

THE WITTE MUSEUM PROJECT:
HISTORICAL AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH OF THE
WITTE MUSEUM GROUNDS

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Technical Report # 17

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Abstract

In December of 2008, Lake Flato Architects Inc. contracted the University of Texas-Center for Archaeological Research to conduct a literature review of the Witte Museum property prior to proposed expansions. The area surrounding the Witte Museum grounds has exhibited evidence of occupation from the Archaic period through the early 20th century. Brackenridge Park, located adjacent to the museum grounds, contains several significant prehistoric and historic sites. In addition to the literature review, CAR provided recommendations as to the archaeological work necessary to determine the location of the Acequia Madre and identify any cultural deposits within the Area of Potential Effect that may be impacted by the proposed expansion.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (UTSA-CAR) was contracted by Lake Flato Architects Inc. to prepare a background and archival history of the property on which the Witte Museum stands. The Witte Museum has future expansion plans. The expansion of the museum will occur in the immediate vicinity of the existing complex. The comprehensive literature review and background research associated with the planned expansion of the Witte Museum in San Antonio precedes any archaeological fieldwork. The purpose of the report is to review the known previous archaeology conducted in the area, summarize the history of the use of the area of potential effect (APE), and recommend appropriate archaeological investigations prior to the expansion activities.

Location of the Project Area

The Witte Museum is located at 3801 Broadway in San Antonio, Bexar County Texas. The project area is located on the south bank of the San Antonio River, just north of the Tuleta Drive and Broadway Avenue intersection (Figure 1-1). The Witte Museum grounds are located on the west side of Broadway Avenue and abut the San Antonio River to the west.

The project area is situated in the geographic region referred to as South Texas. The region is bordered by the Edwards Plateau to the north, the Rio Grande River to the south, the Gulf of Mexico coastline to the east, and the Lower Pecos region to the west (Norwine 1995:138). The general topography of the region is characterized by a gently rolling landscape cross-cut by seasonal drainages. Bexar County is located in the transitional zone between the southern limits of the Edwards Plateau Escarpment and the lower Gulf Coastal Plain. San Antonio is located at the base of the Balcones Escarpment of the Edwards Plateau. The major drainage adjacent to the project area is the San Antonio River. The headwaters of the San Antonio River are located to the north of the project area, on the grounds of the University of the Incarnate Word (Norwine 1995).

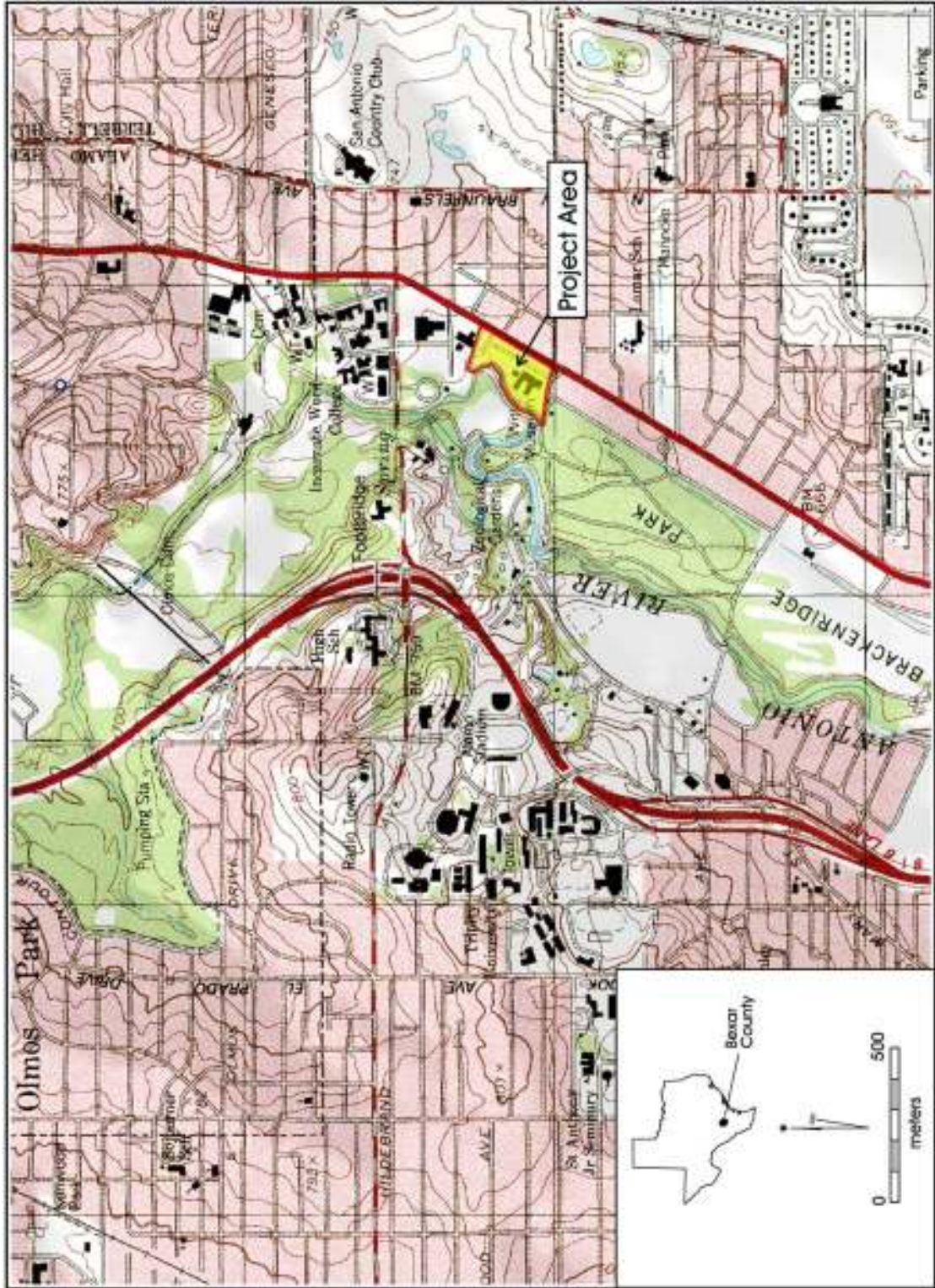


Figure 1-1. The project area depicted on the San Antonio East 7.5 minute series USGS quadrangle map.

Soils typical of the project area are Frio and Trinity soils of the Austin-Tarrant Association. These soils tend to be moderately deep to very shallow silty clays over chalk and marl (Taylor et al. 1991).

Three major vegetation geographic regions converge in Bexar County: The Edwards Plateau, the Blackland Prairie, and the South Texas Plains (SCTRWPG 2008). The Edwards Plateau gradually slopes to the southeast, ending at the Balcones Escarpment (Taylor et al. 1991). The Edwards Plateau is limestone based with spring-fed, perennial streams that flow across the Balcones Escarpment. Typical trees of the Edwards Plateau include Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), live oak (*Quercus Virginiana*), cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*). Grasses characteristic of the region include bluestem (*Schizachyrium and Andropogon spp.*), gramas (*Boutelous spp.*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), common curly mesquite (*Hiaria belangeri*), buffalo grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*), and Canadian wild rye (*Elymus Canadensis*) (Fentress 1986).

Vegetation of the Blackland Prairie includes a variety of oaks, pecan (*Cara illinoensis*), cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), and mesquite (*Prosopis sp.*). Typical grasses of the region include big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nuntans*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua crutispendula*), and hairy gama (*Bouteloua hirsute*) (Fentress 1986).

The South Texas Plains vegetation is characterized by subtropical dryland vegetation that includes honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), blackbrush acacia (*Acacia rigidula*), huisache (*Acacia smallii*) and Mexican Paloverde (*Parkinsonia aculeate*) (Fentress 1986).

The vegetation within the project area has been modified by the Witte Museum. Currently, the property has been landscaped with St. Augustine grasses, exotic flowering plants and trees, and some natural species.

The climate of South Central Texas is humid subtropical. The summers are characterized by high temperatures and humidity (SCTRWPG 2008). The increased temperatures persist from May through September. The cool season begins typically in November and extends to March. Winters are usually short with mild temperatures. Average rainfall in the San Antonio region is approximately 33 inches per year (SRCC 2009).

Proposed Improvements

Improvements to the Witte Museum are planned over three phases. The first phase will consist of additions to the current Pioneer Hall which will be renamed the Kelso Texas Art Center (Figure 1-2). A 5000 square foot addition (the future South Texas Heritage Center) will be attached to the western portion of the Pioneer Hall. A breezeway will connect the current main building of the Witte Museum and the Pioneer Hall. An additional structure, approximately 11,200 square feet, will be built to the north of the Pioneer Hall. This is to be the new changing exhibits gallery, ballroom, and catering area. A partial basement will be located beneath this structure, 15 feet off the western wall. Excavations for the basement will extend approximately 18 feet below surface. A breezeway connecting the Pioneer Hall to the new gallery will be constructed as well during this phase.

During Phase I, the remains of the Reptile Garden will be removed. Two structures that are currently located to the west of the Witte Museum main building will be moved to the location of the Reptile Garden. These two structures to be moved are the Navarro House and the Log Cabin. The Onderdonk Studio, which is currently located in a cluster of structures to the west of the Witte's main building, will be moved north so that it will be situated to the west of the South Texas Heritage Center.

