of Hidalgo, Peñitas, and Relampago.

The wall between the races became increasingly impenetrable. Between 1912 and 1915, border raids claimed at least 30 Anglo lives and several hundred Mexican lives, converted the area into a combat zone, and brought settlement to a halt. Though the raiders disrupted lives and stole cattle, law-enforcement officers were also accused of excessive violence and unjust practices.

Toward the end of the 1920s, however, settlement resumed and segregation had become the norm. Because all the new towns were fully segregated it was impossible for Hispanic children to get an equal education. Inexperienced teachers were assigned to teach at the Mexican schools, which were usually overcrowded and ill equipped. There were no Mexican high schools because Hispanics were not expected to advance beyond elementary school. This deprivation led to self-perpetuating poverty as uneducated (and therefore poor) parents removed their children from school so that they could help support the family. In 1930, the county's population was estimated at 77,004, of which 41,522 individuals were identified as Mexican.

By 1930, the conversion of the economy to truck farming was complete. That year there were only 34,505 cattle, and the number of farms had increased to 4,321, more than double the number in 1920. The primary crops were cotton, planted on 131,884 acres, and corn, planted on 14,658 acres. Stock farming and ranching continued mainly in the northern part of the county, where cattle, sheep, and poultry were the main livestock. Despite the Great Depression, the county's population increased to 106,059 in 1940. The number of residents always fluctuated, however, during any given year because migrant farm workers and winter Texans or "snowbirds" came and went.

The first producing oil well in the county was brought in on September 18, 1934, by Otto C. Woods. The oil and gas industry soon became important in the county. With the increase in population the number of farms grew to 5,094 by 1940. Hidalgo County got its first military base in 1941, when Moore Air Field was built 12 miles northwest of Mission. The field was operated by the United States Army Air Force during World War II and was named for Lt. Frank Murchison Moore, a Texan.

The county's 62 manufacturing establishments produced $6,502,129 in products in 1941. The population was estimated at 160,446 in 1950. The county had 5,314 farms, and citrus fruit production had become the most important industry. The 1950 harvest yielded 3,093,792 boxes of oranges and 169,245 tons of grapefruit. Cotton production was 197,267 bales, and corn production was 72,495 bushels. The population of Hidalgo County was estimated at 180,904 in 1960. By 1967, the county had produced 20 million barrels of oil. In 1969, an estimated $50 million came from Hidalgo County's winter vegetables, citrus fruit, and cotton. That year, the number of farms had declined to 4,124, apparently due to the increase in farming corporations.

The county's population was 181,533 by 1971. The civil-rights movement that had swept the country during the 1960s brought increased participation of Hispanics in Hidalgo County politics, though problems related to race were not over, as the "Pharr Police Riot" of 1971 illustrates. In Donna, migrant farm workers' children were sent to a separate school until the late 1970s. Colonias started cropping up around the county as more Mexicans crossed the Rio Grande in an attempt to improve their lives, and some local businessmen exploited the recent migrants by selling them useless land. The immigration increased throughout the 1970s.

The population doubled between 1970 and 1977, to an estimated 232,300. By 1978, Hidalgo County was averaging $188 million in annual farm income, 90 percent of which came from cotton, corn, citrus fruit, sugarcane, and grain. Also by that year the average annual income from mineral production, including oil and gas, was $65 million. The peso devaluation of 1976 did not have an immediate effect on the economy of the Rio Grande valley. Not until the mid-1980s did area merchants who catered to Mexican nationals begin to experience the negative effects of the several devaluations that occurred in that decade. Clothiers, jewelers, car dealers, and some real estate agents were hurt; agribusiness, ranching, and the oil industry suffered less.

In 1980, the population of Hidalgo County was estimated at 283,229, including 15,868 retired workers. The industries with the most workers were agribusiness, tourism, oil and gas field servicing, construction, frozen food processing and canning, meat packing, and soft drink bottling, industries which earned an aggregate of $1,575,879,000. In 1982, Hidalgo County had 171 manufacturers with 7,100 employees and products valued at $211.9 million. In 1982, Hidalgo County was ranked sixty-fourth among all United States counties in the highest birth rate and twelfth in highest percent of Hispanic-origin residents.

