Archaeological Monitoring Along the Salado Creek at IH-10, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
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Texas Antiquities Permit No. 4880

Prepared for:
Adams Environmental Incorporated
12018 Las Nubes
San Antonio, Texas 78233

Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Technical Report, No. 13

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Abstract

The Center for Archaeological Research of The University of Texas at San Antonio conducted archaeological monitoring of backhoe trenching along the Salado Creek at the IH-10 intersection. The construction is associated with the proposed Salado Creek Hike and Bike Trail. Four backhoe trenches were excavated along the banks of the Salado Creek, within the TxDOT Right-of-Way. The project area is within environs of where the Young Perry Alsbury Homestead and cemetery are said to be located. Backhoe trenching yielded no evidence of the historical homestead or cemetery.

No cultural materials were collected during the project. All project related documents are curated at the Center for Archaeological Research. CAR recommends the proposed construction associated with this portion of the Salado Creek Hike and Bike proceed as planned.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Geostrata Environmental Consultants who conducted the environment assessment. Thanks to John Cantu with the City of San Antonio and Al McGraw with the Texas Department of Transportation Environmental Division. Kay Hindes from the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Division reviewed and provided comments to the draft report. Steve A. Tomka served as the Principal Investigator on the project and provided comments on the draft report. Bruce Moses served as the technical editor and drafted the figures.

Introduction

The Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) of The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) conducted archaeological monitoring of four backhoe trenches excavated along the Salado Creek at the IH-10 intersection on April 24, 2008. Adams Environmental Incorporated, contracted with the Center for Archaeological Research to provide professional monitoring of backhoe trenching. The backhoe trench monitoring was associated with additional work conducted along the proposed Salado Creek Hike and Bike Trail within the existing Right-of-Way (ROW) of IH-10, in Bexar County (Figure 1). This portion of the proposed hike and bike trail was previously investigated by CAR and it was concluded it was within the environs of the former Alsbury property (Weston et al. 2004).

The archaeological work was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 4880 with Antonia L. Figueroa serving as the Project Archaeologist. Steve A. Tomka served as the Principal Investigator.

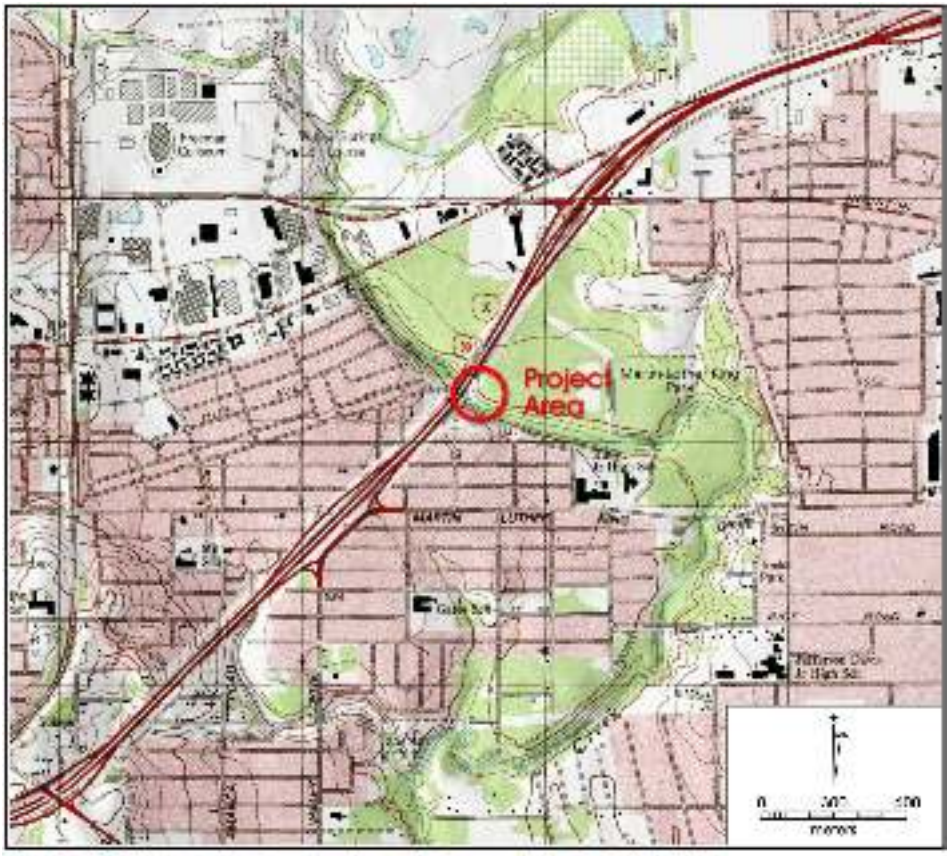

Figure 1. *Location of the project area in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.*