An Acequia Court will be constructed in the vicinity of the Reptile Garden (the new location of the Navaro House and Log Cabin). This location is thought to be near the head gate of the Acequia Madre.



Figure 1-2. Proposed improvements to the Witte Museum grounds during Phase I. Changes are indicated in orange.

Phase II focuses on alterations to the northern portion of the main building (Figure 1-3). A large section of the northern wing of the main building will be demolished. The area will be converted into the Texas Wild Gardens and Courts. The remaining northern portion of the main building will be altered so that the main entrance will be thru a lobby at the northeast corner, a loggia will be added to the current front of the building, and the Texas Wild wing will extend into the current courtyard.

During Phase II, the parking configuration will also be altered, and the path of the street, currently named Curiosity Lane, will be moved to the east of its current location. The majority of the parking spaces will be removed, as the parking garage located to the south of the project area is to accommodate museum visitors. A new entry court and an aqueduct and pool feature will be created in front of the new lobby. The walkway leading to the Pioneer Hall (the future Kelso Texas Art Center) will be extended to meet the new path of the street. In addition, a new bus drop-off along Tuleta Road will be constructed, with a path leading past the loggia to the new entrance.



Figure 1-3. Proposed improvements to the Witte Museum grounds during Phase II. Changes are indicated in orange.

Phase III is marked by the construction of a building and pavilion in the northeast corner of the project area (Figure 1-4). The building will house the Center for Rivers and Aquifers as well as the Alligator Garden Café. A walkway will be constructed to connect the Changing Exhibits Gallery to the Alligator Garden Café. A patio will be built south and west of the Café. Located to the back of the building (west) will be the River Pavilion which will overlook the bend in the San Antonio River. This building and pavilion will be located in an area that currently has a cement lined drainage and parking lot. According to the master plan, the cement lined drainage will be removed completely.



Figure 1-4. Proposed improvements to the Witte Museum grounds during Phase III. Changes are indicated in orange.

Chapter 2: Previous Archaeology

The area surrounding the Witte Museum has undergone many archaeological investigations. Brackenridge Park, located on the opposite bank of the San Antonio River from the Witte, is rich with cultural resources providing valuable information of the occupation and use of the River throughout prehistoric and historic periods. Archaeological work within the Brackenridge Park began as early as the late 1970s. CAR and the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) conducted two of the largest investigation of Brackenridge Park in 1979.

Several archaeological surveys of the area have occurred since the early 1970s, though not early enough to fully document many sites that were destroyed due to the construction of Olmos Dam. Amateur archaeologist, C.D. Orchard recorded sites and collected artifacts during the 1920s and 30s. Orchard published much of his findings during the 1960s and 70s (Fox 1975: 3). Professional archaeological investigations were conducted near the current project area by the Center for Archaeological Research in 1975 (Fox 1975). This survey focused on documenting recorded and reported sites on the grounds of Incarnated Word College (known today as the University of the Incarnate Word). During the course of the project, twelve recorded sites were visited: 41BX289, 41BX282, 41BX283, 41BX284, 41BX285, 41BX286, 41BX287, 41BX288, 41BX24, 41BX290, 41BX291, and 41BX292. In addition to the twelve sites, Orchard identified the location of five areas that had contained cultural remains prior to the construction activities at the Olmos Dam and Incarnate Word. These sites were not issued trinomials, but their locations were recorded on a sketch map of the area. Of the twelve sites recorded, eleven are located within a half mile radius of the current project area. Site 41BX288 is a prehistoric open campsite consisting of a scatter of burned rock and chert flakes. Site 41BX290 is a prehistoric open campsite characterized by the presence of burned rock, cores, and chert flakes. Site 41BX291 is a prehistoric open campsite that produced cores, debitage, and biface fragments, as well as a few historic artifacts. Site 41BX292 is a prehistoric open campsite exhibiting cores, debitage, burned rock, and biface fragments.

Near Olmos Dam, a cluster of prehistoric middens was identified and designated as Site 41BX24. The site is an open camp with a large midden, which produced faunal remains, debitage, scrapers, gouges, and fragments of projectile points, as well as a couple fragments of historic ceramics. The site is approximately 250 meters in diameter and is suspected to extend to the southern end of a crescent mound observed by Orchard and Campbell (1954: 457-458). The majority of the site has been disturbed (Fox 1975: 8).

Site 41BX283 is a historic quarry located on the University of the Incarnate Word grounds. The quarry is rumored to have been first used during the Colonial Period, though no artifacts were noted to support the claim. The quarry doesn't appear to have been used prior to 1890, and it was abandoned by 1938. On the site, a metal frame bridge was located and recommended for preservation (Fox 1975: 4).

Also located on the University of the Incarnate Word grounds during the 1975 survey is 41BX285. This site consists of the remains of a stone foundation. There were likely several structures present at the site. C. D. Orchard recalled that he helped to tear down several rock houses in that location during the early 1900s. The stone foundation at the time of the recording of the site was partially obscured by a trash dump.

Site 41BX282, the San Antonio Springs (the Blue Hole), consists of an unidentified metal structure and pipes, as well as a concrete casing around the top of a natural spring located on the University of the Incarnate Word grounds. The spring is at the headwaters of the San Antonio River, west of Brackenridge Villa. The surrounding land was likely used as a campground prior to European contact, though the periodic flooding has washed away evidence of this type of occupation. Historic military encampments were located in the vicinity of the springs during the early 19th century according to historical records, though no cultural remains dating to this period have been located at the site (Fox 1975: 4).

Site 41BX284 is a cut-stone structure across an un-named tributary of the San Antonio River on the grounds of the University of the Incarnate Word. According to local tradition, the structure was part of a mill, though the building would be considered very small at 18 feet across, and the current flow of the tributary would not provide enough energy.

Site 41BX287 is a possible historic dump located on the University of the Incarnate Word grounds. No sign of house remains is present at the site, but the dump contained glass, ceramic, burned rock, bricks, and metal fragments. The majority of the artifacts indicate a late 19th century temporal affiliation.

Site 41BX289, also known as Fernridge, is a historic house located on the ground of the University of the Incarnate Word. The property was purchased by J. R. Sweet who constructed the east wing in 1852. George W. Brackenridge later purchased Sweet's holdings and built a three story addition to the structure in 1886. Each building episode is typical of the styles of the period. Brackenridge offered the City the Sweet property, along with his other holdings which

totaled 217 acres, for a sum of \$50,000 in 1872. The city considered the offer for approximately two years before finally rejecting it due to the inability to negotiate a better price (Dunn 1975). In 1897, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word petitioned Brackenridge to sell them the parcel of land that contained the Fernridge structure. Brackenridge agreed, but only under the condition that they purchase his entire holdings, approximately 300 acres, for the sum of \$125,000. This was an amazing sum of money to the order, but they accepted and utilized Fernridge as the convent until they were able to construct the Mother House (Ramsdell 1959; 213). Today, the structure is known as Brackenridge Villa, and is used by the University as meeting space.

In 1976, the Incarnate Word College Archaeological Field School conducted test excavations at 41BX291. The field school ran for 23 days during July and August. Ten 2x2 meter units were set up and two backhoe trenches were excavated. The excavations indicated that it is a multi-component site with two major occupation episodes. The earlier episode dates to the Terminal Archaic (ca. 1750-1250 BP) and the later dates to the Late Prehistoric Period (ca. 1250-200 BP). Both occupations of the site were characterized by artifacts relating to short-term, repeated, hunting and gathering activities (Katz and Katz 1982).

During the last few weeks of December 1976, the Center for Archaeological Research conducted an archaeological and historical survey within the boundaries of Brackenridge Park. Four prehistoric sites were recorded over the course of the survey. These included 41BX321, 41BX322, 41BX264, and 41BX323 (Katz and Fox 1979). Site 41BX323, known as the Paddle Boat Site, exhibits a prehistoric component with debitage, burned rock, and a projectile point. The prehistoric component of the site was recorded as being “Neo-American” or Late Prehistoric in age. Recent excavations produced Leon Plain ware pottery from the upper levels of deposits (Figueroa and Dowling 2008). Site 41BX264, is a prehistoric lithic scatter that may have contained a burned rock midden. The construction of the Polo Field at Brackenridge Park likely destroyed the majority of the site. The area has been leveled and covered with grass, though there is a possibility that parts of the site remain. Artifacts noted included cores, flakes, choppers, scrappers, burned rock, bifacial blanks and several projectile points indicating an Early to Middle Archaic subperiod. All four of the identified sites were partially destroyed and were deemed to be in danger of further destruction at the time of the survey in 1976. In addition to the recorded sites, eleven “collection localities” were noted that contained prehistoric material but not enough to warrant a site designation (Katz and Fox 1979).

Additional archaeological work on the grounds of the University of the Incarnate Word

encountered 41BX261, a multi-component site. The prehistoric portion of the site is a possible lithic workshop dating to the Late Archaic. Artifacts encountered relating to the subperiod included biface fragments, chert flakes, blanks, preforms, cores, a fragment of Leon Plain ware, and two Late Archaic projectile points. The historic component of the site is a dump, possibly dating to the 1880s, that contained fragments of glass, metal, and historic ceramics (Stothert 1989: 82; THC 2008).