The county has never experienced a decrease in population. Its residents numbered 383,545 in 1990. Hispanics, Germans, and Anglo-Americans are the three largest ethnic groups. But the labor force that made Hidalgo County a prosperous agricultural region also made it the poorest in the nation. The McAllen-Edinburg-Mission metropolitan area had the lowest per capita income (estimated at $7,001) in the United States in 1987. Furthermore, Hidalgo County had the state's highest unemployment rate, and county government was so underfunded that its independent health-care program ran out of money halfway through the fiscal year. Nevertheless, corporations were doing well, and by 1988, more than $1 billion a year in goods passed through the foreign trade zone located south of McAllen in south central Hidalgo County. After its warehouses filled up that year, the foreign trade zone had to turn away tenants.

In 1988, Hidalgo County hosted 80,000 "winter Texans." Retail sales rose 22.6 percent that year. Little profit found its way to the poorest people, however, a fact reflected in the standard of living of colonia dwellers, of whom an estimated 52,000 lived in 366 colonias in 1986. The problems of inadequate water supply and substandard housing were rife among colonia residents, many of whom were migrant farm workers. It was hoped that in the 1990s, part of the problem would be solved by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Because of its proximity to Mexico, Hidalgo County was also a favored entry point for drug smugglers.

Recreation facilities in the county include the Hidalgo County Historical Corridor which spans the southern portion of the county and various parks and wildlife refuges, including Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and the Las Palomas Wildlife Management area. Special events include the Citrus Fiesta, the Weslaco Sugarfest, and the Rio Grande Valley Stock Show. Fishing and hunting are also available throughout the year. The county has several museums and historic homes. La Lomita Mission is located in Mission, and the Virgen de San Juan del Valle Shrine is in San Juan (cf. Salinas 1990:148-162, who describes eight Spanish missions which originated during the eighteenth century in the Rio Grande Delta area).

REGIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND PREVIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK

Black (1989:Figure 20) includes Hidalgo County in the South Texas Plains archeological area and the Brownsville Complex. Mercado-Allinger et al. (1996:Figures 1.1.4 and 1.1.9) include the county in the Rio Grande Plains Archeological region and indicate that northern portions of the county are within the Coastal Sand Plains whereas most of the southern half of the county is within the South Texas Brush Country. Turner and Hester (1999:Figure 4-2) distinguish eight major archaeological areas in Texas and include the county in the South Texas area. At the time of the STARS survey, the Atlas indicated that only about 255 archeological sites were previously discovered in Hidalgo County (THC 2015), including four State Antiquities Landmarks. Most of those sites are of prehistoric origins and were discovered and recorded in the Atlas during archeological surveys done in conjunction with modern construction projects. It is beyond the scope of this report to include more than a brief general description of the most common types of these sites and present information on representative examples of archaeological investigations conducted in Hidalgo County.

The most common archaeological sites in south Texas are prehistoric campsites (cf. Black 1989:44-45; Hester 1995:430-431), which often contain discrete deposits of occupational refuse known as middens. Such sites frequently are large, open, seasonally occupied base camps located along rivers and streams, or along coastal margins. However, many smaller sites that were occupied or used on a relatively infrequent or shorter term basis are also found in upland contexts within the south Texas region. The larger riparian- or coastal-margin-zone middens often were central places used for the accumulation, processing, cooking, and consumption of foods, and presumably for habitation as well. They were also occasionally used for burying the dead (Hester 1985).

In central Texas, burned rock middens are the most prevalent type of archaeological feature at such sites, but due to the relative paucity of stone in much of south Texas, such middens are not common in the region. In burned rock middens, foods were often cooked in earthen pits lined with rock slabs or boiled in hide pouches filled with water, food, and hot stones. The rocks had to be routinely replaced as they disintegrated from continual exposure to intense heat. This resulted in gradual accumulation of large heaps of thermally fractured and discolored rocks mixed with food scraps, discarded tools, and tool manufacturing debris. Diagnostic projectile points, radiocarbon dates, and other archeological data from burned-rock-midden sites indicate that many of them were occupied intermittently for several hundreds or

even thousands of years by peoples who normally wandered about in small bands, but who apparently gathered into much larger bands for special seasonal activities and ceremonies. In south Texas, instead of stones, clay lumps appear to have served as the primary heating elements at many midden sites.

