

The Weston Urban Open Space Park CPS Line Project San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
Antonia Figueroa and José E. Zapata

Texas Antiquities Permit No. 9059

REDACTED

Principal Investigator
José E. Zapata

Prepared for:
City Public Service Energy
Office of Environmental Management
145 Navarro Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205



Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249-1644
Archaeological Report, No. 498

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Abstract:

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), in response to a request from City Public Service Energy (CPS), conducted archaeological monitoring related to the installation of utilities for new construction on the Weston Urban Open Space Park site in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Completed in September 2020, the archaeological work consisted of monitoring below ground installation of utilities that had the potential to impact known or anticipated archaeological resources within the project area. The installation of electrical and gas service was associated with the development of the Western Urban Open Space Park. The project areas encompassed a combined 22 m length on N. Flores and W. Travis streets, covering an area of less than 0.01 hectares. The project was on City of San Antonio (COSA) right-of-way, and as a result required review by the COSA Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). The work also required Texas Historical Commission (THC) oversight, and was completed under the Texas Antiquities Code, Permit No. 9059.

Peggy Wall and José Zapata completed the archaeological monitoring, Antonia Figueroa and José Zapata served as the Project Archaeologist. José Zapata also served as the Principal Investigator (PI) for this project, assuming that role following the departure of Dr. Paul Marceaux, former CAR director and the original project PI. CAR staff determined that a foundation along the west side of the electrical conduit install trench relates to the first site of the Majestic Theater, which was recorded by Figueroa et al. (2022) as 41BX2347. No artifacts were observed in either of the two trenches, and nothing of note was observed in the gas line trench. The construction project proceeded as planned. All project related material, including the final report, are permanently stored at the CAR facilities in accession file number 2250.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), in response to a request from City Public Service Energy (CPS), conducted archaeological monitoring related to the installation of utilities for new construction on the Weston Urban Open Space Park site in downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figures 1-1, 1-2). The archaeological work consisted of monitoring below

ground installation of electrical and gas services that had the potential to impact known or anticipated archaeological resources within the project area.

The project consisted of archaeological monitoring of trenching for the installation of electrical and gas service. Trenching related to the electrical service was 12 m long, located on the