In June 1977, the Center for Archaeological Research conducted a pedestrian survey in the vicinity of Olmos Dam. The survey was conducted to evaluate the cultural deposit that might be affected by two proposed alternate roads through the Olmos Basin. It was recommended that archaeological testing occur along the proposed routes (Brown 1977).

During November of 1977, the Center for Archaeological Research conducted archaeological testing just south of the Olmos Dam at 41BX291. The project resulted with the delineation of the northern boundary of the site, which extended north of the Incarnate Word property into the Olmos Dam right-of-way. The site produced Paleo-Indian through European-aged deposits.

In December of 1977, UTSA-CAR conducted test excavations at 41BX322. One unit was excavated in order to determine the extent of the site located during a previous survey. The test unit indicated that the area was utilized as a temporary campsite. No temporally diagnostic materials were recovered and therefore no further investigations were recommended (Fox and Frkuska 1978).

The Center for Archaeological Research conducted archaeological investigations at portions of 41BX1 during December 1979 to May 1980. The project consisted of the excavation of backhoe trenches, block excavations, and documentation of *in situ* burials. Excavations revealed Middle Archaic and Late Archaic components, with one Paleo-Indian point recovered from one excavation area. The excavation of the burials provided much information on the people and burial practices of the Late Archaic subperiod (Lukowski 1988).

In October of 1997 and March of 1998, SWCA, Inc. Environmental Consultants conducted cultural resource investigations within Brackenridge Park (Miller et al. 1999). The purpose of the project was to test 41BX323 and investigate the Second Waterworks Canal prior to the installation of a proposed pipeline. SWCA recommended that 41BX323 be avoided or construction impacts mitigated because it had the potential for producing information concerning the paleoenvironment, prehistoric technology and subsistence patterns of the region. Also,

because the proposed pipeline was to cross a portion of the Upper Labor Acequia further investigations were recommended in that area. Cultural materials recovered during the SWCA investigation included lithic debitage and tools, ceramics, and faunal remains (Miller et al. 1999).

SWCA returned to 41BX323 in the fall and winter of 1998 to conduct additional archaeological excavations. Excavations were carried out along the proposed pipeline footprint. The investigation produced Archaic deposits with intact burned rock features, and a shallow Late Prehistoric deposit along one terrace. The cultural deposits at the site appear to date primarily to the Early Archaic, with evidence of occupation in the Late and Transitional Archaic subperiods (Miller et al. 1999).

In 2001, SWCA returned to Brackenridge Park once more to conduct a survey of a portion of the park that was to be rehabilitated (Houk and Miller 2001). The survey was conducted along 28.3 acres of Brackenridge Park. The western portion of the survey focused on 41BX323. Much of the site produced sparse cultural materials, though a concentration of burned rock, debitage and mussel shell was located along one section. The potential for the site to produce additional information about the prehistoric occupation of the area was once more recognized. Again, 41BX323 was recommended for further testing if impacts were to occur within the site boundaries. In addition to visiting 41BX323, a previous unrecorded site was located along the eastern portion of the project area. Site 41BX1425 was identified as a multi-component site with Transitional Archaic and historic components. The prehistoric component consists of an Enser point, burned rock, and debitage. The historic component is at or near the surface, and consists of historic ceramics, glass fragments, and metal objects that date to the late 19th and 20th centuries (Houk and Miller 2001).

In September 2007, CAR conducted archaeological investigations at 41BX323 consisting of pedestrian survey and controlled excavation of test units and trenched. Two components were noted during the investigations along the eastern margin of the site. One component is Late Prehistoric in age, while the deeper deposit may be Early Archaic, though no temporally diagnostic artifacts were recovered to positively assign it to this time period (Figuroa and Dowling 2008.).

Site 41BX170 is a historic site consisting of the outline of a lime kiln and remnants of stone foundations. Historic artifacts including fragments of a large ceramic pot and glass were noted when the site was recorded in 1994 (THC 2008).

Meskill and Frederick (1995) conducted archaeological testing at the Witte Museum. The work was conducted prior to the construction of the new science building that was to be located on an area previously recorded as part of 41BX323. Two backhoe trenches were excavated in the area to the water table. No diagnostic material was recovered from the trenches, though debitage, charcoal and burned rock were encountered. Historic material was also noted within the trenches and consisted of white earthenware fragments, stoneware fragments, porcelain fragments, wire nails, window glass, bottle caps and other metal artifact fragments. A hearth-like feature was encountered in one of the trenches.

Additional testing was recommended prior to the construction of the HEB Treehouse. In 2000, twenty-three test units were excavated to examine the prehistoric component of the site. During the fieldwork, three Archaic Period features were encountered in the test units. Natural erosion and bioturbation affected the integrity of the deposits, though the site provided insights into the utilization of the San Antonio River during the Archaic Period (Meskill et al. 2000).

In 1996, a portion of the Upper Labor Acequia was exposed in Brackenridge Park prompting the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of San Antonio to contract with CAR to investigate the feature. During the course of the investigation, 41BX1273 was identified and documented. This site is the location of the Upper Labor Dam, a dam constructed of limestone blocks in 1776 by the Spanish colonists to divert water from the river to the Upper Labor Acequia. The dam was modified during the 19th century with dressed stone and set at a slightly different angle. A prehistoric component was also revealed during the investigation, located approximately 120 cm below the current surface (Cox et al. 1999). The prehistoric component consisted of lithic debitage.

The abundance of archaeological sites identified within the vicinity of Brackenridge Park make evident that the area offers prime natural resources to support occupation in both prehistoric and historic eras. Site 41BX323, adjacent to the Witte Museum grounds, has produced artifacts that date to the Archaic Period. Archival records indicate that the head of the Acequia Madre, also known as the Alamo Acequia, is located at the bend in the San Antonio River where the Witte is located. The acequia ran from the east bank of the river to Mission San Antonio de Valero (Cox 2005). Possibly located on the museum grounds, according to archival maps, are remains of the Acequia Madre (Figure 2-1). This indicates that the project area has the potential for producing significant information concerning the occupation and use of the area during both prehistoric and historic times.

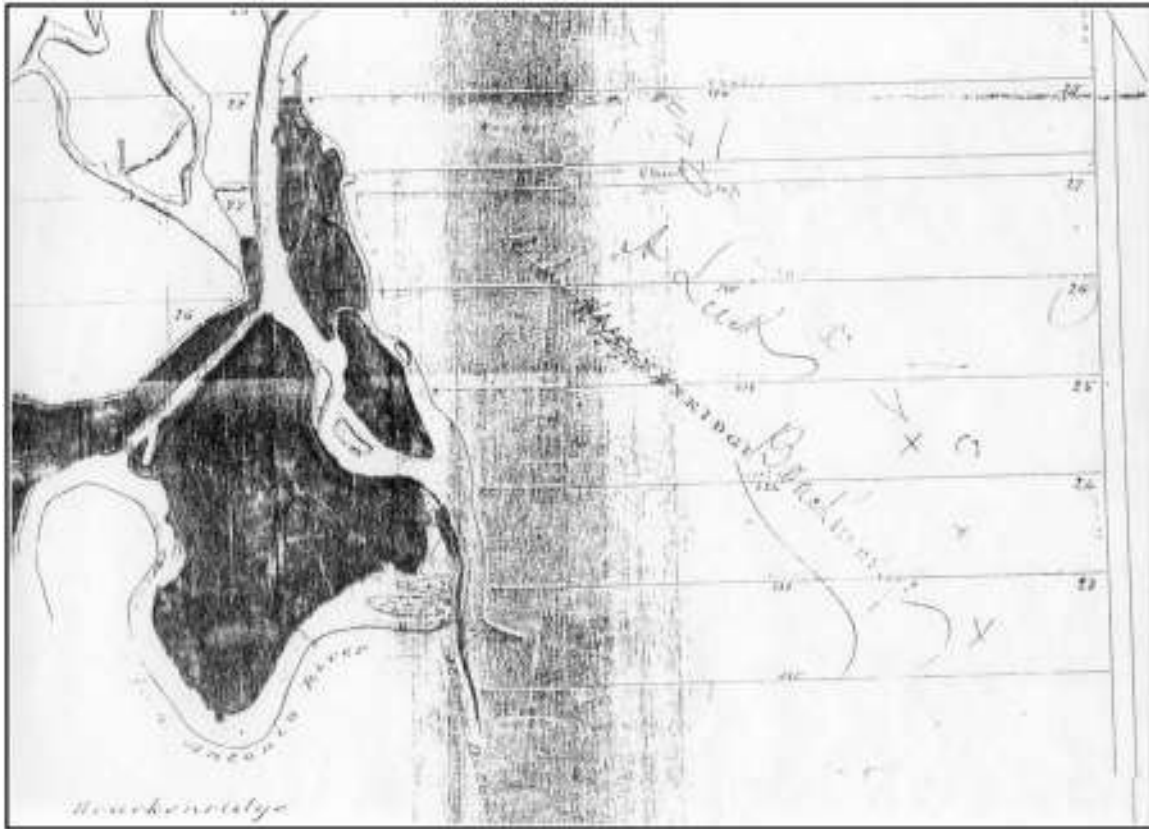


Figure 2-1. Map of the project area drawn by City Engineer Louis Giraud in 1879 showing the San Antonio River and the alignment of the Alamo Acequia and dam.