Due to moderate levels of contamination that were encountered in the area where the proposed trail corridor was to cross Salado Creek, the City of San Antonio chose an alternate crossing. As such, environmental investigations were needed. Given the proximity of the new locality to an archaeologically sensitive area, and because the investigations took place on TxDOT ROW and as part of a Capital Improvement Management Services (CMIS)-sponsored action, the Antiquities Code of Texas required that a qualified archaeologist conduct investigations (i.e., monitoring) during the project.

Archaeological services provided by the CAR included: 1) monitoring of backhoe trenching excavations carried out by Geostrata Environmental Consultants Inc.; 2) investigation and documentation of any cultural remains encountered during the trenching; 3) analysis and preparation for curation of all cultural materials recovered during the trenching.

The Project Area and Area of Potential Effect (APE)

The project area and the Area of Potential Effect (APE) is where Salado Creek and IH-10 intersect. The area is depicted on the San Antonio East (2998-133) 7.5' USGS quadrangle map (Figure 1). The Phase I segment of the proposed hike and bike (between Willow Springs Golf Course and Southside Lions Park) is approximately three miles long. The proposed additional construction activities will occur within the existing ROW of IH-10 and consist of a walk-over bridge that crosses over the Salado Creek. Four trenches (two on the north and two on the south bank) were excavated within the proposed trail alignment in the vicinity of the suspected location of the Alsbury property. The backhoe trench excavations were conducted in concert with Geostrata Environmental Consultants, Inc. investigations. The APE is in proximity to the presumed location of the Alsbury cemetery and homestead, therefore warranting the additional archaeological investigations.

Previous Investigations and the Alsbury Family History

In 2002 and 2003, crews CAR conducted archaeological and geomorphological investigations along a segment of the planned route of the Salado Creek Hike and Bike Trail (Weston et al. 2004) for HNTB Corporation and the City of San Antonio. The investigations focused on the immediate trail alignment and consisted of shovel testing and backhoe trenching. A portion of the proposed hike and bike trail passes near the area of the possible location of the Historic Young Perry Alsbury Family Cemetery and Homestead. Backhoe trenching was conducted within the

immediate proposed trail alignment (BHT 7) in the vicinity of the possible cemetery and homestead.

Young Perry (Y.P.) Alsbury was born in 1814 in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. He was the youngest son of Thomas Alsbury, Jr. In 1824, the family moved to Brazoria County, Texas (Green 1934). The Alsbury's were one of the first three hundred families in Stephen F. Austin's colony ("Old Three Hundred"; Fehrenbach 1968:136). Young Perry Alsbury married Maria (Mary) Rodriguez in San Antonio in 1847. The location of the Alsbury homestead has been difficult to trace (see Weston et al. 2004). For an in depth history of the Alsbury family refer to the report written by Weston et al. (2004).

The previous archaeological work did not locate the Alsbury Cemetery and Homestead site although the project APE was located in the vicinity of a 1936 Texas Centennial Marker found outside of the IH-10 ROW. Figure 2 shows the condition of the Centennial Marker during the current investigations but it was not within the boundaries of the current APE.

Figure 2. *1936 Centennial Marker.*

Backhoe Trenching Methods

The main purpose of the backhoe trenching was associated with environmental investigations performed by GeoStrata. Geostrata collected and analyzed soil samples to determine if lead contamination was present in the area of the proposed trail construction. Archaeological monitoring of the backhoe trenching was to insure that any potential cultural deposits in the area would not be impacted.

Four backhoe trench (BHT) excavations were monitored along the west and east banks of the Salado Creek. Backhoe trenches varied in length from 2.0 meters (m) to 2.8 m. The width of the trenches was 90 centimeters (cm). The average depth of the trenches was 180 cm below surface (cmbs). All backhoe trenches were immediately backfilled after examination. A standardized form was filled out by CAR staff for each backhoe trench noting soil descriptions and final measurements (see Appendix A for an example of the form used by CAR staff). Photo documentation by CAR staff was also made of each trench and its location. The information recorded on the standardized form used by CAR is summarized in the backhoe trench results section.