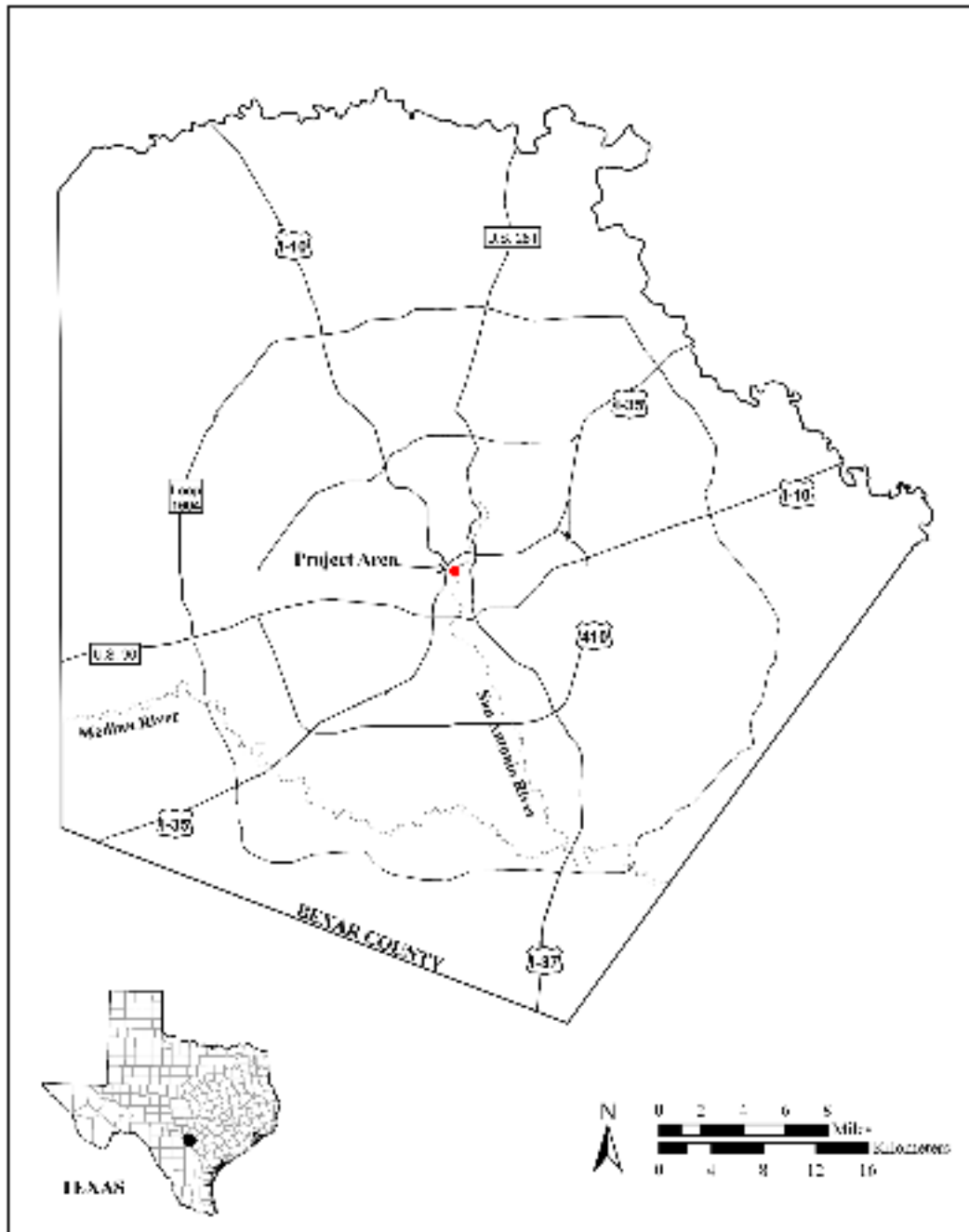


Figure 1-1. Location of the project area (red circle) on a map of Bexar County.

east side of N. Flores Street sidewalk, between W. Travis and W. Houston streets. Trenching related to the gas service was 10 m long, located on the south side of W. Travis Street, between N. Flores and N. Main streets (Figure 1-2).

The project area is located on City of San Antonio (COSA)-owned land, in which case the project required review under COSA's Unified Development Code (UDC) (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634), and by the Texas Historical Commission (THC)



Figure 1-2. Location of the project area on Esri topographic map.

under the Antiquities Code of Texas. A Texas Antiquities Permit was required and the project was completed under Permit No. 9059. The principal goal of the monitoring was to identify and document prehistoric and/or historic archaeological sites that might be impacted by construction activities. To accomplish the goal, CAR completed a combination of background research and monitoring of the project area. Peggy Wall and José Zapata completed the archaeological monitoring, while Antonia Figueroa served as the Project Archaeologist and José Zapata served as Principal Investigator.

Development of the Weston Urban Open Space Park has involved the entire New City Block (NCB) 158. CAR's involvement in this project began in January 2019. The required fieldwork for the electrical line was completed in September 2019, and the gas line completed in September 2020. While no prehistoric or historical artifacts were located, the electrical install trench did encounter the foundation of what was the original site of the Majestic Theatre (1913-1929), site 41BX2347 (Figueroa et al. 2022). This was the original Majestic Theatre which was subsequently renamed

the State Theatre. In 1929, the Majestic Theatre relocated to its present location at 224 E. Houston Street (BCDR 440:3; 1129:162; Cinema Treasures 2020; Figueroa et al. 2022). No cultural materials were encountered and no new sites recorded. Consequently, CAR staff, in consultation with COSA-OHP and the THC, determined that no additional investigations were warranted and the installation of utilities was completed as planned.

Report Organization

As defined by the Council of Texas Archeologists (CTA), Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management (CRM) reports, this is a short report and presents the minimum acceptable level of detail in CRM reporting. There are five chapters in this report. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides the project background and Chapter 3 presents the field and laboratory activities. Chapter 4 presents the results of the field investigations and Chapter 5 provides the summary and recommendations.

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Chapter 2: Project Background

This chapter includes an abbreviated environmental setting and culture history, and concludes with an overview of archaeological sites within 250 m of the project area. A culture history is not presented as no archaeological material was observed and no new sites recorded. A thorough history of the project area is available in Kemp et al. (2020; see also Figueroa et al. 2021).

