

**Archaeological Investigations of a Portion of the *Acequia Madre* at the Future Site of the San Antonio Children's Museum, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas**

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## **Abstract:**

On August 1, 2012, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas at San Antonio conducted archaeological backhoe trenching in an effort to rediscover and document a portion of the *Acequia Madre* (41BX8). CAR was contracted by Lake Flato Architects to fulfill the request of the City Archaeologist to investigate the Area of Potential Effect for the *Acequia Madre*. Backhoe trenching was conducted in three locations within the project area over the course of one day. Only one backhoe trench, Backhoe Trench 3, encountered definitive evidence of the *Acequia Madre*, although a ceramic drainage pipe had been installed in the *acequia* ditch. Backhoe Trench 1 exposed an old sewer line cross-cutting the *acequia* ditch, while Backhoe Trench 2 encountered no evidence of the *acequia*.

Deed research of the APE indicate that the proposed location of the San Antonio Children's Museum was part of the subdivision known as Brackenridge Place that was the site of residences and businesses during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The car dealership that was the last known occupant of the property was constructed during the early 1960s.

Trenches were photo-documented and mapped prior to being backfilled. No artifacts were collected during the course of the investigations. All project-related documentation is permanently curated at the CAR facility. No further investigations are recommended within the tract. The *acequia* appears to have already been impacted by the installation of a sewer line within it and cross-cut by utilities connecting the tract to neighboring developments. Historic maps show that the *acequia* runs along the margins of the property and will not be impacted by the footprint of the proposed development.

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Thanks also go to the employees at CAR that helped to complete the project. The field crew consisted of Cyndi Dickey and Kirsten Verostick. Steve Tomka, CAR Director, served as Principal Investigator and offered much guidance throughout the course of the project. Marybeth Tomka, Lab Director, processed the project-related documentation for curation. Rick Young prepared the figures for the report.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

In August of 2012, the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio was contracted by Lake Flato Architects to investigate a portion of the future site of the San Antonio Children's Museum. The investigations were conducted at the request of the San Antonio City Archaeologist. Previous research conducted in the vicinity of the project area indicated that a portion of the *Acequia Madre* (or *Alamo Acequia*) passed through the Area of Potential Effect (APE). If encountered, the feature was to be photo-documented, drawn to scale, and its location mapped with a Global Positioning System unit.

Because the project APE is privately owned and to date no City or State funds have been used in the project, a pedestrian survey permit was not solicited from the Texas Historical Commission. However, the CAR was recently informed that as the project moves forward, the construction of the parking area and associated outdoor landscaping will be supported by City bond funds. Because of the potential that the *Acequia Madre* would be impacted by the proposed project, the project did fall under the jurisdiction of Chapter 35 of the City of San Antonio's Unified Code of Development as administered by the City of San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation. Dr. Steve Tomka served as Project Manager and Kristi Miller Ulrich served as Project Archaeologist.

The *Acequia Madre* was constructed between 1719 and 1720 to provide irrigation water to Mission Valero, later known as the Alamo. While historians have suspected the route of the *acequia*, the exact location was unknown. Additionally, information was not available regarding the condition of the feature at the time of its closure or at the subsequent filling and burial. Therefore, the goal of investigation was to rediscover the location of the feature and to document its current condition. Historic maps were consulted prior to the commencement of the backhoe trenching to help place the path of the *acequia*.

## Location of the Area of Potential Effect

The proposed site is located east of Broadway, between Brackenridge Ave. and Humphrey Ave. Figure 1-1 shows the 5.4 acre APE on the San Antonio East (2998-133) USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle map. Currently, the APE contains a large structure and parking lots. The Museum intends to construct a new building with a ground level footprint measuring 41,532 sq. ft. The complex shall include all applicable parking, utilities, and site improvements bordered by the property lines of the project.

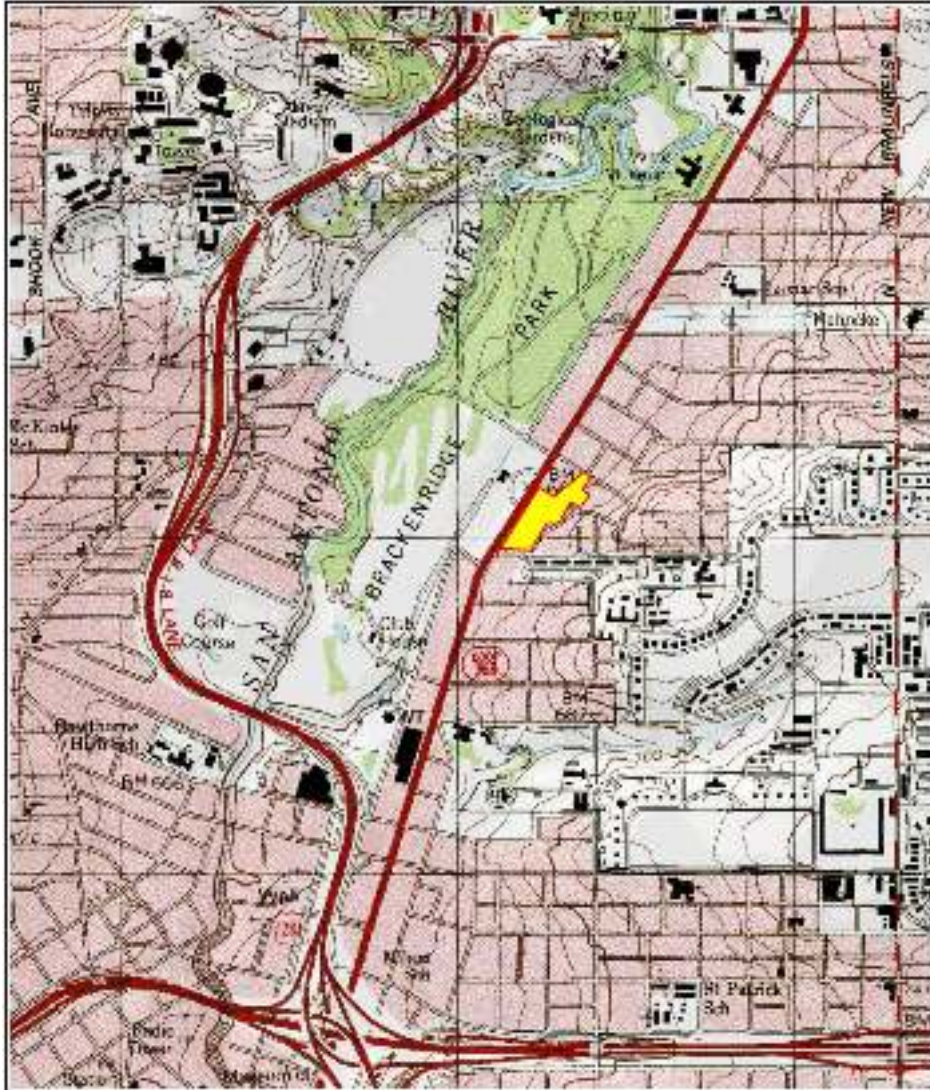


Figure 1-1. *Location of the APE on the San Antonio East (2998-133) USGS quadrangle map.*

The museum structure will consist of no more than two stories above grade and no more than one below grade. The project design and construction will be phased. At a minimum, demolition will be initially phased ahead of main building construction.

Located to the west of the APE is Brackenridge Park which has a mix of early prehistoric occupations and historic features. The entire park has been nominated for listing to the National Register of historic Places (NRHP). Located to the east of the APE is Fort Sam Houston. Fort Sam is a historic military facility that was established in 1879. The Fort is listed on the NRHP and is designated a National Landmark.

## **Chapter 2: Previous Archaeology and Historical Background**

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The area in the vicinity of the project area has undergone many archaeological investigations. Brackenridge Park, located just west of the APE, is rich in cultural resources providing valuable information of the occupation and use of the San Antonio River throughout prehistoric and historic times. Archaeological work within Brackenridge Park began as early as the late 1970s. CAR and the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) conducted two of the largest investigations of Brackenridge Park in 1979.

During the 1920s and 30s, amateur archaeologist, C.D. Orchard recorded twelve sites (41BX288, 41BX290, 41BX291, 41BX292, 41BX24, 41BX283, 41BX285, 41BX282, 41BX284, 41BX287, and 41BX289) and documented five additional concentrations of artifacts that were not designated as sites. Orchard published his findings in the 1960s and 70s (Fox 1975:3). The first archaeological survey near the project area was conducted by the CAR in 1975 (Fox 1975). This survey focused on documenting recorded sites on the grounds of Incarnate Word College (known today as the University of the Incarnate Word). During the course of the project, the twelve sites recorded by Orchard were visited as were the five concentrations of cultural remains. Of the twelve sites, eleven are located within a 0.8 km (0.5 mi.) radius of the current APE. 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. This midden yielded faunal remains, debitage, scrapers, gouges, and fragments of projectile points, as well as a couple of historic ceramic fragments. The site is approximately 250 m (820 ft.) in diameter and is suspected to extend to the southern end of a crescent mound as 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 (UIW) grounds. The quarry is rumored to have been first used during the Colonial Period, although no artifacts were noted to



support that claim. The quarry does not appear to have been used prior to 1890, and by 1938, it was abandoned. Located on the site was a metal frame bridge that was recommended for preservation (Fox 1975:4).

Site 41BX285 is also located on the UIW grounds. This site consists of the remains of a stone foundation. There were likely several stone 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 (1975) 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 UIW 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. Historic military encampments were located in the vicinity of the springs during the early nineteenth century according to historical records. Cultural materials dating to this period have not 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 located on the grounds of the UIW. According to local tradition, this stone cut structure was part of a mill. However, if its function was as a mill, the building would be considered very small, measuring at just 5.5 m (18 ft.) across. In addition to this, the current flow of the tributary would not provide enough water to support a mill.

Site 41BX287 is a possible historic dump located on the UIW grounds. The dump contained glass, ceramics, burned rock, bricks, and metal fragments. The majority of the artifacts found indicate a late nineteenth-century temporal affiliation.