Along the coastal margins of the Rio Grande Delta region, shellfish comprised a large part of the diet of prehistoric aborigines, and shell middens are the most common type of site in that portion of the region (cf. Mercado-Allinger et al. 1996:47-76; Ricklis 1995:265-300). Such sites usually contain sizeable accumulations of discarded marine shells, shell fragments, and other debris that apparently originated primarily during tool manufacturing or food processing activities. They frequently contain shell tools, chipped stone tools, tool fragments, and tool manufacturing debris; ground or polished stone artifacts such as fishing net weights, sandstone abraders, grinding stones and slabs; charcoal from fires and burned clay lumps apparently used as heating elements in hearths or earthen pit ovens; lumps of naturally occurring tar known as asphaltum, which was often used culturally to water-seal pots or as adhesive; animal bone and bone tools or tool fragments; and fragments of shell- and bone-tempered aboriginal ceramic vessels. Aboriginal human burials and associated grave goods are also sometimes found at south Texas midden sites (cf. Mercado-Allinger et al. 1996:91-94; Ricklis 1995:265-300).

Other types of prehistoric sites associated with the south Texas region include smaller, shorter-term occupancy or use sites such as upland hunting-butchering camps, lithic processing sites for the manufacturing of chipped stone tools, isolated hearths and stone chipping scatters, burial and cemetery sites, and isolated finds or caches of projectile points or other tools.

Examples of archaeological investigations conducted in Hidalgo County from about 1990 to this writing include:

Prewitt and Associates, Inc (PAI)., conducted archaeological significance testing and geomorphological investigations at five prehistoric sites impacted by drainage ditch construction in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties (Bousman et al. 1990). None of the sites tested were determined eligible for listing the National Register of Historic Places (NR) or designation as State Antiquities Landmarks (SAL). PAI also conducted archaeological investigation of 766 hectares of land at El Capote Ranch Community in Hidalgo County (Boyd et al. 1994). Seven archaeological sites were found during the study. Only one historic brick kiln site, 41HG156, was determined to be eligible for listing in the NR.

ACI conducted a cultural resources survey of about 11,000 linear feet of street, utilities, and railroad rights-of-way for a proposed industrial park improvement project in Mission (Houk et al. 1995). About 25 acres were examined, and one aboriginal lithic testing site, 41HG172, was discovered. Two one-meter-square test units excavated at the site revealed that it was not eligible for listing in the NR or designation as a SAL. ACI also performed a cultural resources survey of a 167.2-acre landfill expansion project area at Edinburg (Moore and Warren 2002), which produced negative results.

American Archaeology Group LLC did an archaeological survey of the routes of seven proposed electric lines in Hidalgo, County (Bradle and Moore 1997) for Magic Valley Electric Cooperative. The combined length of the proposed routes was 14.4 miles and the right-of-way was 50 feet wide. Thus, approximately 87.5 acres was examined. The survey revealed that the entire project area was disturbed by cultivation and by irrigation canal and highway construction, and discovered no archaeological resources eligible for listing in the NR or designation as SAL.

In 2002, SWCA, Inc., conducted a cultural resource survey along the right-of-way of an extension of Anzalduas Road in Mission (Barile 2002). The project area consisted of approximately 105 acres. No cultural resources were discovered that qualified for listing the NR or designation as SAL. Also in 2002, SWCA, Inc., conducted archaeological investigations of about 180 acres at six border safety inspection facilities in Camercon and Hidalgo Counties (Barile et al. 2002). The areas investigated had been disturbed by modern agricultural activities and no cultural resources were discovered that qualified for listing the NR or designation as SAL. SWCA, Inc., also conducted an archeological survey of about 1,200 acres for a landfill project in Hidalgo County (Law and Houk 2005). Only one archaeological site was found. It proved to be severely disturbed by modern agricultural practices and was not recommended for listing in the NR or SAL designation.