Environmental Background

The San Antonio region is described as a moderate, subtropical, humid climate with generally cool winters and hot summers (Norwine 1995; Taylor et al. 1991). Between 1981 and 2010, monthly average temperatures in San Antonio varied between 52°F and 86°F. The average annual temperature in San Antonio for this period was 69.5°F (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association [NOAA] 2018). The warmest months are July and August, with an average maximum temperature of 96°F. December and January are the coolest months, with an average minimum temperature of 41°F. Annual rainfall (ca. 78.7 cm) peaks in May and June with smaller peaks occurring in the fall months of September and October (Bomar 1999:230). The driest period occurs from winter to early spring in the months of December, January, February, and March with roughly 6.4 cm of precipitation falling in each month (NOAA 2018). Mauldin (2003) gives a history of rainfall and drought patterns in the San Antonio area, based on tree ring research using Palmer Drought Severity Index values. The researcher notes four long-term droughts in a 280 year stretch with three of the severe droughts occurring in the 1700s, and the most severe drought occurring in the 1950s (Mauldin 2003).

The project area is bounded by the San Pedro Creek, located 192 m to the west and the San Antonio River, located 175 m to the east. Native soils in the project area are comprised of Branyon clays (HtA). This soil series, with 0 to 1 percent slopes, typically forms on stream terraces (USDA 2019). The project area is located in the South Texas geographic region and bound by the Edwards Plateau to the north, the Rio Grande River Valley to the south, the Gulf of Mexico coastline to the east, and the Lower Pecos region to the west (Hester et al. 1989).

Previous Archaeology

This section identifies previously recorded sites located within 250 m of the project area (Figure 2-1). There are 29 previously recorded sites, as listed in Table 2-1. Information

on the sites was obtained from the Texas Archeological Site Atlas (THC 2022) and from published cultural resource management reports as cited in Table 2-1.

Five of the archaeological sites within 250 m of the project area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and a sixth site is listed as a State Archaeological Landmark (SAL). The NRHP sites are associated with archaeological projects conducted by CAR and other agencies at the Bexar County Justice Center as well as archaeological investigations at the Main and Military plazas. Development of the Main and Military plazas date to the Spanish Colonial period and were at the heart of early settlement in San Antonio (see Cox 1997; Figueroa and Mauldin 2005; McKenzie et al. 2016).

San Fernando Cathedral (41BX7), located in Main Plaza, was the focus of the earliest archaeological investigations in the downtown area. Archaeologists from the Office of the State Archaeologist conducted excavations in association with the installation of air conditioning ducts in the floor of the cathedral (Fox et al 1977). CAR conducted archaeological investigations associated with the construction of the rectory (Cox 1987). Archaeological investigations were also documented in the sacristy by CAR in 2002 (Meissner 2002).

Archaeological investigations in Military Plaza began with work by CAR in 1976 (Fox 1977) at the Spanish Governors Palace (41BX179). The archaeological investigations included test units that revealed intact Spanish Colonial architectural features. Fox returned to the site in 1996 and investigated the front façade of the building (Fox 1997). Spanish Colonial and 19th Century materials were encountered during these investigations. More recently, work has been conducted by Raba Kistner (Nichols 2018) for the replacement of a water main. During these investigations it was determined that intact cultural deposits dating to the Spanish Colonial period were present and further work was recommended prior to additional impacts in the area. The Spanish Governor's Palace, site 41BX179, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The San Pedro Acequia (41BX337), a State Archaeological Landmark (SAL), was documented by CAR (Fox et al. 1989) during the Bexar County Justice Center project in 1978. It was reported that this segment of *acequia* walls consisted of cut limestone and contained fill that included late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century artifacts. The *acequia* was documented by CAR again in 2008 as part of archaeological investigations for the Bexar County Justice Center Expansion Project (Figueroa 2011). During



Figure 2-1. Archaeological sites within 250 meters of the project area; note that two segments of the San Pedro Acequia (41BX337), as shown, have been recorded in this area.