Site 41BX289, also known as Fernridge, is a historic house located on the grounds of the UIW. The property was purchased by J.R. Sweet, who constructed the East Wing in 1852. George W. Brackenridge later purchased Sweet's holdings, and then built a three story addition to the structure in 1886. Each building episode is typical of the styles of the period. In 1872, Brackenridge offered the City of San Antonio the Sweet property, along with his other holdings, totaling 217 acres, for a sum of \$50,000. The City considered the offer for approximately two years before finally rejecting it due to the inability of both parties 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 it 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 twenty-three days during July and August. Ten 2-x-2 m (6.6-x-6.6 ft.) units were set up and two backhoe trenches were excavated. The excavations indicated a multi-component site with two major occupation episodes. The earlier episode dates to the Terminal Archaic (ca. 1750-1250 B.P.) and the later episode dates to the Late Prehistoric Period (ca. 1250-200 B.P.). 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 CAR conducted an archaeological and historical survey within the boundaries of Brackenridge Park. Four prehistoric sites were recorded. These included 41BX323, 41BX364, and 41BX222 (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 the 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 since been leveled and is currently covered with grass; however, there is a possibility that parts of the site remain. Artifacts noted included: cores, flakes, choppers, scrapers, burned rock, bifacial blanks, and several projectile points—all indicating an Early to Middle Archaic subperiod.

All four of the identified sites were partially destroyed and were deemed in danger of further destruction at the time of the survey in 1976. In addition to these recorded sites, eleven “collection localities” were noted that contained some prehistoric material, but enough material was not recorded to warrant site designation(s) (Katz and Fox 1979).

Additional archaeological work on the grounds of the UIW encountered a multi-component site, 41BX261. The prehistoric portion of the site is a possible lithic workshop dating to the Late Archaic. Artifacts encountered relating to the prehistoric sub-period 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 CAR conducted a pedestrian survey in the vicinity of the Olmos Dam to evaluate cultural deposits that might be affected by two proposed alternate roads through Olmos Basin. It was recommended that archaeological testing occur along the proposed routes (Brown 1977).

During November of 1977, the CAR 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 UIW property and into the Olmos Dam right-of-way. The site produced Paleo-Indian through Historic Period deposits.

In December of 1977, the CAR conducted test excavations at 41BX322. One unit was excavated to determine the content of the site and stratigraphic integrity of the deposits. The test unit indicated that the area was utilized as a temporary campsite. Temporally diagnostic materials were not recovered and further investigations were not recommended (Fox and Frkuska 1978).

The CAR conducted archaeological investigations at portions of 41BX1 spanning 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 a single Paleo-Indian point recovered from one excavation area. The excavation of the burials provided a wealth of information on the people, as well as insights into the burial practices of the Late Archaic sub-period (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 to investigate the Second Water Works Canal prior to the installation of a proposed pipeline. SWCA recommended that 41BX323 either be avoided or construction impacts mitigated. This was due to the potential the site had for producing information concerning the paleo-environment, prehistoric technology and subsistence patterns of the region. Additionally, 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 easement. The investigation

produced Archaic deposits with intact burned rock features and a shallow Late Prehistoric deposit along one terrace. Cultural deposits at the site appear to date primarily to the Early Archaic, with evidence of occupation in the Late and Transitional Archaic sub-periods (Miller et al. 1999).

In 2001, SWCA returned to Brackenridge Park once more to conduct a survey of 28.3 acres of the park (Houk and Miller 2001). The western portion of the survey focused on 41BX323. Much of the site produced sparse cultural materials, although a concentration of burned rock, debitage, and mussel shell were yielded along one section. With the potential for the site to produce additional information about the prehistoric occupation of the area recognized once more, Site 41BX323 was again recommended for further testing, if impacts were to occur within the site boundaries. In addition to visiting 41BX323, a previous unrecorded site was documented 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 consisted of an Enser point, burned rock, and debitage. The historic component is at or near the surface and comprises historic ceramics, glass fragments, and metal objects that date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Houk and Miller 2001).

In September 2007, the CAR conducted archaeological investigations at 41BX323 consisting of both a pedestrian survey and a controlled excavation of test units and trenches. 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; however, the absence of temporally diagnostic artifacts makes a positive assignment to this time period impossible (Figueroa 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 in the area were excavated down to the water table. Diagnostic material was not recovered from the trenches, but excavators did note the presence of debitage, charcoal, and burned rock. Within the trenches, historic ceramics were noted as well, and these consisted of fragments of white earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain. In addition to ceramics, other historic items included: 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 H-E-B Treehouse located on the

grounds of the Witte Museum. In 2000, twenty-three test units were excavated to examine the prehistoric component of the site. During fieldwork, three Archaic Period features were encountered in test units. Despite natural erosion and bio-turbation affecting the integrity of the deposits, the site still 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. A prehistoric component was revealed during the investigation, located approximately 120 cm (42.2 in.) below the current surface (Cox et al. 1999). The prehistoric component consisted of lithic debitage. During the course of the investigation, Site 41BX1273 was identified and documented as the location of the Upper Labor Dam. This dam was constructed of limestone blocks in 1776 by Spanish colonists. Its function was to divert water from the river to the Upper Labor *Acequia*. The dam was modified with dressed stone during the nineteenth century and set at a slightly different orientation.

### ***Acequia Madre (41BX8)***

The *Acequia Madre* (41BX8) is the name given to the irrigation ditch that had its head gates located on the grounds of the Witte Museum. The *Acequia Madre* is one of the oldest *acequias* established in the San Antonio area. The location and path of the *acequia* (as with all *acequias*) was carefully planned and executed. For the construction of the *Acequia Madre*, the head gate had to be placed in a location along the San Antonio River where rising water could be diverted into the *acequia* channel with relative ease. It is highly likely that the engineer of the early *acequias* in San Antonio was Captain Álvarez Barreiro. Captain Barreiro was a member of the Royal Corps of Engineers and accompanied Governor Alarcón to San Antonio. The construction of the *Acequia Madre* commenced in 1719. The ditch was considered massive, although it was said to have not required much effort to construct in its northern area due to the natural topography of the region. The *acequia* ran past Mission San Antonio de Valero, then re-entered the river at about a 2.4 km (1.5 mi.) south of the mission. The completed *acequia* was located approximately 5.6 km (3.5 mi.) from the head gates. Considering later additions and the many branches along the route, the *acequia*'s total length was approximately 16.1 km (10 mi.). Additions were constructed to irrigate farmlands located to both the south and east of the mission (Cox 2005).

The exact date of the completion of the *Acequia Madre* is unknown. Nonetheless, based on several accounts in the Spanish Colonial records, it took years to complete. In 1720, records noted that increased attacks from the Apaches caused work on the *acequia* to halt while Mission Valero was being fortified. A hurricane struck the San Antonio area in 1824, and accounts mentioned that the *acequia* was still under

construction. By this time, it seems that the equipment employed in the construction of the *acequia* had changed from a simple plow to crowbars (Cox 2005). The Aguayo Map (Figure 2-1) drawn in the late 1720s, shows that the *Acequia Madre*, at this time, was completed up to Mission Valero and possibly up to a portion of town near Villa de San Antonio de Bexar, but it did not re-enter the river in the area of the present day King William District (Schuetz 1970).

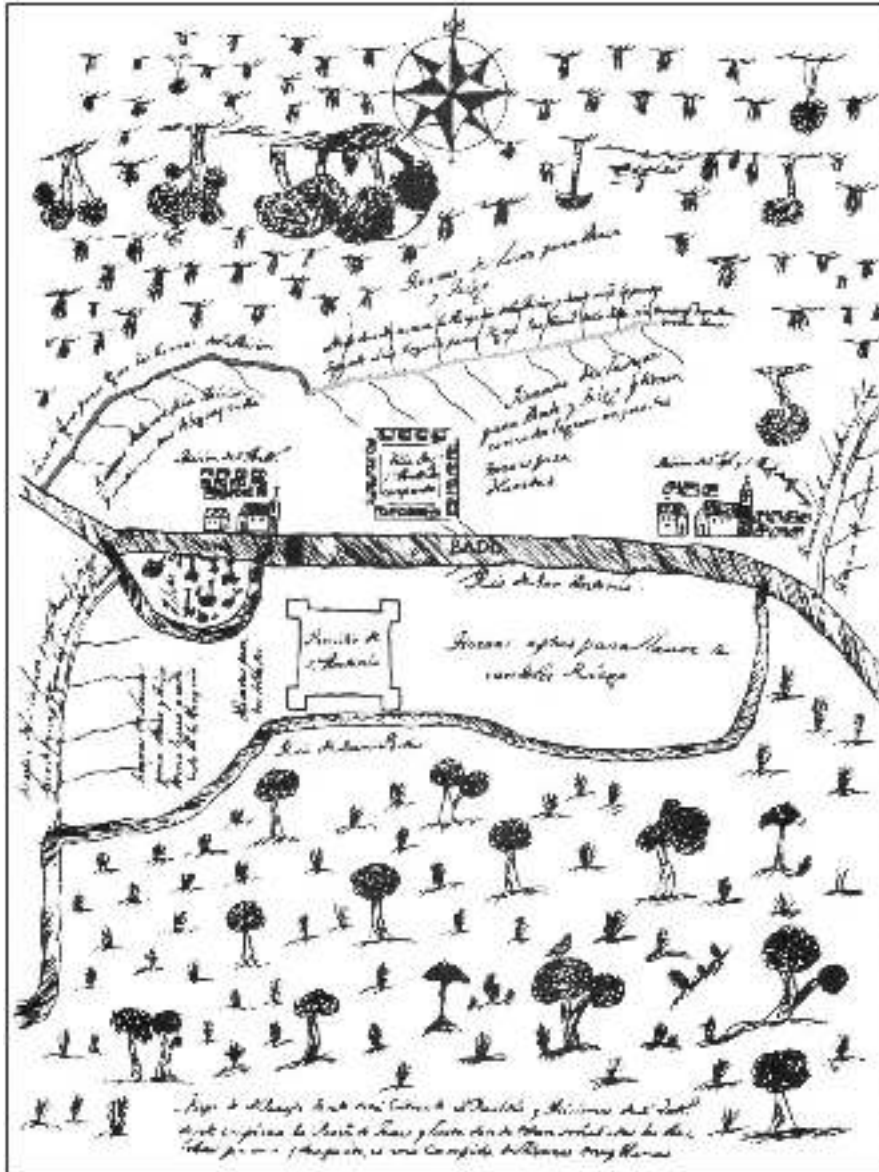


Figure 2-1. *The Aguayo map depicting San Antonio in the 1720s.*

The 1764 map drawn by Manchaca (Figure 2-2) illustrates that the *Acequia Madre* led to Mission Valero. On this map, the path south of the mission is highlighted in blue (Schuetz 1970).