Chapter 3: Prehistoric Occupation of the Area

The location of the APE on the east bank of the San Antonio River would have been a prime spot for the prehistoric inhabitants of the area. The river and the banks provided an abundance of natural resources. The culture history of Bexar County spans nearly 11,500 years (Collins 1995). The occupation of the region can be divided into four major periods reflecting changes in subsistence strategies, material culture, and the arrival of the European settlers. The four periods include the Paleoindian, Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Historic. The Archaic period is further subdivided into the Early, Middle and Late subperiods (Collins 2004). The culture chronology of Central Texas presented here is pulled from summaries by Prewitt (1981) and Collins (1995) that are accepted by many researchers in the region. Collins' culture chronology of Central Texas presented in 1995 and again in 2004 provides the basis for the chronology of the project area.

Paleoindian

The first signs of human population in the New World are evident within the Paleoindian Period. The temporal span of the Paleoindian Period is between 11,500 and 8800 years before present (B.P.). The Paleoindian Period began about the end of the Pleistocene. The "Paleoindians" are described as nomadic, big-game hunters that ranged over a large areas. This idea is currently being challenged. Though, it is likely that populations did exploit the now-extinct megafauna, it may not have been not exclusive. The presence of diverse fauna may have lead people to be more generalized in their subsistence efforts, relying on smaller game and plant material as well.

Three sites in Texas have absolute dates tied to the Paleoindian Period. The earliest occupied site is the Aubry Site located in Denton County. Radiocarbon dates the site occupation as early as $11,542 \pm 111$ B.P. and $11,590 \pm 93$ B.P. (Bousman et al. 2004: 48). The Paleoindian period consists of several cultural horizons, with Clovis being the earliest (Collins 2004: 116).

The earliest defined cultural horizon encountered in Central Texas is Clovis (Collins 2004). The Clovis culture is believed to have existed between 11,200 and 10,900 B.P. Several sites in Texas exhibit the Clovis material culture: Kincaid Rockshelter, Wilson-Leonard, Gault, Horn Shelter No. 2, Pavo Real, and Crockett Gardens. These sites are the principal examples of Clovis occupation with cultural materials consisting of chipped stone artifacts, bone tools, and ochre. Engraved stones, and stone tools fashioned from exotic stone also appear in Clovis context (Collins 2004).

The diet of Clovis period inhabitants was quite diverse, relying on a variety of faunal and flora species. Stone tools recovered from sites occupied during the Clovis horizon indicate that large game (including mammoth, bison, and horse) was hunted as well as smaller species (i.e. badger, raccoon, turtle, and mice). Evidence at Clovis sites reveal that subsistence technology and strategies were well adapted to the point of having the means of successfully hunting big game animals, but yet still supplementing diets with smaller game and plant material so as to not solely rely on megafauna (Collins 2004).

Later culture horizons during the Paleoindian Period, specifically Folsom and Plainview, appear to rely more heavily on large game for subsistence. The later portion of the Paleoindian Period, referred to by Collins as the Late Paleoindian (Collins 2004: 118) exhibits stone artifacts that appear to be a transitional stage between the Paleoindian and Archaic Periods. The decline of the megafauna and warming of the climate forced changes to subsistence strategies that began at the tail-end of the Late Paleoindian.

Archaic

The Archaic is typically divided into three subperiods: Early, Middle and Late. Each subperiod is characterized by a change in subsistence patterns and projectile point styles. Archaeological records exhibit an increase in the use of burned rock middens, a increase in the variety of site types, and geographic distributions of sites and materials indicative of the subperiod (Collins 1995, 2004).

Early Archaic

Collins places the Early Archaic between 8800 and 6000 BP due to the presence of three projectile point styles: Angostura, early split stem, and Martindale-Uvalde (Collins 2004). Hester dates the subperiod between 7950 and 4450 BP, relying on Early Corner Notched and Early Basal Notched projectile point styles for the dating (Hester 1995). Concentrations of early Archaic components are noted along the eastern and southern margins of the Edwards Plateau. The decline of large game resources forced subsistence strategies to change to a reliance on smaller game (i.e. deer, rabbit, fish, turkey, etc.), as well as an increase use of plant resources (grasses, nuts, berries, fruits, and geophytes). Burned rock midden features are commonly found in association with Early Archaic sites in response to this shift in subsistence strategies. Sites were typically located in areas with reliable water sources (Collins 2004). The population density during the Early Archaic was fairly low, comprised of highly mobile, small bands (Figueroa and Dowling 2008).

Middle Archaic

The Middle Archaic subperiod dates from 6000 to 4000 BP and is marked by the presence of Bell, Andice, Taylor, Nolan, and Travis projectile point varieties (Collins 2004: 120). The earliest portion of the subperiod exhibited thin, triangular points (bifaces) that may have aided in the continued exploiting of bison. It is possible these styles were brought in from people migrating from the region west of the Ozarks (Wyckoff 1995). By the later portion of the Middle Archaic bison were absent from the archaeological record, indicating a dryer climate. Thicker points and stone tools were utilized, and increases in the use of rock middens indicate a change in subsistence strategies to utilize more plant materials such as stool (Collins 2004). A population increase is exhibited during the Middle Archaic, and it is possible that the smaller bands of the Early Archaic began combining to assist in gathering and processing efforts (Figueroa and Dowling 2008).

Late Archaic

The Late Archaic subperiod spans 4000 to 1200 BP (Collins 2004). The period is marked by an increase in climate moisture. The use of burned rock middens appears to be at its greatest during this subperiod until approximately 3500 to 2500 BP, at which time it slowed, but did not cease. Projectile points typical of this time were smaller, triangular dart points of the Bulverde, Pedernales, Marshall and Marcos styles (Collins 1995). Population numbers are in dispute (Prewitt 1981; Black 1989), but burial practices appear to have changed with the appearance of large cemeteries in which the burials exhibited grave goods. Trade also appears to have expanded with the appearance of more exotic material at several Late Archaic sites (Bement 1989).

Late Prehistoric

The end of the Late Archaic and the beginning of the Late Prehistoric is problematic. The technologies and subsistence strategies overlap, though most authors find that 1200 BP marks the transitional stage. The Late Prehistoric is marked by the appearance of the bow and arrow, the manufacturing of pottery, and the use of agriculture, in some regions. Hunting and gathering remained the predominant subsistence strategy during the two phases of the Late Prehistoric: Austin and Toyah. The bow and arrow reduced the need for large, open spaces for hunting, and increased the distance at which prey could be felled. The use of bow and arrows is noted in the archaeological record by a decrease in dart points and an increase in smaller arrow points (Collins 2004: 122). An increase of possible inter-group hostilities could be inferred from the evidence of

arrow wound deaths uncovered in Late Prehistoric burials (Prewitt 1974; Collins 1995).

The first phase of the Late Prehistoric period is Austin. The Austin Phase is relatively unchanged in subsistence strategies in comparison to the Late Archaic with the exception of the use of bow and arrow to procure faunal resources. Burned rock middens associated with this phase are found throughout western central Texas, exhibiting evidence of processing sotol (Collins 2004). Evidence suggests that the use of middens increased during this phase (Mauldin and Nickels 2003). The later Toyah Phase of the Late Prehistoric in Central Texas is marked by the introduction of pottery technology. In addition, large thin bifaces, Perdiz points, end scrapers, and blades are lithic tools associated with the phase. The lithic assemblage is consistent with the hunting of bison, deer, and antelope. Debates have arisen to the question of whether these changes occurred independently or were the result of the spread of technologies (Collins 2004). Either way, the Toyah tradition technologies were in use and persisted after the arrival of the Europeans (Collins 2004: 123).

Chapter 4: Historical Background

By Mariah Watson Pfeiffer

Spanish Origins

These rich archaeological deposits attest to the area's desirability as a camping place where Native Americans found both abundant water and shelter. The oasis-like environment of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek, located west of Brackenridge Park, attracted Spanish expeditions traveling through the region in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. On June 13, 1691, a group led by Domingo Teran de los Rios and Father Damian Massanet arrived at a Payaya Indian village named Yanaguana. Because the explorers arrived on the feast day of St. Anthony, they called the place San Antonio de Padua. The location of Yanaguana is not known.

A permanent settlement comprised of Mission San Antonio de Valero and the Villa de Bexar was established in the spring of 1718 by the governor of Texas, Martín de Alarcón, and a small group of priests, soldiers, and families. The mission was sited west of the river and the villa a short distance away on San Pedro Creek. Raids by Lipan Apaches soon threatened the villa and mission, and they were moved south to more protected areas in today's downtown San Antonio (de la Teja 1995: 8-9).

Civilian, military and religious settlers were joined in 1731 by sixteen Canary Island families sent by the King of Spain to establish a permanent municipality. As the community grew, its residents were often at odds over control of land and water, and issues ultimately shaped the area that became Brackenridge Park.

Soon after arriving, the Spanish began to construct an elaborate system of hand-dug ditches (acequias) to carry water from the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek for domestic and agricultural use. Two of these acequias—the Acequia Madre and Acequia Labor de Arriba (Upper Labor acequia) flowed from the river in what is now Brackenridge park.