Table 2-1. Archaeological sites within 250 m of Project Area

Site 41BX-	Time Period	Site Type	Eligibility Listing	Publication
7	Spanish Colonial	San Fernando Cathedral	NRHP	Fox et al. 1977; Meissner 2002
179	Spanish Colonial	Spanish Governor's Palace	NRHP	Fox 1977; Nichols 2018
337	Spanish Colonial	San Pedro Acequia	SAL	Fox et al. 1989; Figueroa 2011; Kemp et. al 2018
647	Historic	Salinas-Barrera House	none	Fox et al. 1989
795	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Ruiz Property	none	Uecker et al. 1991
1369	Historic	Trash pit	NRHP	Cox and Tennis 2000
1370	Historic	Laux Mill	NRHP	Cox and Tennis 2000
1598	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Multicomponent	none	Figueroa and Mauldin 2005
2088	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Plaza de Armas	NRHP	McKenzie et al. 2016
2163	Historic	San Antonio Trolley line	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2164	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Veramendi wall	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2165	Historic	Bexar County Courthouse #3	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2166	Historic	Jack Harris Vaudeville	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2170	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Multicomponent	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2201	Spanish Colonial	Midden	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2202	Historic	Devine building	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2203	Historic	Merchant	none	Kemp et al. 2018
2252	Spanish Colonial	Domestic structure	none	Figueroa et al. 2018
2253	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Domestic structure/ commercial	none	Figueroa et al. 2018
2254	Historic	Trash pit	none	Figueroa et al. 2018
2255	Prehistoric/Historic	Multicomponent	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2256	Spanish Colonial/Historic	Multicomponent	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2257	Spanish Colonial	Domestic trash	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2258	Prehistoric/Historic	Artifact concentration	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2259	Spanish Colonial	Domestic structure	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2347	Historic	Majestic Theater	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2348	Historic	Church	none	Figueroa et al. 2022
2356	Historic	Streetcar alignment (rails/ concrete)	none	Schautteet and Atwood 2022
2394	Historic	Domestic trash	none	Figueroa et al. 2022

the 2008 project it was concluded that this segment of the *acequia* had been disturbed by previous construction but did contribute to its existing SAL designation. More recent work by CAR (Kemp et. al 2019) for the Downtown Street Reconstruction Project at N. Main Avenue and Soledad Street, documented stone-lined segments of this *acequia* along the west side of Main Street. It was found that this segment of the San Pedro Acequia had been impacted by previous construction activities and portions had been removed (Kemp et al. 2019).

During work by CAR in 1999, as part of the San Antonio River Improvements Project (Cox and Tennis 2000), sites 41BX1369 and 41BX1370 were recorded. Site 41BX1369 is the location of the 1866 Laux Mill and Dam, and site 41BX1370 was associated with the 1842 Jacques home. Both sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Three additional sites, 41BX2347 (Majestic Theater), 41BX2348 (First Presbyterian Church), and 41BX2394, are located in the Weston Urban Open Space Park property,

adjacent to the utility trenches (Figuroa et al. 2022). These are discussed below.

Property History

The project is situated along the western and northern perimeters of New City Block (NCB) 158. Development of

this area, and NCB 158 in particular, began in the 1850s (Cox 1992:10). The earliest Sanborn Map (Sanborn 1885) for this area is from 1885 and features numerous dwellings and commercial buildings (Figure 2-2). In 1885, the most prominent building on this block was the First Presbyterian Church, which served its congregation at this location between 1866 and 1908 (Everett 1995:36). By 1922, the