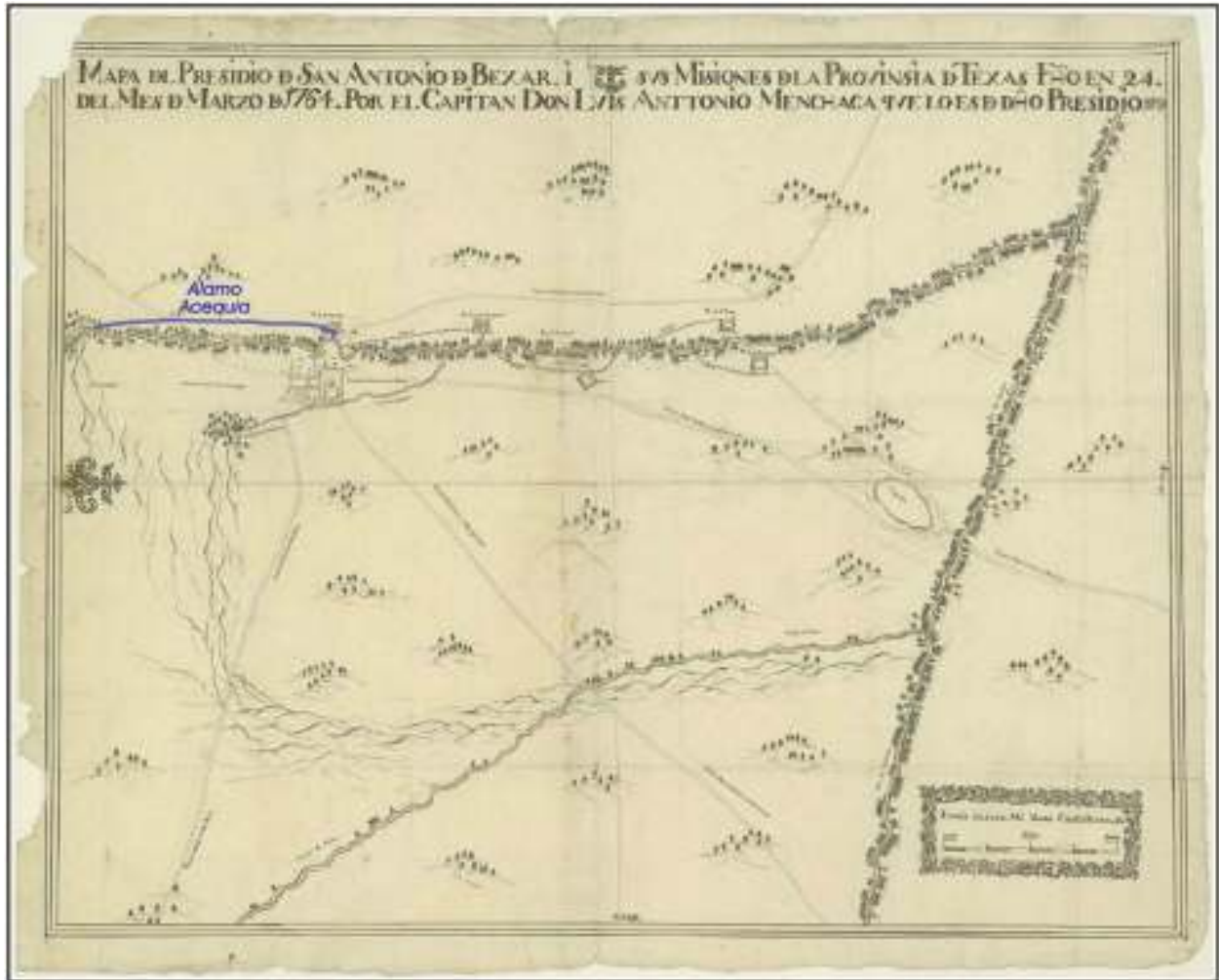


Figure 2-2. *The Antonio Manchaca map showing San Antonio de Béxar in 1764.*

The intended and exclusive purpose of the *Acequia Madre* was to serve the lands of Mission Valero and its native inhabitants. The *acequia* irrigated the crop lands associated with the mission, providing a water source to the mission itself, as well as to the livestock on its ranchlands and corrals. The *acequia* also served as the main water source for the community that sprang up immediately surrounding the mission. The remaining community of San Fernando de Bexar and Villa de Bexar were serviced by the *San Pedro Acequia*, constructed after the arrival of the Canary Islanders in 1731 (Glick 1972). The *Acequia Madre* continued to serve Mission Valero and the adjacent community throughout the entirety of the mission period.

The process of the *dula* (turn) appears to have been put into effect by the 1740s. Water use from the *acequia* was allotted into time slots with each inhabitant receiving a set time of water use per cycle. This was designed as a fair way of distributing water throughout the route of the *acequias*. However, many

disputes between the townspeople and mission inhabitants were recorded during these early years. Council documents in 1747 indicate that each *dula* lasted about four days for the *labors*, and one day for the town (Glick 1972). One person had to be elected to manage the division of time every fifth day for the town. That person would have to determine whose gates could be open and for how long, ensuring that all the townspeople along the path of the *acequia* would receive their fair share (Glick 1972). Secularization of the mission in 1794 paved the way for additional usage and changes to the *acequia* in the next few decades. Despite changes, it appears that the system of the *dula* continued even after the mission lands were parceled out.

After secularization, committees were formed that set forth the rules and regulations of the usage of the *acequias*. Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, but political turmoil did not stop the everyday functioning of the City of San Antonio or the needs of the community when it came to water use allotments. During meetings, the City Council would often bring up issues concerning the use and upkeep of the *acequias*. As early as 1828, proposals of closing certain *acequias* were brought before the council. The Concepción *Acequia* was recommended for closure at its head gates, and a proposal to connect it with the *Acequia Madre* to serve farmlands south of the *Acequia Madre*. This proposal was brought to the council because the Concepción Dam could not perform during times of heavy rains, and the erosion it caused threatened the integrity of roads leading into the lower missions. A committee was formed to investigate the ditch and the potential for connecting it with the *Acequia Madre* in order to determine what would be the best solution. After several years, although no formal solution was found, the City Council required that the landholders along the Concepción *Acequia* be responsible for keeping the dam and ditch in working order and for determining a way to stop the erosion (Cox 2005).

By the fall of 1834, a cholera epidemic was in full swing in San Antonio. Citizens did not realize that the disease was spread through contaminated water or that the main culprit was the *acequia* system. The death toll was not fully recorded, but by October of that year, many had died of the disease.

The following year, unrest in the region occurred once more. In 1835, General Cós occupied San Antonio and worked to fortify Mission Valero, which was now called the Alamo. The *Acequia Madre* originally ran through the mission compound and had supplied the inhabitants with water throughout the mission period. General Cós worried about the possibility of enemy troops contaminating the water supply to the north of The Alamo, and he ordered that the *acequia* be diverted to flow outside of the Alamo complex. A well was dug within the compound to supply soldiers with water from that point onward (Cox 2005).

After Texas won its independence from Mexico, the same ordinances were followed until a new



government was set up that could handle the needs of the new territory and its communities. By March of 1838, a council was set up in San Antonio that decided the new regulations regarding the use of the *acequias*. The main impetus for these new regulations was the need to improve the sanitation of the irrigation ditches and the river. The main tenets of these regulations were that there would be no slaughtering of animals within the city limits, or in areas that would contaminate either the *acequias* or the creeks to the north of the city. In addition, the council decided that the owners of the parcels of land along the *acequias* still needed to maintain them as set forth prior in the ordinances of the Spanish Colonial period.

Beginning in 1840, discussion of widening the *acequias* was brought before the council. The idea was quickly tabled due to a Comanche attack on San Antonio. A few years later, due to the influx of European immigrants, the ordinances concerning the use of the *acequia* was revisited.

German immigration into San Antonio led to a change in the appearance of the *acequias*. Portions were stone-lined by the German occupants. A portion of the *Acequia Madre* that ran through the developed part of town in the nineteenth century was lined with cut limestone. Evidence of this was found during the 1966 excavations that took place after the demolition of structures in preparation for HemisFair. A portion of the stone-lined *Acequia Madre* within HemisFair Park was excavated in 1966 and restored. Artifacts recovered during these excavations indicated that the *acequia* was kept clean and in working order during the Spanish Colonial period. The material recovered from the investigation dated to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, coinciding with the closure of the *Acequia Madre*.

In December of 1968, another portion of the *Acequia Madre* was uncovered in association with the Zilker Property, located approximately two blocks northeast of Mission Valero. This section was also lined with cut limestone. The property had been a pastureland during the Spanish Colonial period and was portioned into a city lot during the city survey in 1852 (Schuetz 1970). Although the property was owned by the Charles Zilker, it appears that he did not purchase the parcel until 1909, after the closure of the *Acequia Madre*. It is likely that the lining of the ditch occurred after the parcel of land was sold in 1852.

A torrential rainstorm that occurred on March 26, 1865, caused much flooding throughout the developed portion of the City. After the clean-up of the damage, flood prevention became a hot topic at the City Council meetings. At this time, it was proposed that another branch off of the *Acequia Madre* should be created to bring water to the east side of San Antonio. A committee met at the Alamo Dam to inspect the possibility of adding the branch. The dam was described as being in good condition with only minor repairs that were necessary.