The Acequia Madre (1719-20) originated on the river's east bank just above today's Witte Museum, ran south to water the lands of Mission San Antonio de Valero, and returned to the river below the mission. The land between the river and the ditch was controlled by the mission. It was not until after the mission's secularization in 1793 that these fields were granted to individual owners, notably the Adaesanos who had relocated to San Antonio when the Presidio de Adaes

was abandoned in 1773.

The portion of the “Adaesanos farm” lying within Brackenridge Park was granted to Vicente Flores and Jose Antonio de la Garza. The Flores family’s property at the north end of the park included the head gate of the Acequia Madre where the ditch left the San Antonio River. To the south, the de la Garza property included a return or waste channel of the Madre that joined the river south of the park. Much of the Flores and de la Garza land remained family-owned until the middle-nineteenth century (de la Teja 1996: 83-84).

By the 1760s, serious consideration was given to building an acequia to irrigate land west of the river to San Pedro Creek. The area became known as the “upper farm”— formally named Nuestra Senora de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows). The Upper Labor acequia (1776-78) branched from the river’s west bank within the park just below Hildebrand Avenue. Twenty-six long, narrow parcels (suertes) running from the acequia to the river were awarded in the late 1770s to those who financed the ditch. The northernmost parcels were retained by the city and not sold until the nineteenth century. Other land west of the Upper Labor ditch but within today’s park boundaries was retained by the city and has remained publicly owned since the Spanish era (de la Teja 1996; 80-83).

The Upper Labor dam was partially excavated and documented in the 1990s during park renovation. The acequia channel is still visible within the park and zoological garden. Though portions of the Acequia Madre outside the park have been documented, the dam and channel within the park have not been excavated.

Brackenridge Park remained a rural, agricultural area with scattered dwellings until after Texas joined the Union in 1846. The river and Spanish-built acequias continued to provide water for farmers and households. Travelers passed east and west of the park on roads leading to Austin and Fredericksburg and land to the north was used for farming and ranching.

San Antonio grew from 3,488 to 12,256 residents between 1850 and 1870. The demands of this growing population ultimately led to the park’s transformation from irrigated farmland to industrial and commercial uses. This process began in the early 1850s, and accelerated during and after the Civil War.

In the early years of statehood, the City Council planned to sell surplus tracts of city-owned property to meet its growing budgetary needs. Because records of the original town tract

boundaries had been lost, the city entered into a lawsuit to re-establish its claims and hired Francois Giraud to complete a new survey of the town tract. Land sales finally began in 1852.

The majority of land comprising Brackenridge Park was already privately owned, but the 1852 land sale included property immediately to the north and east where springs forming the San Antonio River were located. The “head of the river” as it came to be called was purchased by city alderman, James Sweet. Seventeen years later, it was acquired by George W. Brackenridge.

George Brackenridge moved to San Antonio in late 1865. His success as a cotton trader during the Civil War and connections with political and business leaders both statewide and nationally served him well. In early 1866, Brackenridge established the San Antonio National Bank that became the foundation of his extensive business holdings. Three years later, he purchased a 108-acre tract and antebellum home at the head of the San Antonio River. Because the word “bracken” was the Scottish word for “fern,” Brackenridge named his new home “Fernridge.” (Sibley 1973: 91).

The property acquired by Brackenridge contained springs that formed the river and fed the city’s two major acequias a short distance to the south. The “head of the river” had remained city-owned until 1852 when it was acquired by James Sweet at the auction of public lands. The sale was controversial—not only was the city’s main water supply sold to a private owner, but the owner was a sitting city alderman.

The transfer of the river’s headwaters from public to private control was still remembered by locals when, in the aftermath of the cholera epidemic of 1866, local physicians argued for construction of a safe municipal water system. Progress on this issue was slowed by Reconstruction politics and an overall lack of public support.

A local newspaper began to campaign for repurchase of the head of the river property in 1872, leading the city to begin negotiations with George Brackenridge. A \$50,000 contract was accepted by the City Council, but after public outcry over Brackenridge’s potential profit, the sale was eventually voided in April 1872, and he retained control of the headwaters (Sibley 1973: 128-130; CCM D:36-37).

The city had failed to reacquire the headwaters and was making no progress in establishing a public water system. It was in this context that George Brackenridge began to purchase additional riverfront land. Though his motives are not proven, he was likely positioning himself

to play a key role in the future water system.

George Brackenridge acquired four of the upper five lots in the tannery tract west of, and adjoining the river in 1875, and purchased the fifth lot in 1881. Brackenridge made his most significant purchase in June 1876, when he and his brother, John, paid Mary A. Maverick \$25,000 for a wooded 200-acre tract on the east side of the river that ran from the head gate of the Acequia Madre ditch south to the property of Francois Guilbeau. The land was bounded on both the west and north by the river and on the east by the Acequia Madre (BCDR 4:473; BCDR 25:612).

The 200-acre tract had been acquired in Mary Maverick's name in June 1843 shortly after her husband, Texas Declaration of Independence signer, Samuel A. Maverick, returned to Texas after being held for seven months in Perote prison. Mary Maverick wrote in her diary, "In June, and again in September, Mr. Maverick visited San Antonio—to attend to court and land business." It was apparently during his June trip that Maverick purchased the property at auction for the high bid of \$267 and placed it in his wife's name (BCDR B2: 162; Maverick : 78-81). The Maverick's land remained largely undeveloped, and was probably used for farming during their thirty-two year ownership. A lease signed only six months before the property was acquired by George and John Brackenridge, provides a glimpse of the property and its use. The lessee, M.M. Morales, was to maintain the irrigation ditches and protect the pecan, walnut, oak and elm trees. Mr. Morales was allowed to cultivate and harvest crops in addition to the sugar cane that was already growing on the property (BCDR 4:470).

George Brackenridge's Water Works Company donated 199 acres of riverfront land to the City of San Antonio for use as a park. The gift, accepted by the City Council on December 4, 1899, was celebrated in both the San Antonio *Light* and *Daily Express*.

This place [sic] of property is one of the loveliest pieces of land of Texas and for beauty is unrivaled. It is the largest natural park in the south controlled by a city, its scenery back on the river bank being unsurpassed (San Antonio Light Nov 7, 1899).

Outside of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, there is probably no city park that is in any way comparable to it (San Antonio Daily Express Nov 11, 1899).

The gift of the Water Works property was generous, but tightly constrained by reservations and

restrictions. These caveats were at least partially attributable to years of distrust between Brackenridge and the city over financial dealings. The Water Works Company retained a 250-foot wide strip running the length of the property along the west side of River Avenue, and a 25-foot strip along each side of the river and the east bank of the Upper Labor ditch. The company retained full control of ingress and egress to the park as well as the banks of the river and acequia. A fence was built around the park and access was restricted to two locations. The issue of access remained unresolved until after Brackenridge sold the Water Works in 1906. Perhaps most notably, the bequest was restricted by its prohibition of the sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages in the park (BCDR 185:183; CCM N:284, 291, 304-305).

The Witte Museum: 1926

San Antonio did not have a public museum by the middle 1920s when museum advocates convinced city commissioners to build such a facility in San Pedro Park. Ground was broken on September 22, 1925, just two days before local businessman Alfred G. Witte died and left an unusual bequest. Witte gave the city \$75,000 to construct a museum of art, science and natural history to be built in Brackenridge Park and named for his parents. Construction halted at the San Pedro Park site, and museum proponents, the mayor, and Ray Lambert set out to find a new location in Brackenridge Park.

The new museum site was located between the river and Broadway at the “third entrance” to the park—today’s Tuleta Drive. The vacant property, located just below where the Acequia Madre left the river, had been part of the 200-acre tract sold by Mary Maverick to George Brackenridge in 1876. It was acquired by the city from the Water Works Company in 1908 as part of the settlement for access to Brackenridge Park. Architects Ayres and Ayres moved building materials to the Brackenridge Park site, enlarged the building plan, and began construction. The museum opened to the public on October 8, 1926.

The Witte Museum has been expanded and remodeled several times since 1926. An extensive remodeling in 1962 altered the original Ayres and Ayres façade (Figure 4-1). Three historic structures stand behind the museum near the river. These buildings, originally located in downtown San Antonio, were preserved from demolition and relocated to the museum grounds in the 1940s through the efforts of local preservationists. They are: John Twohig house- relocated 1942 (Figure 4-2); Francisco Ruiz house- relocated 1943 (Figure 4-3); and Celso Navarro house- relocated 1947 (Figure 4-4).

The H-E-B Science Treehouse was constructed behind the museum along the river in DATE. In 2008, the Onderdonk family's art studio was relocated to the grounds from the Monte Vista National Register Historic District.

In 2008, Pioneer Hall houses exhibits of the Texas pioneers and trail drivers' associations. The building is included in the Witte Museum master plan and will be used as the South Texas Heritage Center.



Figure 4-1. *Photograph of the Witte Memorial Museum.*



Figure 4-2. *Photograph of the Twohig House.*



Figure 4-3. *Photograph of the Ruiz House.*



Figure 4-4. *Photograph of the Navarro House.*

The Reptile Garden: 1937

The reptile garden is located north of Pioneer Hall near the presumed location of the Acequia Madre headgate. The once-popular attraction was originally opened by the Witte Museum to provide additional income during the Depression. It was moved from its original location closer to the museum in 1937. The reptile garden closed many years ago and is now deteriorated (Figure 4-5).