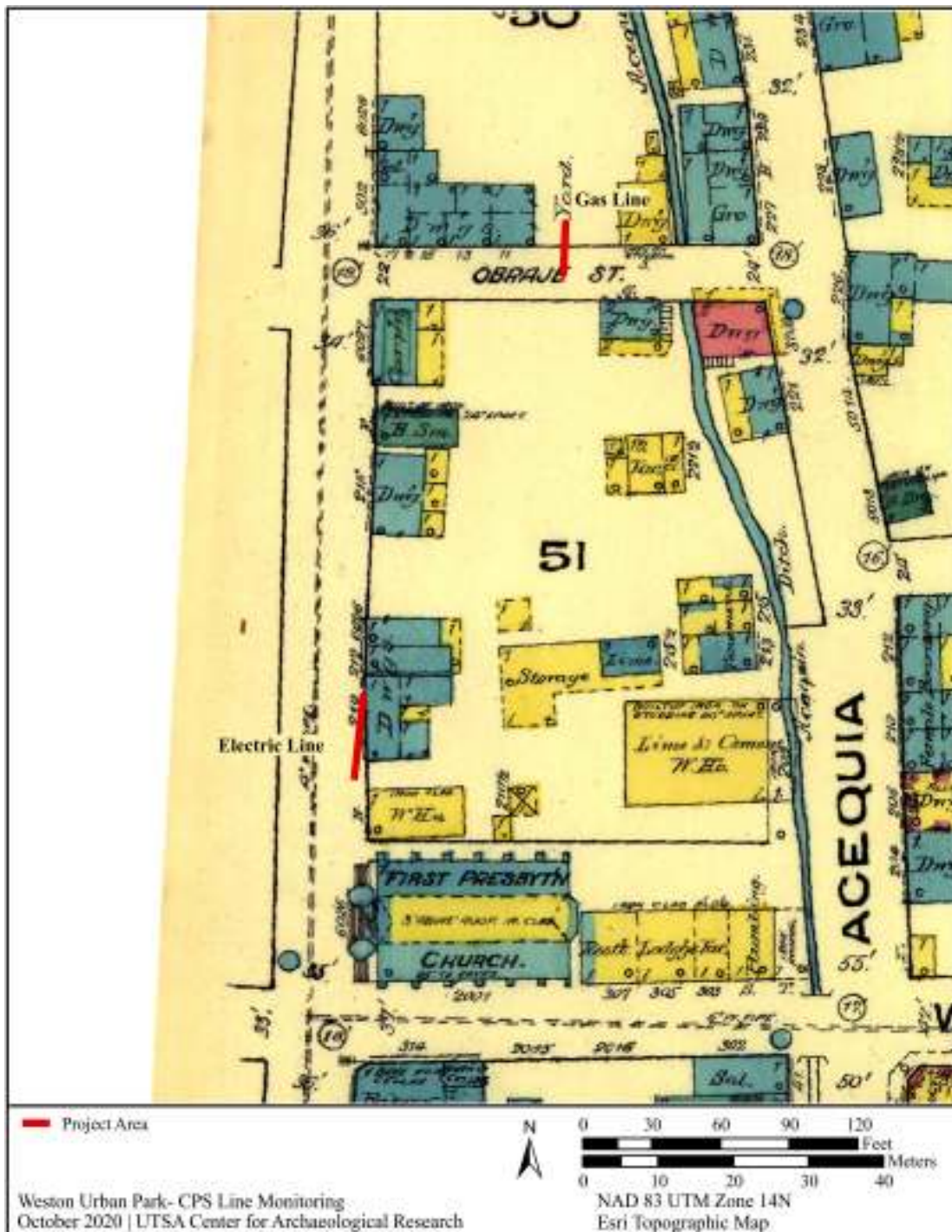


Figure 2-2. 1885 Sanborn Map showing both project areas; note First Presbyterian Church (41BX2348) at bottom left quadrant of City Block 51 (Sanborn 1885).

entire block was commercial and the building that had served as the Presbyterian Church was now a boarding house and store (Figure 2-3). Most significant to the current study was the addition of the Majestic Theatre (1913-1929), which extended from the front entrance on Main Avenue, and then across the width of the block, to N. Flores Street (BCDR 440:3; 1129:162).

The 1913 Majestic Theatre (41BX2347) was the first location of this iconic San Antonio theatre, better known for its second location on East Houston Street which is a listed National Register Landmark and Historical Exceptional Landmark of the City of San Antonio (Figuroa et al. 2022). The original Majestic Theatre was a part of the Stowers consortiums' development of NCB 158 between 1910 and