The committee also viewed the head gates and the channel of the *acequia* itself during this meeting. The head gate at the time was said to be in good condition, needing only minor repair. It was reported as being “[...a] double gate, about eight feet in width and six feet in depth” (Cox 2005). The committee stated that about 1.2 m (4 ft.) of water was being held back within the gate. This was ascertained at the time of the annual cleaning; therefore, the gate was closed. Additional observations indicated that the gate needed to only be opened about a third of the way to supply the ditch with sufficient water or else it would overflow the banks of the *acequia*.

The proposed new ditch was approved by the council, but the drive to construct the ditch never reached full momentum. Even a year after the 1865 meeting, the new ditch was not under construction. The idea was revived again four years later, though at this time a different location was suggested (Cox 2005). The *Acequia Madre* did not undergo any changes at that time.

The water works system that was put into use in 1878 led to the reassessment of the necessity for and sanitation of the *acequias* in San Antonio. Drinking water was no longer obtained from *acequias*, and they were functioning for the most part as storm drainage ditches soon after the water works was constructed. The ditch commissioner was tasked to investigate the subject to determine how much it would cost to keep the *acequias* working and whether or not this was necessary. The 1880 inspection of the *Acequia Madre* noted that the head gates needed to be repaired. It was recommended that the gate at the Brackenridge be augmented with a second gate placed about 1 m (3.28 ft.) behind the existing wall, and cement was to fill the space between (Cox 2005). In addition, it was noted that the banks of the *Acequia Madre* were overflowing and flooding fields. To remedy that, the council suggested that “heavy banks of earth be thrown up, using lumber also where the weakest points are” (Cox 2005).

By the 1890s, the need for City *acequias* was no longer necessary. By this time, they posed more of a health hazard. Between 1899 and 1901, the *Acequia Madre* came under attack because it was too narrow to contain the storm water and act as a proper drainage ditch. The upkeep expenses led the council to start closing the ditches. The *Acequia Madre* was ordered closed in 1901. Although citizens argued that the *acequia* was a much needed outlet for storm water, the council won out, and the ditch was closed at a cost of \$2,800. Shortly thereafter, the closure of the *Acequia Madre* led to drainage problems. Storm water would pool in areas along the path of the ditch and flood City streets, making some areas impassable. Plans were made to improve the drainage in areas that would reduce the flooding to both the *acequia* and roads. As a consequence, the ditch was ordered to be re-opened in 1903.

In 1905, the *Acequia Madre* was ordered closed once more. It was estimated that it would cost

approximately \$2,000 to fill the ditch, but an alderman came up with an alternate, cost-efficient plan. He suggested that the ditch be filled with street sweepings, dramatically reducing the cost to closing the ditch. By mid-1905, the *Acequia Madre* was closed for the final time (Cox 2005). Though the *acequia* was closed, the path of the ditch was noted on several maps of the area that were drawn after 1905. These maps, plus ones that were drawn in the mid to late 1800s, were used to help determine the path of the *acequia* near the current project area (Figure 2-3).

## **Nineteenth-Century San Antonio**

During the nineteenth century, many changes occurred throughout San Antonio as a result of the unrest that was brewing between Texas and Mexico. After Texans gained their independence, San Antonio witnessed an influx of people who helped to shape cultural and physical landscape of the growing town.

Though plans were entertained in 1828 to change the *Acequia Madre* to be able to irrigate additional cropland, they never came to fruition. Initial ideas were to create a new ditch at the Alamo Dam to service the area between Alamo City and Powderhouse Hill (Cox 2005). Plans appeared to stall, until the idea was taken back up in again 1867. A study was conducted of the current *Acequia Madre* and the Alamo Dam to determine if the creation of a new ditch was possible. The cause gained momentum, with City Council approving the proposed route, but within a year, it appeared that any plans of altering the *acequia* had died. No work was ever completed on the proposed alterations of the *Acequia Madre*.

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. Land to the north was used for farming and ranching.

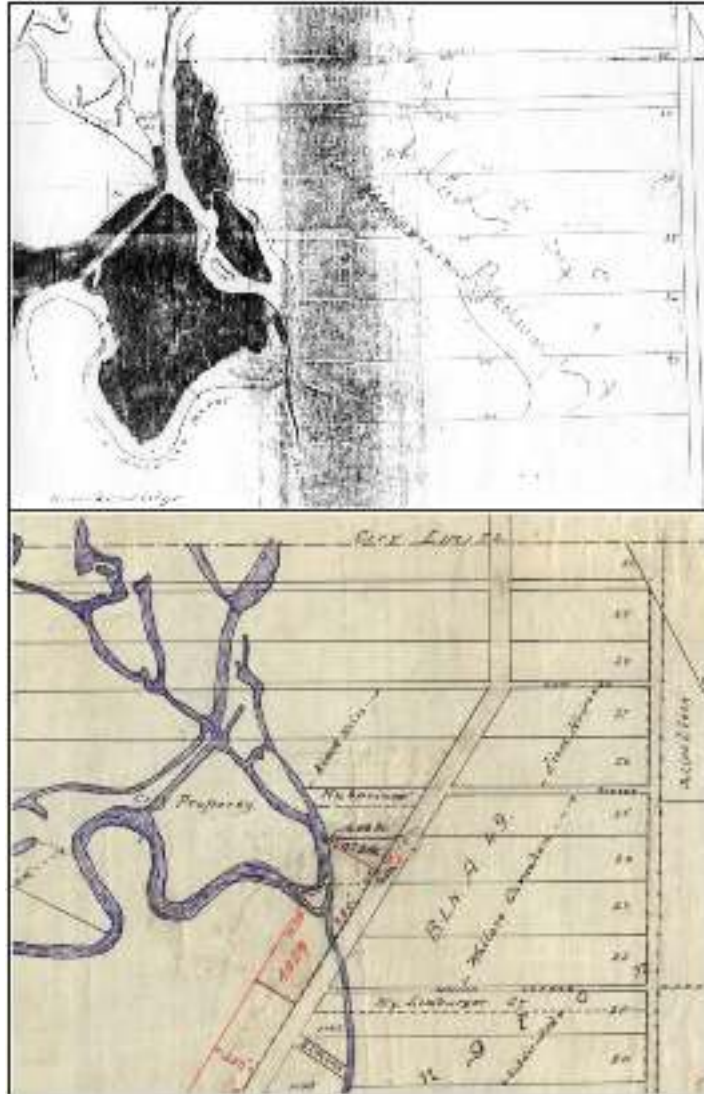


Figure 2-3. *The 1879 Giraud map (top) compared to the 1908 City Engineer map (bottom) showing the area of the headwaters of the Acequia Madre.*

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 rural, 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, J. R. Sweet. Seventeen years later, it was acquired by George W. Brackenridge.

Brackenridge moved to San Antonio in late 1865. His success as a cotton trader during the Civil War and his connections with political and business leaders both statewide and nationally served him well. In early 1866, Brackenridge established the San Antonio National Bank, which 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. Brackenridge named his new home “Fernridge” because the word “bracken” is the Scottish word for “fern” (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 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 Reconstructionist politics and an overall lack of public support.

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

The City had failed to reacquire the headwaters and was not making progress in establishing a public water system. It was in this context that 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.

Brackenridge acquired four of the five upper lots in the tannery tract to the west of and adjoining the river in 1875. Brackenridge 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 owned by Francois Guilbeau. The land was bounded on both the west and the 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 a 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 this June trip that Maverick purchased the property at auction for the high bid of \$267, placing it in his wife's name (BCDR B2:162; Maverick 1921:78-81). The Mavericks' 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 into 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).

In 1899, 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 by newspapers 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 76 m- (250 ft.) wide strip running the length of the property along the west side of River Ave., and a 7.6 m (25 ft.) 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 to the banks of the river and *acequia*. A fence was built around the park and access was restricted to two locations. 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 issue of access remained unresolved until after Brackenridge sold the Water Works in 1906.

The use of *acequias* in San Antonio to supply water to its inhabitants began to decline around the turn of the century. This was due to many factors: several cholera epidemics, the constant need to repair the *acequias*, and the fact that people were using them to discard trash and sewage, which made them unsanitary. Thus, city officials were encouraged to close them. In 1905, the *acequia* was ordered to be closed. Street sweepings were used to fill the ditch, and the *Acequia Madre* was not opened again (Cox 2005). Although the *acequia* was closed, the route of the irrigation ditch was still drawn on later maps of San Antonio. One of these is the 1908 City Engineer Map of San Antonio (Figure 2-4). The map depicts the head of the *acequia* and its route past the current APE.

In addition to Brackenridge Park, another important historical site located near the current APE is Fort Sam Houston. Prior to 1870, military occupation in San Antonio had centered on the Alamo and the San Antonio Arsenal. After the Civil War, it was determined that leasing property for the US Army to use as training and housing facilities was no longer cost effective. To address this issue, the military began a search for a suitable permanent location. Locations in New Braunfels and Austin were offered, but San Antonio did not want lose its military presence. The City decided to donate land for use as a permanent military post. After several offers, the City of San Antonio ultimately donated 92 acres located approximately 3.2 km (2 mi.) from the Alamo in 1875. The site was referred to as Government Hill. Construction of the Quadrangle commenced in 1876. Over the next 10 years additional structures were constructed including a Post HQ, barracks, a hospital, additional office space, officers' quarters, and married NCO quarters. In 1886, an additional 310 acres were purchased for a rifle range and training field. By 1890, the post was officially named Fort Sam Houston after the General and President of the Republic of Texas. Fort Sam at the time was the second largest post in the Army (Fort Sam Houston Museum 2004). Fort Sam has grown and is still an active military post today. Fort Sam has over 800 historic structures and represents over a century of the Army's architectural heritage. The original Quadrangle is still present, though not used in the same capacity. The Post is listed as a National Historic Landmark (Fort Sam Houston Museum 2004).