Figure 4-5. *Photograph of the Reptile Garden.*

THE TEXAS PIONEERS, TRAIL DRIVERS, RANGERS MEMORIAL

(known generally as Pioneer Hall)

“With the rapid passing and enfeeblement of members of the trail drivers, pioneer freighters and other organizations it was felt that the museum is the proper institution to perpetuate the memory and deeds of these pioneers.” (Witte Museum board minutes, January 7, 1933)

Pioneer Hall: 1933-35

Recognition of the important contributions of early Texas settlers was central to the founding purpose of the Witte Museum when it opened in 1926. The museum was the site of exhibits, dances and demonstrations that documented and celebrated the legacy of those who helped build the state (Figure 4-6). These events outgrew the museum’s History Hall, and representatives of the Witte, Old Trail Drivers Association and San Antonio Pioneers Association discussed the possibility of constructing an all-purpose hall for their joint use. No firm plans were made before

the beginning of the Depression (Woolford and Quillin 1966:264).



Figure 4-6. *Photograph of the Pioneer Hall.*

Depression-era programs and the upcoming 1936 Texas centennial celebration brought the promise of funding for public projects and a flurry of planning activity. As early as August 22, 1933, Ellen Quillin wrote to Mayor C.K. Quin, asking his opinion about a loan from the Federal government to construct an addition to the museum. A subsequent application to the Public Works Administration (PWA) included an addition with a memorial section for the state's trail drivers and an auditorium (Letter Quillin to Quin Aug. 22, 1933; San Antonio Express, Aug 29, 1934).

The project was not funded, but the discussion of an addition continued. Notes by museum director Ellen Quillin, titled, "Sequence of Active Work of Museum Board of Directors in Securing the Pioneer Hall," include the following notation for September 1934:

(The) idea of a Pioneer Hall and Trail Drivers Patio had its origin in the Director's office at the Museum when Mrs. Quillin was discussing the need of an

auditorium with Bess Carroll and Major Fletcher Gardner. Miss Carroll asked why the Museum didn't get in on the Centennial money for Texas. We all agreed and within twenty-four hours, Mrs. Quillin presented Mr. Atlee B. Ayres with a pencil sketch for a Pioneer Hall and Trail Drivers Patio to be built adjacent to the museum, but as a separate unit for special use by the Pioneers, Rangers and Trail Drivers. (WMA Pioneer Hall Volume)

The Texas State Legislature appointed a permanent centennial commission in June 1934, and the group began to study bids from three Texas cities— Dallas, Houston and San Antonio—to host the Central Centennial Exposition. San Antonio leaders presented plans by architect Harvey P. Smith and landscape architect H.E. Kincaid for an exposition that encompassed much of Brackenridge Park and adjacent San Jacinto Park (the site of today's Trinity University). The plan echoed the concept of an international exposition proposed for the same site ten years earlier (San Antonio *Express*, Jan. 31, 1925; San Antonio *Light* Feb. 1, 1925; San Antonio *Light* Aug. 26, 1925).

The centennial commission visited San Antonio on September 8, 1934, to assess the city's proposal. Commissioners visited "Brackenridge Park and adjacent lands in San Antonio," including the Witte Museum. Park attractions were "all located in the area proposed for a Centennial site" (TSBC Sep. 8, 1934). In spite of arguments that San Antonio, with its rich history, was a "logical Texas centennial site," commissioners selected Dallas, the least historic of the three cities. It was reported at the State Board of Control meeting on November 19, 1934, that the choice of Dallas had been "reaffirmed" (TSBC Sep. 8, 1934; TSBC Nov. 19, 1934).

The selection of Dallas as the center of the centennial celebration did not deter San Antonians from making their own plans. Ellen Quillin's notes state that in October 1934 the architectural firm of Ayres and Ayres presented plans for "a Texas Pioneer Hall." The plans were approved by the museum's board on November 5, 1934. Over sixty community organizations sent letters of support to the local centennial commission headed by Morris Stern, H.H. Ochs and Mrs. O.M. Farnsworth. Ellen Quillin and museum chairman, Mrs. J.K. Beretta, summarized the Witte's proposal in a letter to Morris Stern dated January 7, 1935 (Beretta and Quillin to Stern, Jan. 7, 1935).

The following are the plans of the Witte Museum Board of Directors and its Affiliated Organizations for Expansion of the Museum in preparation for the Centennial Celebration, 1936.

Halls and Improvements are listed in order of importance and necessity: Texas Pioneer Hall including diorama and art gallery on second floor; Texas Trail Drivers Patio; Semi-tropical Garden; Landscaping Grounds; Indian-Frontier Village and Trading Post; Texas Industrial Hall; Transportation Hall; Texas Indian Hall; Frontier Animal-Life Hall; More Imposing Entrance to Brackenridge Park; and Furnishings, in part, for above additions.

The total cost of these improvements was estimated at \$250,000 including \$50,000 for Texas Pioneer Hall, \$10,000 for the hall's diorama, and \$10,000 for the Trail Drivers' Patio. Beretta and Quillin told Stern, "Any or all may be done in proportion to funds allotted" (Beretta and Quillin to Stern, Jan. 7, 1935).

Plans for San Antonio's centennial celebration continued to evolve in the first six months of 1935. Soon after Morris Stern's committee approved the Witte's concept for Pioneer Hall, it was disbanded and replaced by a new committee headed by Harry Hertzberg and C.A. Goeth. Mrs. Quillin appeared before the new body to request funding for the Pioneer Hall and the Trail Drivers Patio, and the board proceeded with its "original plans for expansion." These plans included the addition of a second story to the two-story wings, construction of a transportation hall, and improvements to the museum grounds and the reptile garden. The firm of Ayres and Ayres was authorized to draw plans in July, and on September 3, 1935, Atlee Ayres wrote to board member, Colonel W.B. Tuttle, "We have prepared preliminary sketches and an estimate of cost covering additions to the present Witte Museum Building" (WMM June 18, 1935; WMM Jul 15, 1935; WMM Aug. 23, 1935; WMM Sep 3, 1935; Witte Museum Annual Report 1934-35).

An undated floor plan of the proposed addition including a memorial hall and adjacent patio is bound with Witte reports and letters from October 1935 and carries the names of architects Atlee B. and Robert M. Ayres and Richard Vanderstraten. The plan includes a rectangular addition to the back of the museum measuring approximately 52' X 94' (WMA).

A typescript titled, "Order of Unit Building Plan," presumably written by Ellen Quillin, describes the hall's arrangement. Exhibit cases in the center of the memorial hall would be rolled back for dances and chuck wagon suppers. Additional cases for display of Western memorabilia lined the outside walls. A door led outside to the yard and barbecue pit. The area would be fenced with rails "much along the lines of our present corral patio" (WMA Pioneer Hall volume).

Other projects were also put forward during 1935 including a larger Texas Centennial Hall to honor Texas pioneers. It was suggested that the museum's board and the Pioneers Association

manage the proposed hall to be built at an estimated cost of \$240,000 in nearby San Jacinto Park. This project did not advance beyond the discussion phase (Quillin Notes January 4 & 8, 1935, July 7, 1935).

Aware that funds would be needed to supplement state and federal allocations for local centennial projects, San Antonio city commissioners voted on August 22, 1935, to hold a \$500,000 bond election to fund five centennial projects. The Texas Centennial Hall in San Jacinto Park was not included. Proposed projects were:

- \$300,000 for a coliseum in Roosevelt Park (today's Riverside Park, adjacent to the old exposition grounds)
- \$130,000 for a sports stadium in San Jacinto Park (a long-time dream of sports' enthusiasts)
- \$50,000 for monuments in public places
- \$10,000 for the addition to the Witte Museum
- \$10,000 for improvements to the Sunken Garden

Failure of the bond package by a three to one margin on October 15, 1935, was attributed to low turnout and an intense radio campaign against the propositions (CCM M:615; San Antonio Express October 15 & 15, 1935).

Two days after the bond package failed, Ellen Quillin sent blueprints of the Witte's project to Mrs. Robinson Hodge, chairman of the planning committee of San Antonio's Woman's Centennial Committee planning committee. She wrote:

The Texas Pioneer Hall, while a part of the museum, would be a separate unit in the sense that it would belong to Pioneers and their children. It would serve for their meetings, have an office and desk for their secretary, be used for their old time dances, be used as a lecture hall for our regular Sunday afternoon lectures and use the wall space for Pioneer exhibits. The hall, by virtue of its connection with the museum, will serve both the pioneers and the museum as a whole (Quillin to Hodge Oct. 17, 1935).

The museum's plan included a patio dedicated to the trail drivers and ranch house replica. Quillin urged Mrs. Hodge to support funding for these improvements of "permanent value."—

the hall at an estimated cost of \$50,000 and the patio, \$25,000. Quillin also provided details of the plan in her October 25, 1935, memo to Harry Hertzberg's centennial committee.

The Hall will be built of brick and stone, with two floors, 52 X 94 feet. The lower floor will have a small stage for the use of musicians, speakers, general entertainment, and demonstration of old-time Crafts. Flooring to be hard wood, so as to be more suitable for old-time gatherings. Walls of first floor to be used for exhibits, photographs of our Pioneers, documents, etc. (Witte Museum to San Antonio Planning Committee, Oct. 25, 1935).