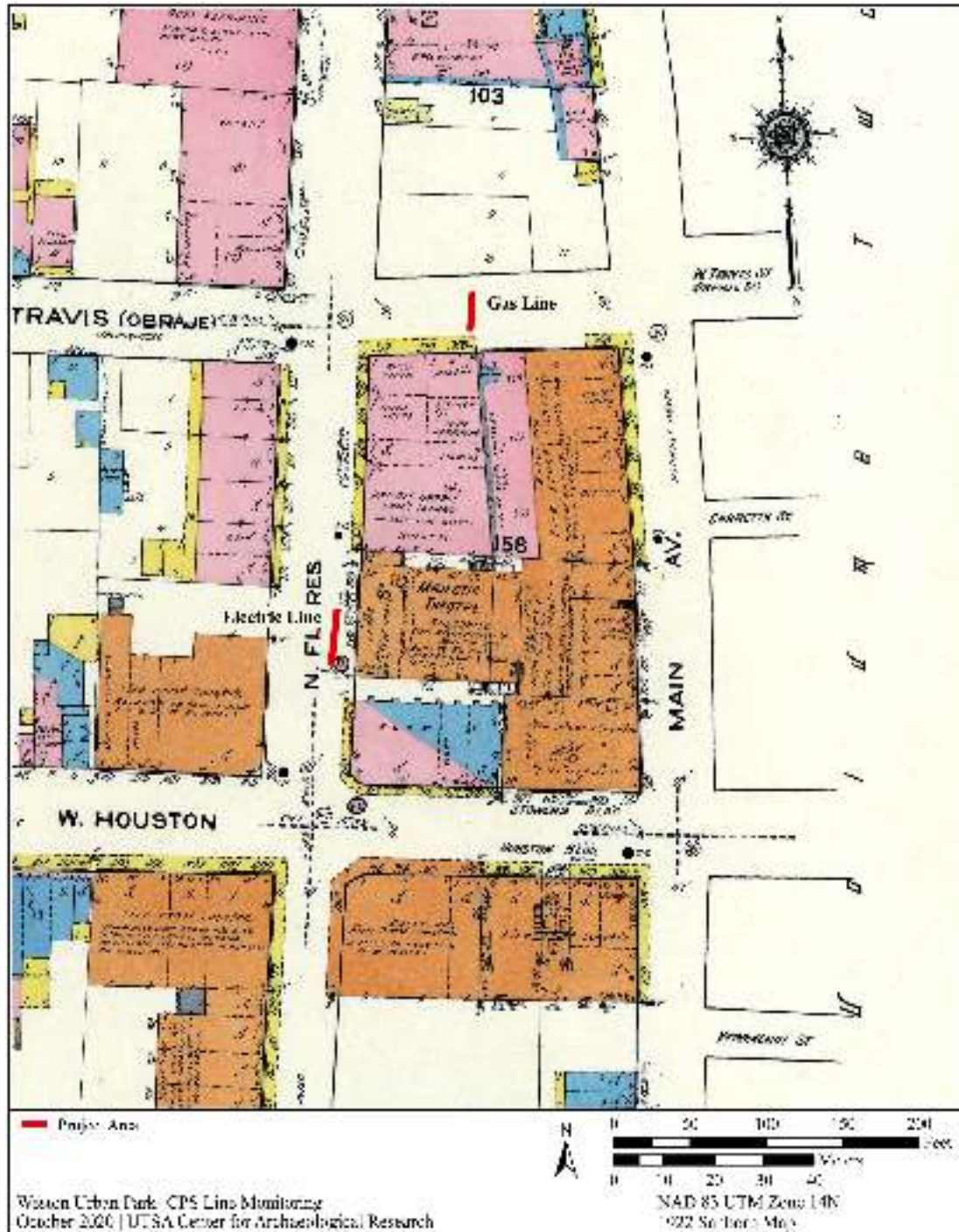


Figure 2-3. 1922 Sanborn Map adjacent showing both project areas; note the Majestic Theatre (41BX2347) and the First Presbyterian Church (41BX2348) at left quadrant of New City Block (NCB) 158, formerly City Block 51 (Sanborn Maps 1922; see also Figuroa et al. 2022).

1913. The theater is clearly shown on Figure 2-3 and Figure 4-3. Figure 4-3 represents an expanded view of the building as shown on the 1922 Sanborn map (Sanborn 1922:V1:4). The Majestic Theatre extended fully through NCB 158 with the main entrance, lobby and concessions on the Main Avenue side and the theater stage and seating on the western half of the development. The basement encountered and recorded as 41BX2347 was beneath this western portion and most likely housed green rooms, hydraulics for the stage, as well as prop storage.