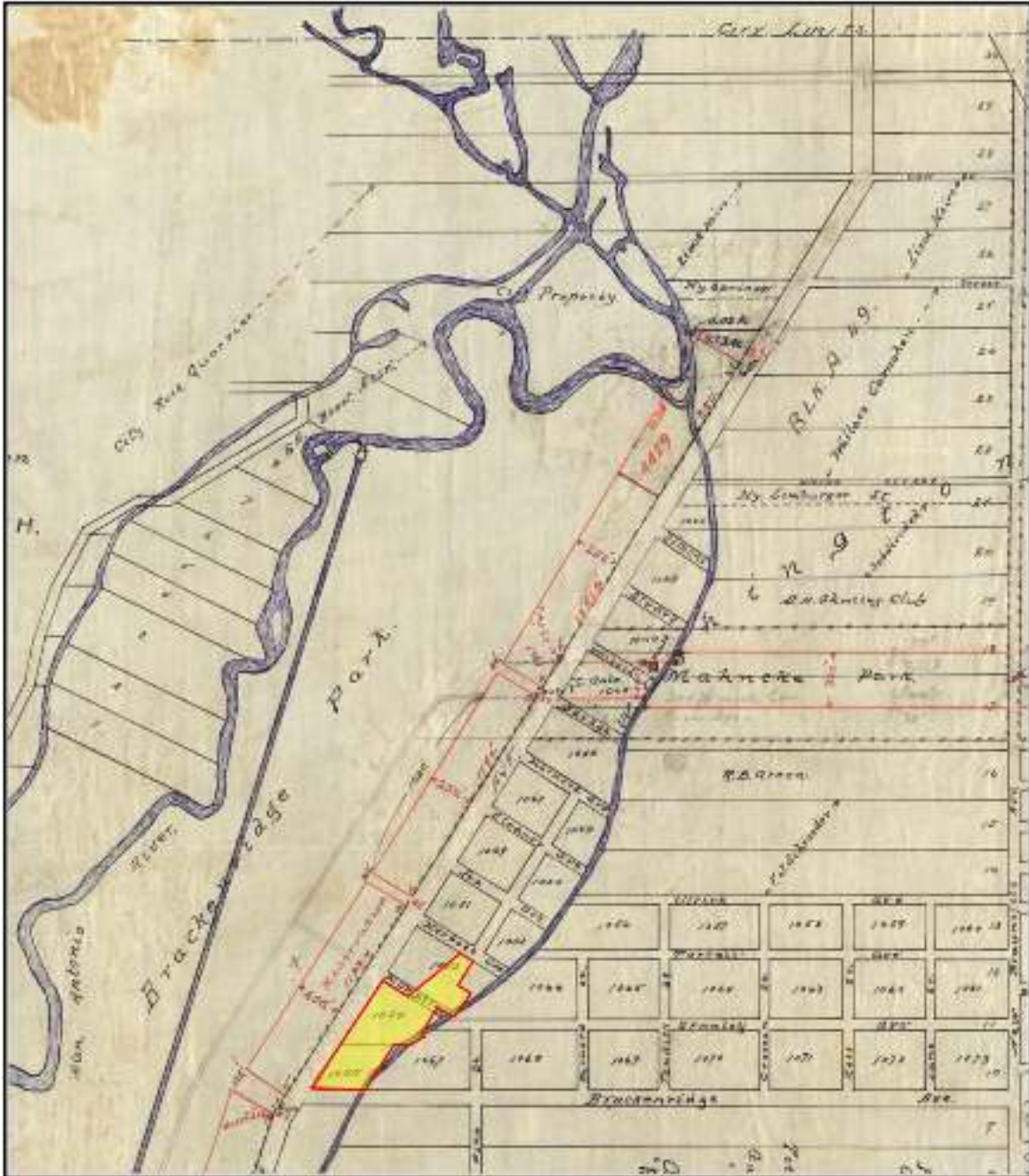


Figure 2-4. The current APE on the 1908 City Engineer's map of San Antonio.

### Deed History of the APE

Brackenridge not only held the majority of the land that would later become Brackenridge Park, he also obtained a large portion spanning between the San Antonio River and New Braunfels Ave., extending north past Austin Highway and likely further south than Brackenridge Ave. Prior to 1893, Brackenridge helped to form the Washington Heights Improvement Company (BCDR 118:326). Brackenridge had



retained the rights to much of the property until this time, but he partitioned out a section of land into smaller lots on the east side of River Road (currently Broadway Ave.) and west of the *Acequia Madre*. The Washington Heights subdivision was the creation of the portioning of lots. A plat drawn up in 1892 depicted how the lots were divided (BCDR 105:19; Figure 2-5). Under the Washington Heights Improvement Company, President Joseph Hallock oversaw the distribution of the lots, whereas Brackenridge just sat on the Board of Directors. One of the earliest plats indicates that Washington Heights encompassed the area from just north of Harwood Ave. (now Natalen Ave.) to south of Humphrey Ave. where a part of Charles St. was located. The subdivision was bound on the west by River Road (now Broadway) and on the east by the *Acequia Madre* (referred to as the Alamo Ditch). The southern boundary appears to be where Brackenridge Ave. is today. Immediately to the east of Washington Heights was Oakland Terrace subdivision, which was also on land that was owned by Brackenridge. Individual lots were partitioned out prior to the plat drawn in 1890 (BCDR 72:506).

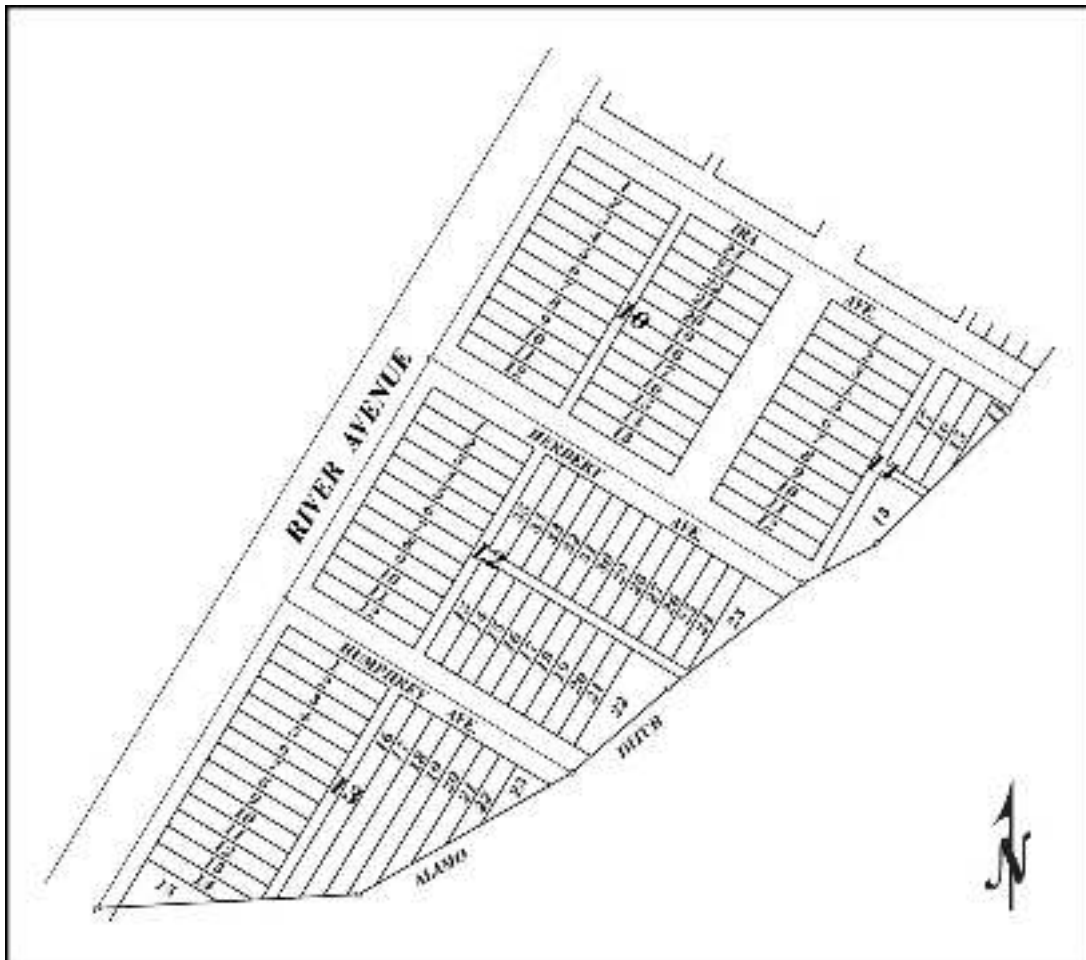


Figure 2-5. A portion of the 1892 plat of Washington Heights. The current APE is located within Blocks 12 and 13.

In April of 1909, the Washington Heights Improvement Company conveyed a large portion of the subdivision to B. G. Irish and H. E. Dickenson for the sum of \$21,000 (BCDR 326:73). This sale led to the creation of Brackenridge Place, as indicated by a plat drawn in 1909 (BCDR 105:248; Figure 2-6). The current APE was included in this sale, though the city block designations do not match up to the current numbers. The deed references the center of the Alamo Ditch as the eastern boundary. At this time, the ditch should no longer have been in use. The *acequia* had been shut since 1905 but still appeared on the plat. Similar to other transactions that Brackenridge conducted, he inserted the requirements that prohibited the sale and distribution of alcohol on the premises. It did make the exception that alcohol could “be used socially in private residence” (BCDR 326:74). The deed also indicated that the property could not be used for any illegal purpose. Should the owner violate the restrictions, the property was to pass to the State of Texas for the benefit of the University of Texas. Brackenridge had very strong views on the consumption and distribution of alcohol. Because of these views, certain tracts of land that he deeded to the City for public use are still bound to the restrictions on alcohol.