Backhoe Trenching Results

BHTs 1 and 2 were excavated on the west bank of the Salado Creek, under the IH-10 Bridge (Figure 3 and Figure 4). BHT 1 was orientated west to east and was approximately four meters from the edge of the creek. It was 2.0 m long and 90 cm wide. The final depth of the trench was 180 cmbs. Four soil horizons were observed in BHT 1 (Figure 5). Zone 1 was a thin humus layer (10 cm thick) defines the top portion of the profile. Zone 2 was a dark brown (10YR 4/3) silty loam and extends from 10 to 60 cmbs. Zone 3 is a dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) clay that transitions into a silty clay in Zone 4, at 120 cmbs. Although modern trash (soda cans and plastic) was noted in the first zone of the trench, no prehistoric or historical material was encountered in BHT 1.

Figure 3. *Location of the backhoe trenches and Centennial Marker.*

BHT 2 was excavated north east of BHT 1 (Figure 3), and was orientated west-east. The backhoe trench measured 2.4 m long and 90 cm wide. The terminal depth of the backhoe was 180 cmbs. The four soil horizons observed in BHT 1 were also observed in BHT 2. No cultural material was observed in BHT 2, with the exception of some modern debris in the upper 10 cm.

Figure 4. *Location of Backhoe Trench 1 and 2, on the west bank of the Salado Creek.*

BHT's 3 and 4 were excavated on the east bank of the Salado Creek (Figure 3 and 6). BHT 3 was orientated west-east and measured 2.5 m long and 90 cm wide. The trench was 2.5 m east of the creek. The trench terminated at 180 cmbs and the water table was encountered. Four soil horizons were noted in BHT 3. Zone 1 was a dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) sandy loam that extended from ground surface to 50 cmbs. Zone 2 spanned from 50 to 140 cmbs and consisted of very dark grayish brown clay (10YR 3/2). Zone 3 was a thin deposit, only 10 cm thick. It consisted of a grayish brown (10YR 5/2) sandy clay with gravel inclusions (20%). Zone 3 occupied the remainder of the trench and was a dark grayish brown (10Y 4/2) clay matrix. Zone 4 was a dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) clay. No cultural material was observed in BHT 3.