The 1913 Majestic was a direct result of a series of agreements and contracts between G. A. Stowers and Interstate Amusement of New York City (3 May 1912 BCDR 440:3-9; 24 November 1913 BCDR MBL 16:215-216). Interstate Amusement purchased the Houston Street location in 1926 and subsequently built the new Majestic Theatre in 1928-1929 with Fox Film Corporation the leasehold tenant operating the theater (21 December 1929 BCDR 919:639-52; 31 October 1929 BCDR 1155:1-14). The 1913 Majestic closed at the

time of the opening of the new location in 1929. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps demonstrate that the building became the State Theater through the mid-1930s. After the 1930s it was repurposed as a movie theater (Sanborn 1931 V1:4; 1934 V1:4; 1938 V1:4). Following World War II, the site continued as a movie theater before finally closing in the early 1960s and the theater portion of the site being demolished (Sanborn 1960 V1A:4A; 1965 V1A4A). As site 41BX2347 is unlikely to yield information important to history, or offer potential research value, it was determined to not meet National Register or SAL criteria (THC 2022).

A separate archaeological monitoring project (NCB 158; Figure 4-3) found a series of trash deposits within the northwest quadrant of the site (Figuroa et al. 2022). The artifacts recovered from these trash features date to between ca. 1830 and 1850, and the site was recorded as the Cardona and Santos-Coy trash deposits (41BX2394). Like 41BX2347, the trash deposits were determined to be ineligible for NRHP or SAL status.

Chapter 3: Field and Laboratory Activities

Field Activities

CAR staff were tasked with monitoring below-grade excavations related to the installation of utilities that extended to between 61 cm and 122 cm. These were excavations that had the potential to impact known or anticipated archaeological resources within the project area. The subcontractors conducted all grading and excavations with a mini excavator.

CAR staff utilized standard forms to maintain a daily log of activities. All activities observed were documented in this log and supported by digital data, including GPS observations and photographs, where appropriate. CAR staff also maintained a photographic log.

Laboratory Activities

No prehistoric or historic artifacts were observed and only one previously recorded site was discerned. All records generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulation 36 CFR part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. Field forms were printed on acid-free paper and completed with pencil. All field notes, forms, photographs, and drawings were placed in labeled archival folders. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper and placed in archival-quality page protectors. All project related material, including the final report, are permanently stored at the CAR facilities in accession file number 2250.

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Chapter 4: Results of the Field Investigations

Archeological monitoring for the Western Urban Park CPS electrical line install was completed on September 16, 2019. Monitoring for the Western Urban Park CPS gas line install was completed between September 8 and 11, 2020. This chapter presents the results of these monitoring activities.

Electrical Line

The 12 m long project area was located along the east side of the N. Flores Street sidewalk. The 1.5 m wide sidewalk was saw-cut, razed, and removed in order to expose the subgrade. The concrete sidewalk and subgrade extended to a depth of 0.5 m. Excavation then continued and extended to a depth of 2.0 m.

Two views of the excavations are shown in Figures 4-1 and 4-2. A concrete pier and beam footing were encountered along the west side of the trench and extended along the entire



Figure 4-1. Electrical line project area along the east side of N. Flores Street. Note concrete pier and beam footings for the Majestic Theatre, site 41BX2347 (view north).



Figure 4-2. Electrical line project area along the east side of N. Flores Street. Note concrete pier and beam footings for the Majestic theatre, site 41BX2347 (view south).

length. CAR staff determined that this footing relates to the original location of the Majestic Theatre (41BX2347), as discussed in Chapter 3 and shown in Figure 2-3 above and in Figure 4-3. Construction fill was also noted between the exposed footing and the east side of the trench. There were no intact soils in the trench. No prehistoric or historical artifacts were encountered.

Gas Line

Approximately half of the 10 m long project area was located on the south side of W. Travis Street and the other half on New City Block (NCB) 158. This utility trench was 46 cm wide and 76 cm deep. A 122 cm by 122 cm pit was excavated in the street in order to locate the main gas line. This pit was mechanically excavated and the main line located at 122 cm below surface. A buff-colored brick fragment was embedded in the east wall profile of the pit, and construction fill was noted throughout the 46 cm wide trench (Figures 4-4 and 4-5).