A portion of the APE was conveyed to Herman Hummert by M.H. Townsend in February of 1910 (BCDR 331:175). Hummert paid \$1,200 for Lots 9 and 10 in Block 15. Similar to the restrictions that Brackenridge had put on the properties within Washington Heights, no sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages was allowed. In addition, the property was not allowed to be used as a business other than a boarding or lodging house or a hotel. Other restrictions included that it was not to be used to treat or house for profit people who had tuberculosis or any other contagious disease and that the property could not be sold to or occupied by Mexicans or African Americans unless they were servants. A structure worth less than \$2000 was not permitted to be erected on the property, and chicken coops, stables, or privies were not to be constructed to front or abut the street. It was common for land transactions in this area to have these stipulations during the early part of the twentieth century. Hummert conveyed Lot 9 to Max Moellinger in October of 1945. The contract stated that the Grantee was to adhere to the stipulations that were put forth in the original deed between Hummert and Townsend (BCDR 2175:109). Townsend and Irish were partners, as Irish was mentioned in the 1945 deed. In January of 1960, the San Antonio Development Company conveyed Lot 9 Block 15 to O.R. Mitchell Motors (BCDR 4403:15).

In November of 1909, Townsend, who appeared to be working with Irish, conveyed Lots 13, 14, 15, and 16 in Block 15 to W. A. Kelly. The lots were sold for a sum of \$2,300 (BCDR 344:215). It appears that at some point the lots reverted back to Townsend because a quitclaim exists that indicates that as part of the Last Will and Testament of Townsend the property was sold to Julia Cloonan in 1929 (BCDR1091:524). At the time of this record, another quitclaim was processed in February of 1929 that

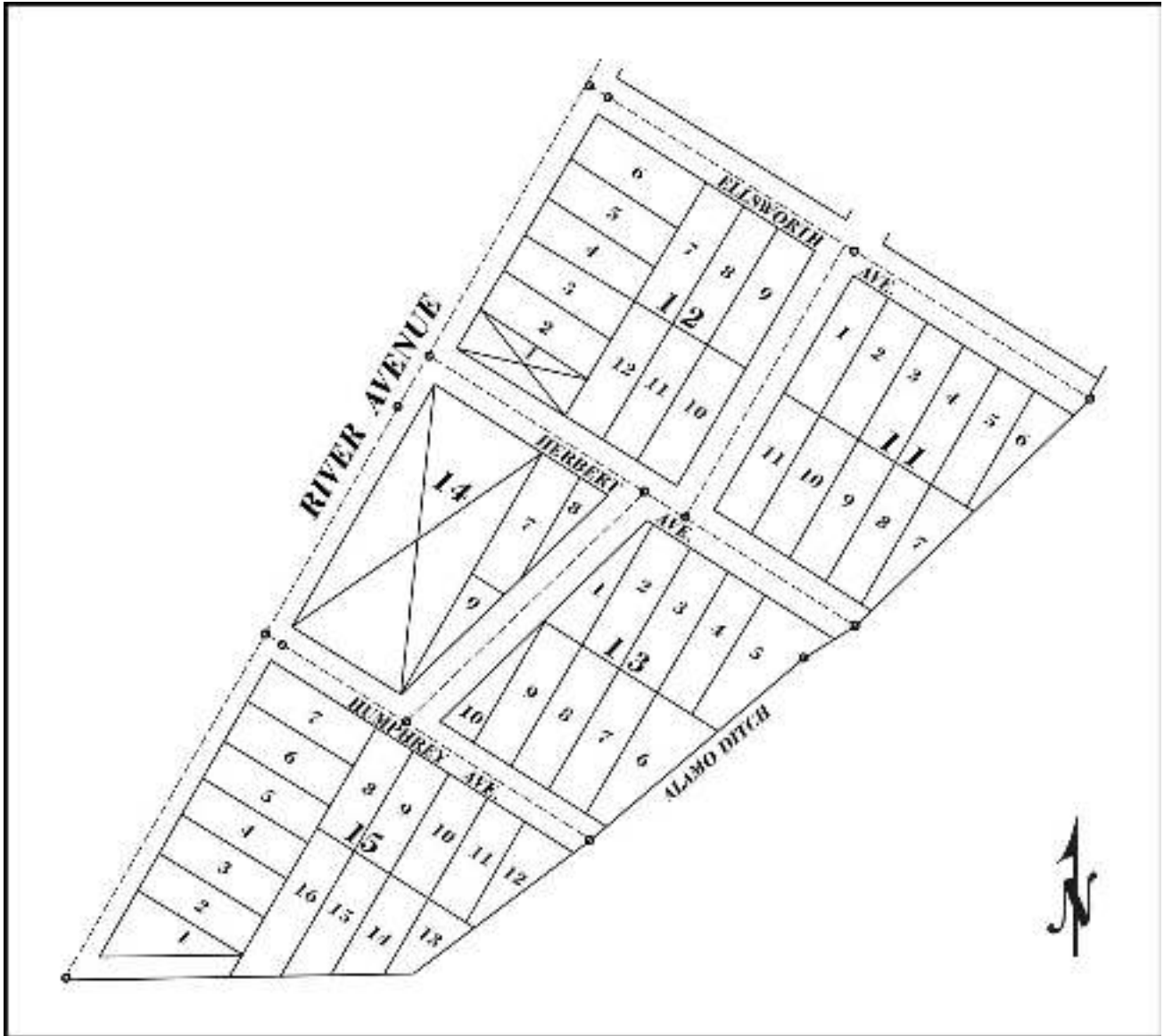


Figure 2-6. A portion of the 1909 plat depicting Brackenridge Place. The current APE is located in Blocks 13 and 15.

indicated that B.G. Irish had conveyed Lots 1 and 2 of Block 15 to Julia Cloonan (BCDR 1091:525). Cloonan died on July 24, 1924, so these transactions would have been for the benefit of her heirs (BCDR 1243:228). George Cloonan, heir to Julia Cloonan, sold all six lots to J.L. and Lola H. Wass in December of 1944 (BCDR 2099:315). In October of 1945, Wass conveyed Lot 1 Block 15 to Max Moellinger (BCDR 2173:305). Then in a separate deed, Wass conveyed the remaining 5 lots to Moellinger in the same month as well (BCDR 2171:305). In October of 1950, Moellinger conveyed all six lots plus additional property to the San Antonio Development Company, Inc. (BCDR 2925:545).

In October of 1917, Irish conveyed Lot 1 Block 15 to Manuel Mercado (BCDR 544:44). Interesting to

note is that previous deeds stated that the property within the subdivision was not to be sold or inhabited by “Negroes or Mexicans”. This transaction left out the restriction that the property could not be sold to Mexicans but retained the stipulation against African Americans. All other restrictions remained the same.

In January of 1910, Townsend conveyed another portion of the APE to J. H. Berry. The same restrictions set out in the previously discussed deed were also set out in this transaction. Berry purchased Lot 10 in Block 13 for a sum of \$350. A vendor’s lien was retained on the property to ensure that proper payment of the note was made (BCDR 374:39). The name of the subdivision was noted as being Brackenridge Place rather than Washington Heights in this and subsequent deeds. In May of 1912, Townsend conveyed Lot 8 in Block 15 to Alfred Jonas for the sum of \$600 (BCDR391:462). Similar to the previous transactions, the deed attached a series of restrictions. In December of 1923, Jonas conveyed the property to Herman and Lena Koepp for the sum of \$300 (BCDR 748:441). Koepp conveyed the property in March of 1926 to Hilmer and Ann Rose Schmidt for a sum of \$500 (BCDR 864:544). Hilmer Schmidt conveyed the property to his son, Hilmer Jr., in October of 1933 (BCDR 1441:624), who conveyed the property to O.R. Mitchell Motors (BCDR 4387:214) in November of 1959.

In December of 1917, B. G. Irish conveyed Lot 7 and half of Lot 6 in Block 15 to Pearl Fryer (BCDR 528:460). Part of the transaction required that Fryer paid \$290.26 to Eureka Paving Company to fulfill a paving lien that had been placed on the property. The deed also listed the same requirements as mentioned in the previous deed transactions. In April of 1918, B.G. Irish conveyed one half of Lot 6 in Block 15 for a sum of \$575 to Pearl Fryer (BCDR 634:272). At the time of this deed, the grantor required that in addition to previous stipulations no dwelling valued less than \$3,000 was permitted to be constructed on the property. In October of 1959, Turner and Moore conveyed Lots 6 and 7 Block 15 to O.R. Mitchell Motors for a sum of \$66,000 (BCDR 4371:139). In January of 1960, Moore and Turner released Mitchell Motors from the vendor’s lien after receiving payment in full (BCDR 4411:434).

In April of 1919, Irish sold Lot 3 Block 15 to Mrs. Marion Roseberry for a sum of \$1,500 (BCDR 581:475). This deed reverts back to the original stipulations. In January of 1920, Roseberry conveyed the property to Ernest Gomez for a sum of \$1,500 (BCDR 584:413). The previous restrictions were present in the 1920 deed. It appears that Gomez defaulted on the agreement. In April of 1925, Roseberry conveyed the property to James and Inez Nix (BCDR 818:457). This sale released Roseberry from a Vendor’s Lien executed by Irish (BCDR 818:458). Nix conveyed the property to T. H. Peay in March of 1934 (BCDR 1391:206). Peay conveyed Lot 3 Block 15 to Marvin Ash in November of 1939 for a sum of \$3,500 (BCDR 1731:203). Ash conveyed the property to Inez Nix in October of 1940 (BCDR

1801:579). It appears that Inez Nix, who was a widow in 1940, remarried. Her husband, Richard Chapman, and she entered into a lease with O.R. Mitchell in October of 1959. In February of 1980, after Inez Nix Chapman had passed, the executor of her estate conveyed the property to Eugene Sondles (BCDR 1862:348). Eugene Sondles sold the Lot to Michael Gulley for a sum of \$49,000 in February of 1983 (BCDR 2769:1470). In August of 1984, Gulley conveyed the lot to Torrado and Associates for the sum of \$78,000 (BCDR 3203:346).