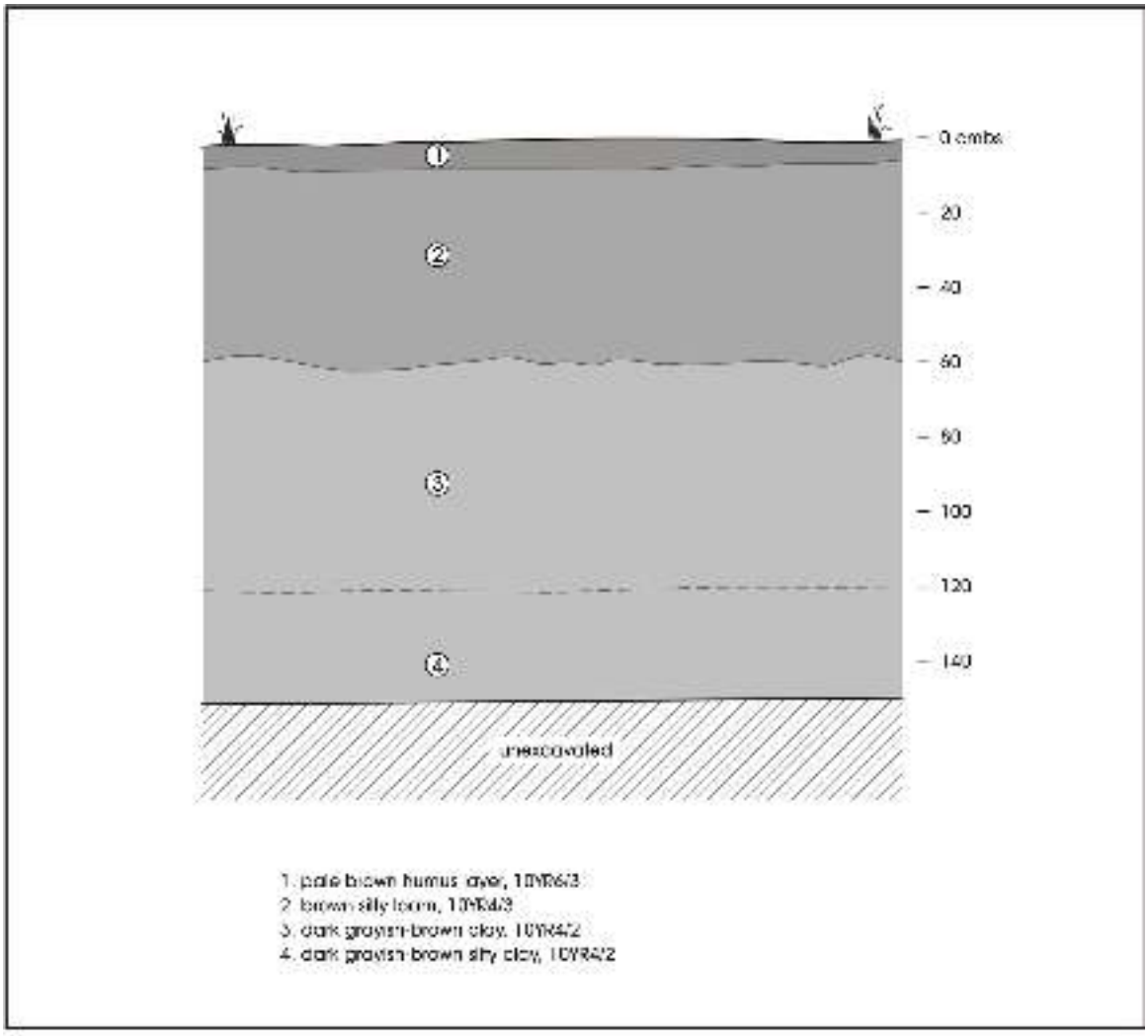

Figure 5. *Profile of the north wall of Backhoe Trench 1.*

BHT 4 was located east of BHT 3 and was orientated west-east. The trench measured 2.8 m and was 90 cm wide. The trench terminated at 180 cmbs when the water table was encountered. Four soil horizons were observed in BHT 4 (Figure 7). Zone 1 was a dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) sandy loam that 40 cm thick. Zone 2 was a very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2) clay that started at 40 cmbs and ended at 90 cmbs. Zone 3 was a grayish brown (10YR 5/2) clay with gravel inclusions (20% to 30%) and was present from 90 to 110 cmbs. Zone 4 occupied the remaining depth of the backhoe trench and consisted of a dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) clay. No cultural material was observed in BHT 4.

Figure 6. *Location of Backhoe Trench 3 and 4, on the east bank of the Salado Creek.*