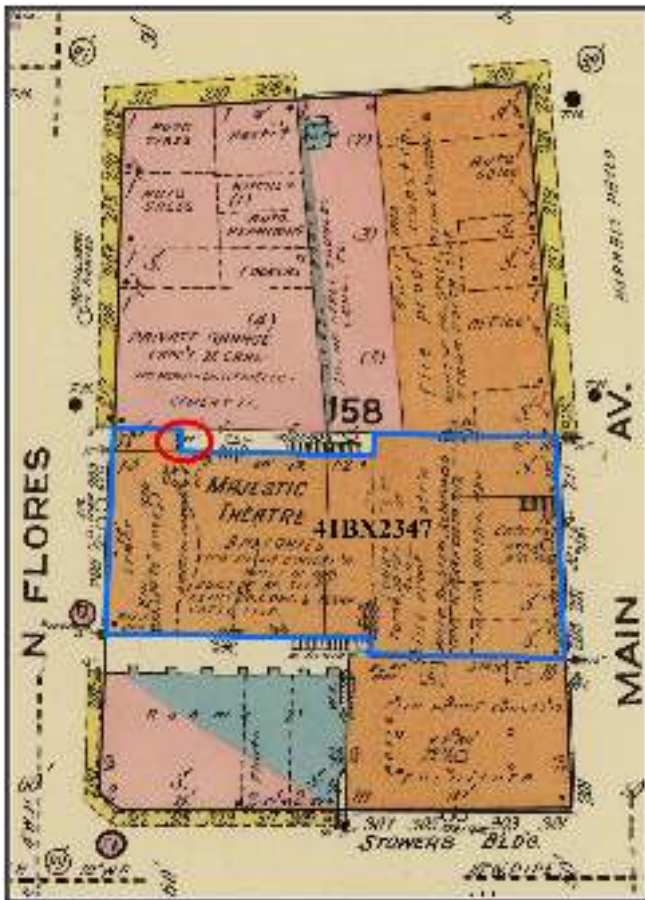


Figure 4-3. Expanded view of the Majestic Theatre (41BX2347), outlined in blue, from the 1922 Sanborn map (Sanborn 1922:VI:4; see also Figueroa et al. 2022). Trash deposits (site 41BX2394) are circled in red.

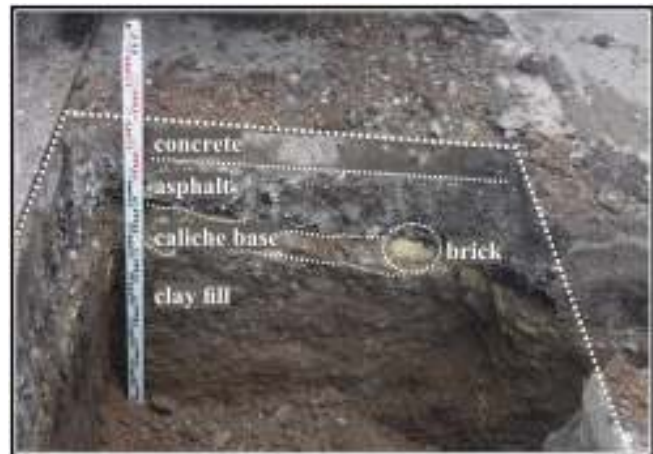


Figure 4-4. Gas line pit, view east.



Figure 4-5. Gas line trench, view southwest.

With the exception of a buff-colored brick fragment, no other cultural material was observed in the gas line pit. Trenching into the construction

site showed existing utility conduits in a sterile caliche clay matrix. The gas line was installed between and under the exposed conduit.

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), in response to a request from City Public Service Energy (CPS), conducted archaeological monitoring related to the installation of utilities for new construction on the Weston Urban Open Space Park site in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

The project consisted of archaeological monitoring of trenching for the installation of electrical and gas service. Trenching and archaeological monitoring related to the electrical service was completed in September 2019. Antonia Figueroa served as the Project Archaeologist and José Zapata served as Principal

Investigator. The required fieldwork for the electrical line was completed in September 2019. No prehistoric or historical artifacts were located. However, the electrical install trench did encounter the foundation of what was the original location of the Majestic Theatre (1913-1929), site 41BX2347 (Figueroa et al. 2022). The foundation was recorded as a part of 41BX2347. The gas line installation was completed in September of 2020. Other than a single brick fragment, no cultural materials were encountered in that excavation. Consequently, CAR staff, in consultation with COSA-OHP and the THC, determined that no additional investigations were warranted and the installation of utilities was completed as planned.

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