Blanton & Associates, Inc (BAI). surveyed about 4.4 acres for American Electric Power's AEP-LCRA North Pharr to Harlingen substation transmission line rebuild project in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties (Young et al. 2004). The survey included about 25.8 kilometers of transmission line. Only one archaeological site, 41CF187, was found during the survey. The survey revealed that the entire project area, including the site, had been disturbed for many decades by plowing, commercial and residential development, and other intensive landscape modifications. The site was deemed ineligible for listing in the NR or SAL designation. In, 2003, BAI archaeologists surveyed 19.2 acres of the La Joya East Wastewater Treatment Plant buffer zone in Hidalgo County (Meadows et al. 2003). BAI also conducted significance testing of two archaeological sites for the La Joya Water Supply Corporation and Dannenbaum Engineering (Ringstaff 2005). Although Atlas data about results of these investigations are lacking, apparently no archaeological resources eligible for listing in the NR or SAL designation were found during the survey and the sites tested proved ineligible.

Other archaeological studies in the region revealed that humans apparently have continuously occupied the area of present-day Hidalgo County throughout the four broad subdivisions of the known culture history of south Texas (cf. Black 1989:25-33; Black and McGraw 1985:35-40; Hester 1980:27-37; Turner and Hester 1999:50-63): the Paleoindian period (c. 11,000-8000 B.P.), the Archaic period (c. 8000-1500 B.P.), the Late Prehistoric period (c. 1500 B.P. to A.D. 1528), and the Historic period (c. A.D. 1528 to present).

Readers interested in more information about the archaeology of South Texas or Hidalgo County are encouraged to consult Black (1989); Hester (1995:427-459); and *Archeology in the Central and Southern Planning Region, Texas, A Planning Document*, published by the THC (Mercado-Allinger et al. 1996); and Salinas (1990).

SOILS

According to the *Soil Survey of Hidalgo County, Texas* (Jacobs 1979:86, 92; Sheet 84), the principal soil in the vicinity of the project area is Hidalgo sandy clay loam. It is described as deep, well-drained, clayey soil on uplands. Soil encountered within the project area during the survey seemed to match that description well.

INVESTIGATION METHODS AND RESULTS

Background Search

A check of relevant Atlas data (THC 2015) revealed that apparently no archaeological resources were previously found or recorded within or adjacent to the project area and the area was not previously investigated.

Surface Examination

It was obvious that the project area was disturbed repeatedly by modern agricultural and related activities that likely occurred over a span of at least several decades, and by natural erosion and deflation. At the time of fieldwork the area was freshly mowed and ground surface visibility averaged about 50-70 percent. Therefore a conventional pedestrian visual inspection of the ground surface was done by two archaeological technicians walking zig-zag transects on intervals averaging about three meters apart in the trail corridor and about 15 meters apart in the aquatic center footprint. No cultural evidence was found during the surface examination.

Shovel Tests

Because of the excellent ground surface visibility, the lack of alluvium within the APE, and warnings of buried cables in the vicinity of the aquatic center footprint and along portions of the trail cooridor, subsurface testing was substantially reduced in terms of the original SOW. In lieu of the more extensive subsurface testing originally planned, six archaeological shovel tests (Figures 2 and 3) were dug broadly across the APE to help assess general sursurface conditions throughout the area, and to test for cultural evidence. Each test was about 30 x 30 centimeters in plan and depths of the tests ranged from about 40-60 centimeters and averaged about 50 centimeters. Digging and recording were done in arbitrary 20-centimeter-thick unit-levels. Together with recent heavy rains, the clay content of the soil made screening impractical, but all excavated matrix was carefully sorted through and searched for cultural evidence. Matrix excavated from shovel tests consisted of dark to medium gray-brown (about 10YR4/2) clay loam topsoil, which contained few visible natural inclusions and averaged about 30 centimeters thick, over medium to light brown (about 10YR6/3) clay subsoil. Considering the apparent deflation and erosion of agricultural fields and other cleared landscapes in the general vicinity of the project area (Figure 4) and the lack of natural or cultural inclusions seen during subsurface testing within the APE, the ACI field team believed that the subsoil was probably deposited prior to human presence in south Texas according to the known cultural sequence for the region.