Mrs. Quillin's notes indicate that on November 2, 1935, the Hertzberg committee recommended \$40,000 for the Pioneer Hall project and another \$10,000 for the Trail Drivers Patio. She also noted that the Trail Drivers monument, a separate project of the Trail Drivers Association, had been left out of the recommendations (Quillin journal).

The final recommendation on expenditure of the city's \$400,000 allocation was left to the eight-member Centennial Advisory Committee chaired by Colonel Claude Birkhead. Ellen Quillin retrieved the letters of support she had gathered in 1934 and resubmitted them to Birkhead and Ernest J. Altgelt, a San Antonian who served as the assistant commissioner to the United States Commissioner General for the Texas Centennial Exposition. Among the letters of support was that of Edwin Chamberlain, president of the State Association of Texas Pioneers to San Antonio mayor, Phil Wright (Witte Museum Annual Report 1934-35; Quillin to Stern Oct. 19, 1935; Quillin to Birkhead Nov 18, 1935).

Funding for San Antonio centennial projects was further complicated at the December 10, 1935 meeting of the Centennial Advisory Commission when Bessie Terry Lesser, president of the Old Trail Drivers Association, switched the group's support from the Trail Drivers Patio to a new project—a stadium she suggested be called the "Trail Drivers Corral." Lesser and her group knew that committee chairman, Claude Birkhead, favored the stadium project that had been defeated in the October 1935 bond election. Support of this project, was seen as a way to achieve recognition for the state's trail drivers. Ellen Quillin remarked, "I don't know why the change was made. I didn't know a thing about it until this minute" (WMM Jan 6, 1936).

Pioneer Hall: 1936

The Centennial Advisory Commission ultimately submitted a majority and minority report on

funding recommendations to the United States Texas Centennial Commission. The majority report favored the stadium over Pioneer Hall, while the minority report included \$45,000 for the hall. When the list of centennial projects to be funded by the \$400,000 Federal appropriation was finally announced on March 5, 1936, it included the stadium but did not include the Witte Museum. The board revived Atlee Ayres' plans for the transportation hall and began modest improvements to the grounds (WMM May 13, 1936).

The sequence of events related to Pioneer Hall between March and August 1936 is not clear. This is complicated by a gap in Witte Museum board minutes from June 8 until September 11, 1936. The final decision on San Antonio's centennial projects lay with Vice President John Nance Garner who chaired the Federal Texas Centennial Commission. In late August, Garner approved plans for the stadium project to be constructed at an undisclosed site. The following day, both the state and local centennial commissions "freely admitted" that the stadium project had been eliminated and the allocation would be divided among three "substitute projects." Ernest Altgelt explained the stadium's elimination due to both cost and location (San Antonio *Light* Aug. 27, 1936).

First they wanted it in San Jacinto Park. Then some people living near there didn't want it. Then they talked about some place on the south side. The city wanted it on the east side (Exposition Park). The Sports Association, who originally wanted a stadium, said they would rather have any than have it at Exposition Park.

On August 27, 1936, local newspapers announced "Fete Building planned for San Antonio, \$100,000 memorial building honoring Texas trail drivers, pioneers, and rangers will be the biggest item in San Antonio's \$400,000 centennial program" (San Antonio *Light* Aug. 27, 1936). The memorial building would be constructed in Brackenridge Park, "possibly adjacent to the Witte Memorial Museum." The building would include offices for these three organizations and a small auditorium.

The "historical building at the Witte Memorial Museum to be dedicated to Texas Pioneers, Trail Drivers and Rangers" was described in the San Antonio *Express*.

That use of the fund doubtless will be gratifying to patriotic citizens generally. Such a building for San Antonio will match the new Texas State Museum on the University Campus at Austin, the Hall of State on the Exposition grounds at

Dallas, the Sam Houston Memorial Museum at Huntsville, the Big Bend Historical Memorial Museum at Alpine and like structures in Texas cities. When so many communities were commemorating the centennial in that creditable manner—providing safe, worthy housing for relics, family heirlooms, documents, and other priceless mementoes of Texas' first hundred years—the most historic city in the state and one of the richest in historical material could not afford to be found remiss. San Antonio was subject of censure on that score, until the allotment just announced provided means to repair the neglect (San Antonio *Express* Sep 8, 1936).

The first meeting between the Witte Museum board and the committee for Pioneer Memorial Hall was held on September 11, 1936. Ernest Altgelt reported that the building would be located “north of and in line with” the present Witte Museum. “At present it would be as a unit building as the United States Government would require this. At a future date, it may and should be connected with a patio, wing, or closed colonnade” (Witte Museum Board of Directors and Pioneer Memorial Hall joint meeting minutes Sept 11, 1936).

The architectural firms of Ayres and Ayres and Phelps and Dewees were selected to design Pioneer Memorial Hall. The new structure would follow “the architecture of the present building.” Pioneer Hall, however, would be built of stone “with the hope that a stone veneer will be added to the present (Witte) building.” The building, not to exceed 60 X 120 feet, was described as having two floors—the first with an exhibit hall and the second to be used for lectures, “old time parties,” and other functions. The second floor would be closed off when not in use. The building was to be steam heated but not air-conditioned. Early in the planning process, the colonnade originally planned for the rear of the building was changed to the middle of the building (Quillin journal Sept 25, 1936).

Minutes record Ernest Altgelt's response to questions about the building's management.

In reference to management Mr. Altgelt said it was the idea of the committee in time to have one big complete plant and that this addition would probably encourage some of San Antonio's people with more money than they could use to provide a similar building on the south side to balance Pioneer Hall (Quillin journal Sept 25, 1936; Joint meeting minutes Sep 11, 1936).

Altgelt deferred the final management decision to a later date.

Five days after the first joint meeting between the museum board and Pioneer Hall committee, Witte board chairman, Mrs. J.K. Beretta, wrote to Ernest Altgelt.

We have had many years of experience during our management of the museum. We have no wish to dictate to you in any way, as we recognize your services and ability. We feel, however, that we might be able to make valuable suggestions. Therefore we should be most appreciative if you would give us an opportunity to confer with you and the architects before the final plans for the new centennial building go into effect (Beretta to Altgelt, Sep 16, 1936).

Altgelt responded that it “would be his pleasure to ask you to meet with architects for a discussion.” He anticipated that it would be at least ten days before the architects were prepared to meet. Altgelt continued:

Inasmuch as the building is to be dedicated to the pioneers, trail drivers and rangers of Texas, their suggestions and recommendations will have to be considered first and you know there is always a little danger of a conflict or an argument arising unless there is really something definite to talk about (Altgelt to Beretta, Sep. 18, 1936).

Mrs. Beretta, understanding the significance of Altgelt’s remarks, provided the letter to Ellen Quillin for inclusion in the Witte Museum’s records. Quillin recalled that following the joint meeting on September 11, 1936, a city ordinance was passed that effectively removed the Witte Museum from management and use of the hall (WMA Pioneer Hall volume).

City Ordinance OH-200 passed on September 18, 1936, stated:

...this building will be the assembly hall and place for the housing of the historical relics, the records and other property of the organizations named (the Pioneers, Trail Drivers and Texas Rangers)... the city of San Antonio assumes all obligation of maintenance, repair and preservation of said structure, and agrees that the property shall be used only for the purposes for which it is intended (San Antonio City Ordinance, OH-200, Sep. 18, 1936).

Ellen Quillin concluded, “Within a week’s time, Mr. Altgelt with others secretly put through this ordinance...apparently the museum’s influence and work was no longer needed” (WMA Pioneer

Hall volume).

Construction of Pioneer Hall: 1937

Ayres and Ayres and Phelps and Dewees were well underway with plans for Pioneer Hall by the time their contract was finalized by the State Board of Control on November 5, 1936. An elevation drawing of the cream colored limestone building with a red tile roof appeared on the front page of the *San Antonio Express* on October 4, 1936. The newspaper noted that the “construction and furnishings of the interior are in keeping with the building’s purpose.” Elevation drawings for Pioneer Hall were approved by the Witte Museum’s board on October 7, having been previously approved by the pioneers, trail drivers and rangers organizations (*San Antonio Express* Sep 20, 1936; State Board of Control Records Centennial Division minutes, Box 1991/016-80; *San Antonio Light*, October 7, 1936).

Plans were put out to bid and opened on January 21, 1937. The low bid by Christy and Smith of San Antonio was \$82,257. After some changes, the general construction contract totaled \$78,432. Shafer Plumbing Company’s contract totaled \$10,619 and the contract with Nathan Alterman Electric Company was \$2,582

The following changes were made to the plans prior to construction: change marble toilet stalls and screen partitions to metal partitions and doors; change tile wainscot in toilets to cement plaster and terrazzo base; change marble wainscot to terrazzo base, etc. in Memorial Hall; Omit sliding curtains and tracks in ballroom; Omit cabinets and counters in kitchen and service room (these were added back in a later change order); omit glass panels of special lighting fixture leaving allowance; omit glass ceiling fixture; omit wood roof strips and substitute Spanish tile for Mission tile.

The site selected for Pioneer Hall did not necessitate moving the Witte’s reptile garden, but it was ultimately relocated to the north to provide better access and views of Pioneer Hall. The museum’s watchman house was also relocated (*San Antonio Express* Jan. 24, 1937).