In April of 1920, Irish conveyed Lots 4 and 5 of Block 15 to C. H. Woodson and his wife, Emily Woodson (BCDR 639:81). The Woodsons paid a sum of \$3,000 for the two lots. In June of 1920, Irish conveyed Lot 2 in Block 15 to Margarita de Alonso. Alonso paid a sum of \$1,500 for the lot (BCDR 691:532). Alonso's deed restrictions were the same except the restriction against selling or leasing the property to "Mexicans" was not present. In August of 1921, Mary Arnesen purchased Lot 11 Block 15 from Irish, via his attorney (BCDR 648:371). Arnesen paid a sum of \$900 for the lots and agreed to the same requirements as laid out in previously discussed deeds. Arnesen's contract did not include the stipulation that the property could not be sold or inhabited by "Mexicans". In May of 1953, William and Elizabeth Warner purchased the lot from Arnesen for a sum of \$5,000 (BCDR 1971:267). Marietta Cones, a widow, purchased the property from the Warners in May of 1944 for a sum of \$4,500 (BCDR 2057:127). In July of 1956, Marietta Cones conveyed the property to Jack and Jane Cones. It may be that Jack was Marietta's son, as she is listed as a widow during the transaction (BCDR 3897:371). Cones conveyed Lot 11 Block 15 to O. R. Mitchell Motors in April of 1960 (BCDR 4437:363).

In April of 1922, Irish conveyed to Mattie Cameron Lots 6 and 7 in Block 13. Cameron paid \$550 for the two lots (BCDR 689:538). In October of 1922, Irish sold half of Lot 9 in Block 13 to Pearl Crabtree for a sum of \$362.50 (BCDR 722:547). The restriction about the sale and distribution of alcohol is missing from this deed transaction. The other half of Lot 9 Block 13 was conveyed to Mary Stuart Edwards for a sum of \$810 in September of 1928 (BCDR 1057:322). Irish conveyed Lot 7 Block 13 to Howard Doebbler in May of 1924 (BCDR 769:625). Doebbler purchased the lot for a sum of \$650. Again, this deed lacks the prohibition on alcohol.

In February of 1978, Mitchell Motors conveyed the lots to Elwood Cluck. The principle sum of the promissory note was for \$700,000. Cluck, who was one of the partners, was acting on behalf of Bill Heil Properties (BCDR 2869:1422). In July 1983, all of the lots that comprise the current APE were sold to Albert Torrado by Bill Heil Properties. Torrado sold the property to himself and Francisco Torrado in August of 1983 (BCDR 2910:1878). This appears to be the way in which Torrado Associates formed. Torrado leased the property to Chrysler Realty Corporation in October of 1989 (BCDR 4359:288; BCDR

4359:310; BCDR 4359:331). In May of 2004, Torrado, Inc. (there appears to have been a name change) conveyed the property to Broadway Real Estate Holdings, LTD. The property was sold for a sum of \$1,350,000 (BCDR 10750:877). In October of 2011, Broadway Real Estate conveyed the property to the San Antonio Children's Museum (BCDR 15183:1050 and BCDR 15183:1055).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Field Methods**

A staff archaeologist from the CAR was present during the excavation of the trenches. Trench dimensions were determined by the CAR archaeologist at the time of excavation. Initially, the backhoe trenches were to be approximately 3 m (9.8 ft.) in length and 1.5 m (4.9 ft.) in depth. Trench dimensions were altered at the time of excavation to better expose features or to avoid impediments. Any exposed features were documented to the extent possible and without further impact to them. The documentation consisted of photography, measurements, and soil descriptions. Profiles of the trenches were drawn to record the encountered features. Temporally diagnostic specimens were to be collected and brought back to the CAR laboratory for processing, analysis, and curation. Other artifacts were left in place and documented in the monitoring notes.

### **Laboratory Methods**

All cultural materials and records obtained and generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulation 36 CFR Part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. Additionally, the materials are curated in accordance with current CAR guidelines. The few artifacts recovered during the project were processed in the CAR laboratory. Laboratory processing began by washing and subsequently air-drying the artifacts. The artifacts are stored in 4-mil zip-locking archival-quality bags. Acid-free labels were placed into all artifact bags. Each laser-jet printed label contains provenience information and a corresponding lot number. Artifacts were identified, separated by class, and stored in acid-free boxes. Field notes, field forms, photographs, and field drawings were placed into labeled archival folders. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper, labeled with archive-appropriate materials, and placed in archival-quality plastic sleeves. All field forms were completed with pencil. Any soiled forms were placed in archival quality page protectors. Ink-jet produced maps and illustrations were placed in archival quality plastic page protectors to prevent against accidental smearing due to moisture. All collected materials and project-related documentation is permanently housed at CAR.

## Chapter 4: Results of Investigations

Three backhoe trenches (BHTs) were excavated within the APE for the new location of the San Antonio Children's Museum (Figure 4-1). After consulting historic maps and examining the APE, two locations were believed to have the best potential for revealing evidence of the *Acequia Madre*. Historic maps indicate that the *Acequia Madre* may have passed along the eastern boundary of the property (Figure 2-4). It appears that the *acequia* may have formed the property boundary between several adjoining lots.



Figure 4-1. Current aerial photograph with the location of the backhoe trenches.

Prior to the backhoe trenching, the CAR archaeologist examined the area and noted that a drainage ditch located to the northeast of the property appeared to be in line with the *acequia* as shown on historic maps. That drainage ditch touched the northeastern portion of the APE and dipped underground a few feet beyond this point. Several drains that appeared to be in line with the *Acequia Madre* were noted along the streets in the area. The examination of the historic maps suggested that the northern portion of the APE was the most likely location where backhoe trenching would intersect the route of the *acequia*.



Backhoe Trench 1 was placed at the southeastern edge of the project area. The fence line between the current APE and the apartment complex to the east was covered by bamboo and other foliage (Figure 4-2). The asphalt-covered surface from the car lot did not extend to the chain-link fence. The trench was placed perpendicular to the fence. The upper 15 cm (5.9 in.) of soil consisted of caliche base under a thin layer of asphalt. Beneath the base was blocky, black (dark brown) clay (Figure 4-3). In the southeastern corner of the trench, a portion of an old lead-glazed ceramic sewer pipe was encountered. The line was running at an angle to the backhoe trench, and therefore, it would have likely crossed the path of the *acequia* rather than follow its alignment. Beneath the pipe and throughout the trench, the black clay deposit became very gravelly. The gravels consisted of chert cobbles that were fist-sized and smaller. The density of the gravels (approximately 80 percent) made excavation difficult (Figure 4-4). Beneath the black clay and cobbles, medium brown clay was encountered. The clay was dense and appeared to be moister than the overlying deposits. The clay layer was approximately 50 cm (19.7 in.) in thickness. Beneath the clay, the gravel density increased from approximately 15 percent to approximately 80 percent. BHT 1 was excavated to a depth of approximately 280 cm (110.2 in.) below surface in search of evidence of the *acequia*. The stratigraphy of the trench revealed no evidence of an intrusive cut. It is possible that the past installation of the sewer line may have disturbed the *acequia* trench or that the backhoe trench missed the path of the *acequia*.



Figure 4-2. *Eastern end of BHT 1 showing soils stratigraphy.*

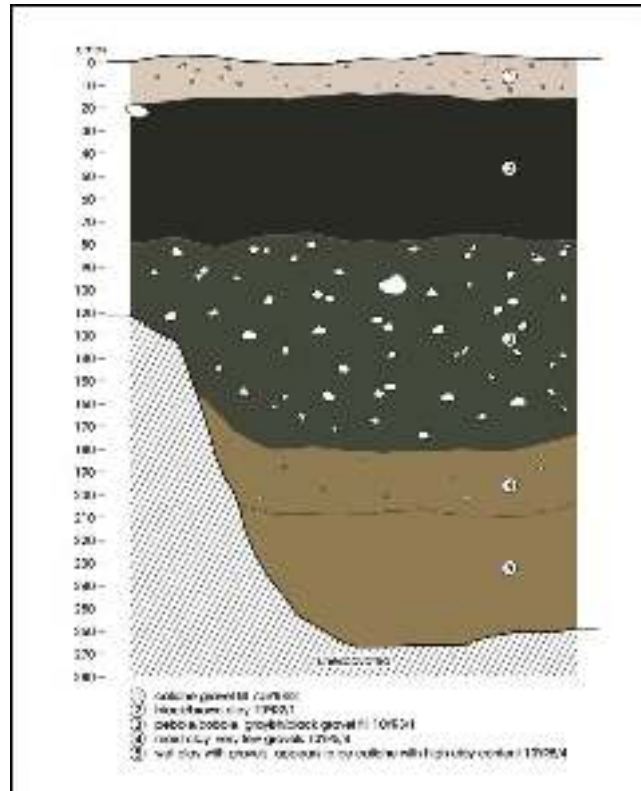


Figure 4-3. Profile of the north wall of BHT 1.



Figure 4-4. North wall of BHT 1 showing gravel zone.

Backhoe Trench 2 was located in the northern portion of the APE (Figure 4-1). According to the 1908 City Engineer's Map, the *Acequia Madre* may have cross through this area north of Humphrey Road. The northeast boundary of the APE touched a current drainage ditch that appears to follow the route of the *Acequia Madre*, based on historic maps. The drainage does not appear in the APE; rather, it goes underground before entering the project area. BHT 2 was positioned approximately 8 m (26.2 ft.) south from the fence line where the drainage stopped and positioned to bisect the *acequia* (Figure 4-5). Excavations revealed fill material in the upper 50 cm (19.7 in.; Figure 4-6). The soil then changed to dark brown, loamy clay. At the base of the trench (approximately 1.5 mbs; 4.9 ft.), the soil was grayish-brown, silty clay. No definite outline of an *acequia* trench was noted in BHT 2. Metal fragments were noted in the transition to the loamy clay, but no material was encountered that could be positively associated with the nineteenth century. The trench was extended to a maximum length of 630 cm (248 in.); however, no outline of an *acequia* was encountered at any point along the extension.



Figure 4-5. Location of BHT 2 and fill immediately below asphalt layer.