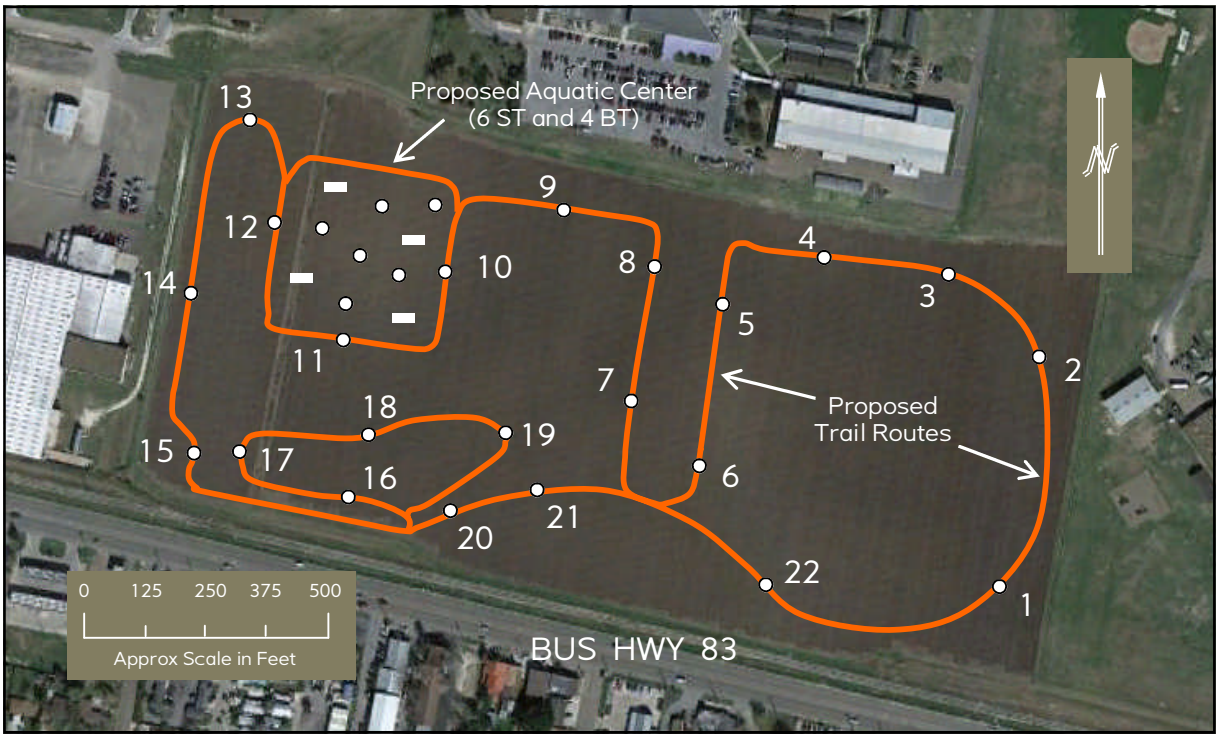

Figure 2. Aerial overlay of project plans showing approximate locations of ACI shovel tests (ST; white dots) and backhoe tests (BT; white rectangles) as planned in the SOW. Plottings and dimensions are approximate based on project plans provided courtesy of DISD and Fulcrum Consulting Services, Harlingen, Texas.

During the survey no cultural evidence of significance as defined in the ACT, of either an archeological or non-archeological character, was found, and nothing was collected or curated in conjunction with the survey.

INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since no cultural evidence with landmark or research potential was found during the survey, either within or adjacent to the APE, the Principal Investigator believed that the project should not affect any archeological sites or other cultural resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or for designation as State Antiquities Landmarks. Therefore, the Principal Investigator recommended to the DISD and the THC that the project should proceed without further work for ACT compliance, except in the event of finds of cultural evidence during construction. ACI recommended that if any cultural evidence was found during project-related disturbances, per applicable antiquities statutes and regulations work should immediately be halted in the vicinity until such finds were examined and evaluated by ACI, by another qualified archaeological consultant, or by the THC Archeology Division staff.

Figure 3. Photographs of ACI subsurface tests in progress during fieldwork. Clockwise from top left: Shovel Tests 1, 3, 6, 10, 13, and 15. Note lighter colored clay in the Shovel Test 13 photograph, apparently representing natural substrate exposed at the surface by deflation. Approximate test locations are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 4. Sweeping view towards east showing typical appearance of project area during fieldwork from near ACI Shovel Test 6 location.

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