Bad weather delayed groundbreaking which took place on February 6, 1937. The ceremony, planned by Bessie Terry Lesser, president of the Old Trail Drivers Association, was attended by representatives of the trail drivers, rangers and pioneers. Mrs. J.K. Beretta represented the museum (WMM Jan. 5, 1934; Feb. 22, 1937).

Mrs. Quillin and Mrs. Beretta continued to offer guidance in the construction and ultimate management of Pioneer Hall. When the local press persisted in calling the building the “museum annex,” Quillin requested that it be called the Centennial Memorial Hall in recognition of being built entirely with Federal funds. She discussed with Mayor Quin the possibility of appointing representatives of the pioneer, trail driver and ranger groups to the museum board to manage the new building. Quin postponed establishing a “board of control” for the building until after its completion when it would be turned over to the city by the Federal government (WMM Jan. 5, 1934; Feb. 22, 1937).

Construction of Pioneer Hall apparently proceeded smoothly. Minutes of the State Board of Control’s Centennial Division reflect few change orders and no problems. Approved changes were minimal. The word “Texas” was added to the building’s inscription which was originally planned to read “Pioneers, Trail Drivers and Rangers Memorial,” and gold leaf was added to the lettering. (The lettering was completed by Rodriguez Brothers.) A platform and curtains were added to the ballroom, Venetian blinds were approved for the first and second floors, and the sixteen ballroom bracket lights were changed to cast plaster (State Board of Control Records, Centennial Division minutes, Box 1991/016-90. November 1936 through October 1937).

The building was substantially completed by September 1937, and final contractor invoices were approved in October. Witte Museum employees removed trees that stood between Pioneer Hall and Broadway to provide a better view of the new building (Witte Museum, Building and Grounds Report, September 1937).

Opening Pioneer Hall: 1936-37

The first joint meeting of the museum board and Pioneer Hall committee had been held on September 11, 1936. The group did not meet again until August 6, 1937, when the building was almost complete. The meeting was attended by the mayor’s appointees to the joint board—representatives of the Witte, the Art League, the Conservation Society, Archaeological Society, San Antonio Pioneers Association, Old Trail Drivers Association and Texas Rangers.

Correspondence found in the Texas State Board of Control records indicates that as early as February 1937, assurances were given to Bessie Terry Lesser of the Old Trail Drivers Association that both the Board of Control and United States Texas Centennial Commission believed “... the management of the building would be lodged in the Rangers, Pioneers and Trail Drivers organizations so long as they are existent” (Garner to Lesser Feb. 12, 1937). Board of Control

chairman, Claude Teer, wrote to Mayor Quin on February 25, 1937:

Of course, the ownership of the property will be in the City of San Antonio, but it is the wish and intention of the Board of Control, as well as the Federal Centennial Commission and the State Commission of Control, that this building shall be used only by the three organizations for which it was originally planned.

It is not known if Mrs. Beretta and Mrs. Quillin were aware of this correspondence when they called on Mayor Quin to suggest joint management of the museum and Pioneer Hall. Quin did initiate committee appointments, though it is clear from Mrs. Quillin's notes dated June and July 1937 that the mayor encountered some difficulties in getting individuals to serve. It became evident during the summer of 1937 that the September 1936 city ordinance was being interpreted to leave the Witte Museum out of the management structure of Pioneer Hall. Nonetheless, the mayor appointed a joint committee which discussed management issues at its August 6 meeting. The issue was not resolved, but it was agreed that the three organizations would "take sole charge of the program for the official opening" (WMM Aug. 6, 1937).

Ellen Quillin was aware in late July that Bessie Terry Lesser told Mayor Quin the Old Trail Drivers Association would finance Pioneer Hall at no cost to the city. Relations between the Witte Museum and Trail Drivers Association deteriorated when the group was inadvertently left out of newspaper accounts of Pioneer Hall published on August 2, 1936. The situation was further complicated by decisions on placement of access roads and relocation of the Witte's reptile garden (Quillin journal Aug. 1- Oct. 1, 1936).

Ellen Quillin's notes about Pioneer Hall end with an entry on October 1, 1936, written after visiting with Pioneers Association representative, Dr. P.B. Hill. "Saw Dr. P.B. Hill at his office and talked over new hall. So this time, I am withdrawing for good. Four years effort wasted" (Quillin journal Oct. 1, 1936).

State officials advised Bessie Terry Lesser that the issue of the building's management lay with local officials. Planning continued for the opening ceremonies that the Trail Drivers Association hoped would coincide with their annual convention on October 7 and 8, 1937. The ceremony was delayed pending final completion and transfer of the structure to local control. Pioneer Hall was dedicated on Saturday, January 1, 1938. An evening ball followed the afternoon dedication ceremony.

Ernest Altgelt, the former assistant to the United States Commissioner General for the Texas Centennial Exposition was asked to assist with details for the opening ceremonies and wrote to Claude Teer, chairman of the State Board of Control.

It is with great pleasure that I say to you that this is a beautiful building, and I believe in the end it will stand up with any of the Texas Centennial projects (Altgelt to Teer, Sep. 23, 1937).

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the review of the resources of the area, discussions with Lake Flato Architects and the Witte Museum, about the proposed improvements, CAR proposes two levels of archaeological investigations, one focused on identifying possible buried deposits, the other focused on locating the Acequia Madre (Figure 5-1). First, the previous review indicates the museum grounds have the potential to produce significant cultural remains associated with several periods of occupation. Immediately adjacent to the project area is prehistoric site 41BX323 that contains evidence of both Late Prehistoric and Archaic Period components. Archaeological investigations in the form of shovel testing and backhoe trenching will be necessary to locate buried cultural resources.



Figure 5-1. Map of the project area with overlay of the location of the acequia dam and areas that had previously been underwater (based on Louis Giraud map, 1879).

The construction of the foundation of the new changing exhibit gallery and ballroom will impact approximately 4 to 5 feet below surface. The South Texas Heritage Center building will have a partial basement that will extend 15 feet off the west wall of the structure. The basement will require excavation up to 18 feet below surface. The Center for Rivers and Aquifers will be constructed above ground, though piers will be needed to support the structure. The Navarro House, Log Cabin, and the Onderdonk Studio will be moved to new locations, and will result in minimal subsurface impacts. Asphalt over the current parking lot and street will be removed. The new parking spaces and alignment of the street will be constructed with some, but relatively shallow, subsurface impacts.

To address the levels of impact the improvements the Witte Museum expansion will have on possible buried cultural deposits, CAR recommends two methods of investigation. First, CAR recommends that shovel testing be conducted in the areas with minimal shallow subsurface impacts to determine if any cultural deposits are located within those impact areas. This includes the areas to be affected by the parking lot and street alterations, the Acequia Court (Figure 5-2), the future entry court, the locations to which the historic structures will be relocated, and any areas to be altered by new landscaping. Second, in areas that shovel testing will not reach the level of impact of deeper construction activities, CAR recommends the excavation of backhoe trenches. Backhoe trenches should be excavated in the footprint of the additions to the Pioneer Hall (i.e. South Texas Heritage Center), the additions to the Witte Museum main building, and within the footprint of the changing exhibit gallery. Specifically, a backhoe trench should be excavated in the area to be impacted by the construction of the partial basement of the South Texas Heritage Center. CAR also recommends that an archaeological monitor be present when excavating the areas of deep impact beneath the proposed building additions.



Figure 5-2. Photograph of the location of the proposed Changing Exhibits Gallery.

Next, links to the Spanish Colonial use of the area are evident in archival documents that indicate that a diversion dam and portion of an acequia run through the northeast corner of the project area (Figure 5-1). To relocate the acequia and dam an 1879 map was consulted and overlaid on the current project area map. The historic map places the head of the Acequia Madre and associated diversion dam south and southeast of the proposed Acequia Court. The initial design of the Acequia Court placed at the presumed location of the Acequia Madre. However, the 1879 Water Works map indicates that the previously assumed location of the Acequia is not correct. Careful inspection of the map reveals that the dam associated with the acequia appears to be much larger than initially anticipated. When the 1879 map is laid over the current Masterplan of the Witte improvements, the dam appears to extend from an area intended for wetland restoration on the west bank of the San Antonio River to the current paved entrance walkway of the Pioneer Hall (Figure 5-1). The area of the proposed Acequia Court would have been inundated with water until the dam was no longer in use.

CAR recommends that backhoe trenching be utilized to identify the location of the acequia dam

as seen on the 1879 Giraud map. Backhoe trenching should also be conducted in the area identified in said map as the “Alamo Ditch” to identify the remnant of the Acequia Madre. The gate to the acequia is possible located at the conjunction of the head of the acequia and the edge of the dam. Careful backhoe trenching in combination with hand-excavated test units is recommended to determine if remnants of the acequia gate are present sub-surface. Once the location of the acequia has been determined, test units are recommended to uncover portions of the Acequia Madre. The amount, placement, and extent of the units will be determined by the results of the backhoe trenching in the area. Additional test units will be placed in areas that produced significant cultural remains during the shovel testing or backhoe trenching.

In addition to the shovel testing, backhoe trenching and unit excavations, CAR recommends that an archaeological monitor be present when excavating the areas of deep impact beneath the proposed building additions.

The archaeological investigations proposed to occur at the Witte Museum will allow the museum to incorporate the found resources in their improvements.

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