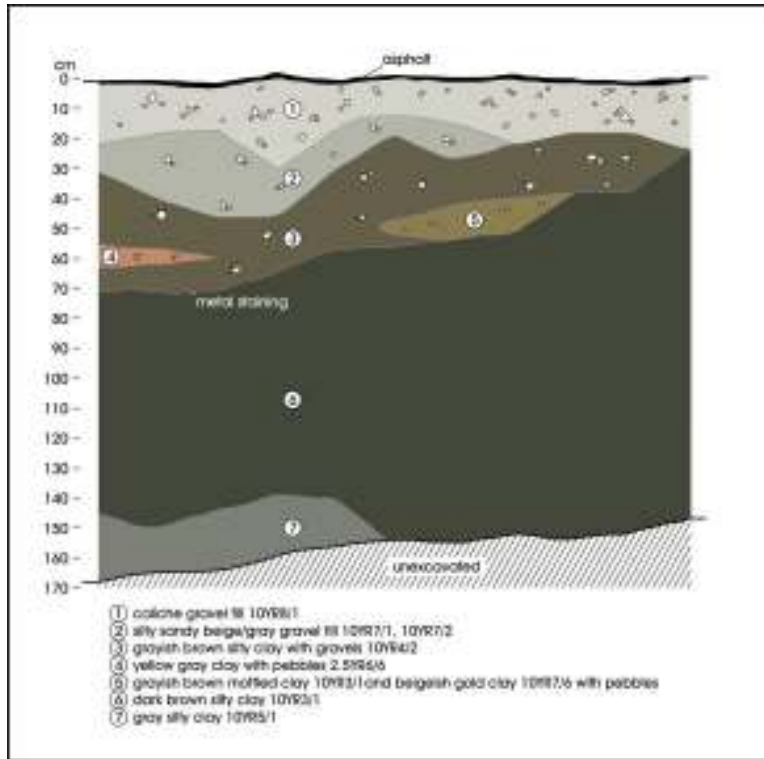


Figure 4-6. Profile of the north wall of BHT 2.



Figure 4-7. North wall of BHT 2, note dark gray clay zone under mottled gravel fill.

Backhoe Trench 3 was located to the southeast of BHT 2. This trench was excavated within the same empty lot located north of Humphrey Road. Similar to BHT 2, the upper layers consisted of caliche base and fill (Figure 4-7). In the western portion of the trench, a concrete slab was encountered. It was not removed, and instead, the trench was extended to the east. A concrete pipe was encountered in BHT 3 (Figure 4-8). Below the pipe, the same clay loam deposit was encountered as in BHT 2, and it was underlain by grayish, silty clay similar to that noted in BHT 2 (Figure 4-9). At the base of the trench, approximately 215 cm (84.6 in.) below surface, caliche was encountered. The trench profile suggests that the concrete pipe had been placed in a previous trench, possibly the *Acequia Madre* irrigation ditch (Figure 4-10). In addition, the eastern portion of the north wall exhibited a distinct trench outline in the loamy clay (Figure 4-10). Artifacts encountered in the trench profile consisted of glass fragments, wire, and unidentified metal fragments. No material was diagnostic to the colonial period or nineteenth century.



Figure 4-8. BHT 3, concrete pipe in north wall, note light caliche layer at the base of the trench.

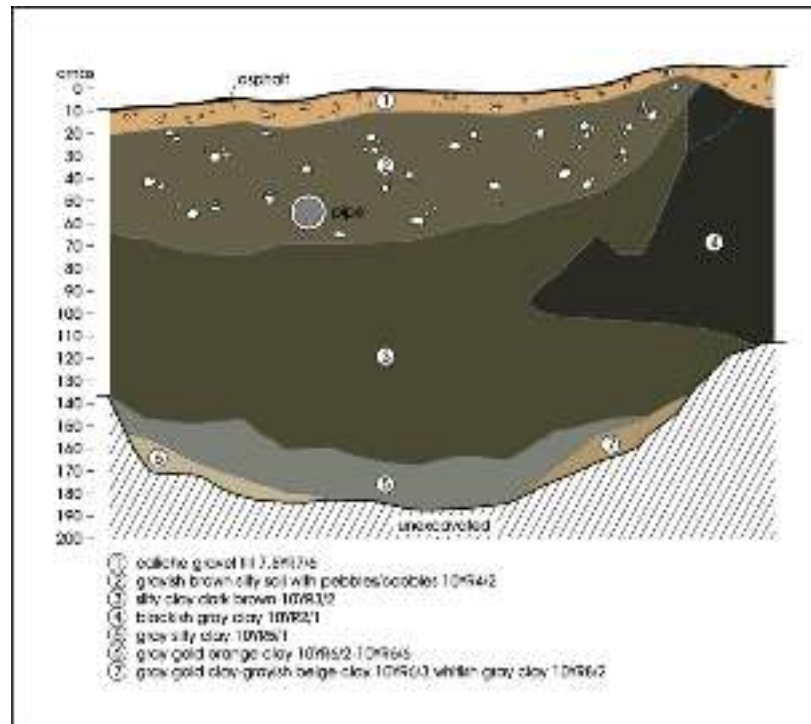


Figure 4-9. Profile of the north wall of BHT 3.



Figure 4-10. Possible Acequia Madre irrigation ditch outline in north wall of BHT 3.



## Standing Structures within the APE

Located within the current APE are several structures associated with a car dealership that had once been running on the premises. The dealership appears to have been constructed sometime during the late 1950s according to the deed research which reveals that O.R. Mitchell Motors purchased and leased the property from several individuals. Up until the recent, a dealership continued to operate at the site. The ownership and type of dealership changed, but it still was being used in the same capacity. Several buildings were present that were part of the dealership. A main showroom, workshops and garages were located in the main portion of the APE (Figure 4-11). To north of the main showroom was a body shop and offices (Figure 4-12). The showroom is constructed of brick, tile, and stucco with large windows fronting Broadway. The workshops, garages, and body shop were constructed of metal siding with metal roofs. All of these structures would have been constructed either during the late 1950s or after.



Figure 4-11. Main showroom and workshops at the dealership.



Figure 4-12. Clouse-up of glass-walled showroom of dealership, looking south along Broadway.



Figure 4-13. Brick body shops at back of dealership, looking east along Humphreys Ave.





Figure 4-14. Body shop located to the north of the main showroom.

## Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

Three backhoe trenches were excavated within the current APE during the course of one day in August 2012. The three locations were chosen due to their proximity to the 1908 depiction of the *Acequia Madre*. It appears that the route of most of the *Acequia Madre* runs along the APE property boundary. Due to the amount of asphalt, fencing, and structures, suitable locations for the backhoe trenches were limited. Backhoe Trench 1 was located in the southern portion of the project area. Backhoe Trench 2 was at the northern most point that the *acequia* may have passed through within the project area. Backhoe Trench 3 was located just to the south of BHT2. Each trench varied in depth and length. Dimensions were determined by the Project Archaeologist.

Backhoe Trench 1 encountered no evidence of the *Acequia Madre*. The 1908 City Engineering Map, when overlaid on a current aerial photograph, indicated that there was a good possibility that the *acequia* was located along the fence line. BHT 1 was placed along the southeast fence line in hopes of encountering a portion of the irrigation ditch. Excavations revealed that the asphalt surface was covering a layer of base. Beneath the fill, there was blocky clay with medium-sized gravels. In the southeastern corner of the trench, a ceramic sewer line was encountered. The pipe was lead glazed indicating that it was not a recent line. If the *acequia* happened to be in the vicinity, the installation of the sewer line likely disturbed any evidence.

Backhoe Trench 2 was placed in the northern portion of the project area. Reconnaissance prior to the backhoe trench excavations found that a drainage ditch located to the north of the project area appeared to follow the same route of the *Acequia Madre* according to the 1908 map. The drainage ditch entered a culvert at the property line. The excavation of BHT 2 did not encounter evidence of the *acequia* path. Below the asphalt was fill that sat on top of dark brown clay loam. Below the fill, the matrix had not been disturbed.

Backhoe Trench 3 was located to the southeast of BHT 2. Similar to the other trenches, the asphalt was sitting on top of fill. A concrete feature was located in the western portion of BHT3. The trench was extended further to the east. In doing this, the backhoe encountered and removed a portion of a ceramic pipe. To the east of the pipe, an outline of a ditch became evident in the north wall profile. It is likely that BHT 3 encountered a portion of the *Acequia Madre*. Modern disturbances may have wiped out the western bank of the *acequia* in this area. In addition, the pipe may have been laid down the center of the *acequia* as a more modern drainage (post 1905), most likely associated with the construction of the auto dealership that occurred in the early 1960s.

In summary, it appears that only one of the three trenches, BHT 3, excavated within the APE encountered evidence of the *Acequia Madre*. The *acequia* outline was noted at approximately 20-70 cm (7.9-27.6 in.) below the surface. The eastern portion of the *acequia* appeared to be visible, but modern construction activities seem to have impacted the western edge. A modern sewer line appears to have been installed within the path of the colonial *acequia*. The *acequia* path appears to be located in the northeastern portion of the APE and along the eastern edge of the property boundary. It is likely that the majority of the *acequia* path is located under portions of the current fence line. Current plans to relocate the San Antonio Children's Museum within the APE call for the addition of fill across the project area to raise it above the 100-year floodplain of the San Antonio River. The addition of fill across the APE in combination with the fact that the *Acequia Madre* is located on the perimeter of the project area will ensure that the construction of the Children's Museum will not impact on the *acequia*.

Deed research indicated that the property at one time was within the Washington Heights subdivision and then later the Brackenridge Place subdivision. Washington Heights appears to have been platted in 1892. By 1910, the subdivision was referred to as Brackenridge Place. The sale of the individual lots appears to have picked up pace after 1908. The property was purchased and repurposed as a car dealership by the early 1960s. Therefore, the standing structures may barely be 50 years old and are not distinctive in terms of the four National Register eligibility criteria. We recommend that their demolition may proceed as planned. Furthermore, we do not recommend the need for monitoring the removal of the building components.

However, the historical research does show that there were homesteads located on the lots prior to being razed for the dealership. According to the Sanborn Insurance Maps, residences had been constructed within the current APE. It is unknown what might remain intact below the fill level within the APE, but it is possible for remnants of foundations and privies to be located in intact soil below the upper 30 cm (11.8 in.) within the project area. Therefore, CAR recommends that an archaeological monitor be present during the construction phase of the project to determine if remnants of the residences of Washington Heights and Brackenridge Place are present below the parking lot base. If such historic features are present, they may be worth investigation since late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century patterns of urbanization are poorly documented in San Antonio.

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