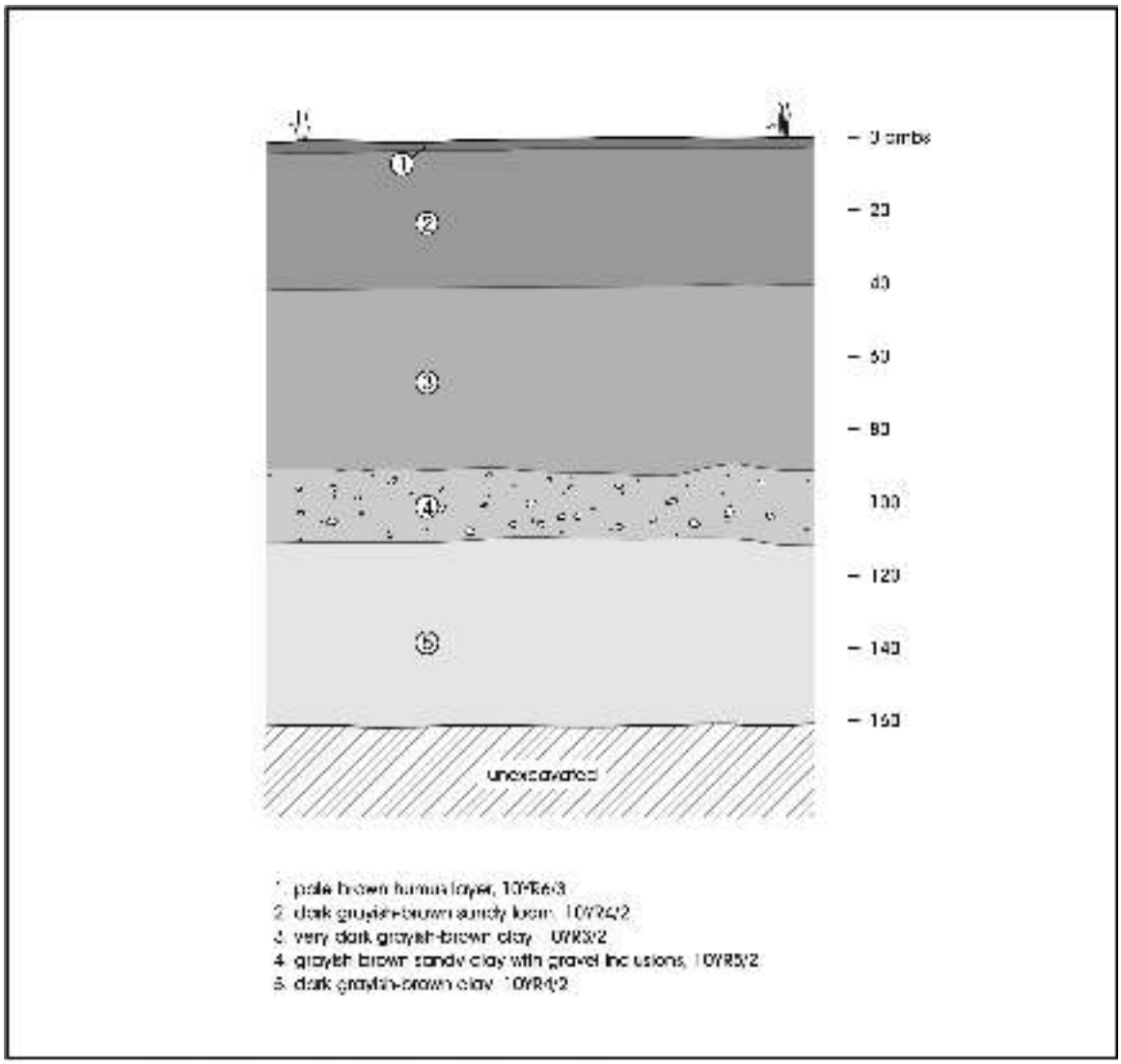

Figure 7. *Profile of the south wall of Backhoe Trench 4.*

Conclusions and Recommendations

On April 24, 2008, CAR personnel monitoring the excavation of four backhoe trenches along the Salado Creek located within the TxDOT ROW. Two trenches were excavated on both the west and east banks of the creek. No evidence of the Alsbury homestead, including the cemetery, was noted in the backhoe trenches. CAR recommends that the proposed construction associated with this portion of the Salado Creek Hike and Bike Trail proceed as planned. Following the review of the draft report, representatives of the Texas Department of Transportation-Environmental Division and Texas Historical Commission concurred with this recommendation.

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Appendix A

CAR Backhoe Trench Recording Form

Project/ Site #:_____Date_____ Recorder _____Trench #____

Trench Length:_____ Width:_____ Max. Depth_____ Orientation (Degrees) _____

1). Never enter a trench that is deeper than 1.5 meters**. 2).** If trench location is not already on the GPS, then shoot in the location with a GPS – shoot the ends of the trench -Also, mark the location on aerials or topos. **3).** Clean both trench walls with a shovel and trowel. Inspect both walls for cultural features, artifacts, changes in sediments, or buried soils. **4).** Regardless of what is present, take a minimum of 4 photographs (2 of each wall) and record on the log below what you are photographing. **5).** If cultural material is present, it may be necessary to make a complete profile drawing. On the drawing, be sure to sketch in all rocks greater than about three centimeters (accurately, not just circles), gravel concentrations, artifacts, charcoal, large roots, rodent holes, and other disturbances. Differentiate between natural rocks/gravels and burned rocks (FCR). Sketch in changes in sediment (strata) and outline any features that may be present within the profile, and provide a brief description. Each strata or sediment type identified on the drawing should be designated with a number, and samples of each of the strata should be collected (ca. ½ liter; 4 x 6 inch plastic bag full). Be sure to place the identifying information (site, trench, strata # from drawing, etc.) on or in the plastic bag. Tie the profile drawing to the natural ground level, especially when top sediments have been stripped away. Include an appropriate scale on the drawing. **6)** If cultural material is not present, but a profile is warranted, then the option exists to simply do a 1 meter segment that is representative of the entire profile. Record the same information you would on a large profile. On the drawing, be sure and note where in the trench the profile is, what side, etc.

CAR Camera #_____

Digital Image #	**Description/direction, etc.**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

General Trench Description

_____
_____
_____
_____

Cultural Materials/ Features Observed:

_____
_____
_____