

Archaeological Monitoring of a Parking Lot at Hemisfair Park in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
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Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7612

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Abstract:

In April 2016, the University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (UTSA CAR), under contract with Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., and in response to a request from the City of San Antonio (COSA), conducted archaeological monitoring of a 0.63-acre (0.25-hectare) parking lot adjacent to the Beethoven Hall (41BX584) in Hemisfair Park. The archaeological services were in response to a request for fulltime monitoring of all subsurface construction excavations in this culturally sensitive area of downtown San Antonio. Impacted areas were graded with a road maintainer and trenched with a compact excavator. A bobcat auger was used to drill 8-ft. (2.4-m) holes. Approximately 6-14 in. (15.2-35.5 cm) of surface was removed, in 3-4 in. (7.6-10 cm) cuts, from the perimeter. These excavations failed to locate any cultural features, and only modern litter, such as broken glass, pull tabs, and plastic bottle caps, was observed but not collected. The study was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7612, with Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux serving as Principal Investigator and José E. Zapata serving as Project Archaeologist.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In April 2016, the University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (UTSA CAR), under contract with Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., and in response to a request from the City of San Antonio (COSA), conducted archaeological monitoring of a parking lot construction at Hemisfair Park. The investigation consisted of monitoring below ground construction that had the potential to impact known or anticipated archaeological resources within the northwest quadrant of Hemisfair Park, in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1-1).



Figure 1-1. Project Area of Potential Effect (APE) shown on USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle map (San Antonio East).

Located in downtown San Antonio, Hemisfair Park is bounded by South Alamo, Nueva, Water, and César Chávez streets. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) includes 0.63 acres (0.25 hectares), approximately 120 ft. (36.5 m) north/south by 180 ft. (54.8 m) east/west (Figure 1-2). Ten recorded archaeological sites lie in the area, including eight extant structures and the *Acequia Madre* (41BX8). Beethoven Hall (41BX584) and the Longini-Hermann House (41BX585), formerly the Acosta House, adjoin the planned parking to the south and east, respectively (Figure 1-3). Beethoven Hall and Longini-Hermann House are designated State Antiquities Landmarks (SAL) and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The planned improvements required grading of the top 6-14 in. (15.2-35.5 cm) of sod and fill, as well as boring and trenching to accommodate light pole piers and conduit. Two areas were bored (1.5-x-8 ft. deep; 0.5-x-2.4 m) at either end of the parking lot and a 1-x-1.5 ft. deep (0.3-x-0.5 m) and 90-ft. (27.4-m) long trench was excavated between the two holes (Figures 1-4 and 1-5).



Figure 1-2. APE location (outlined in red) shown on satellite imagery.

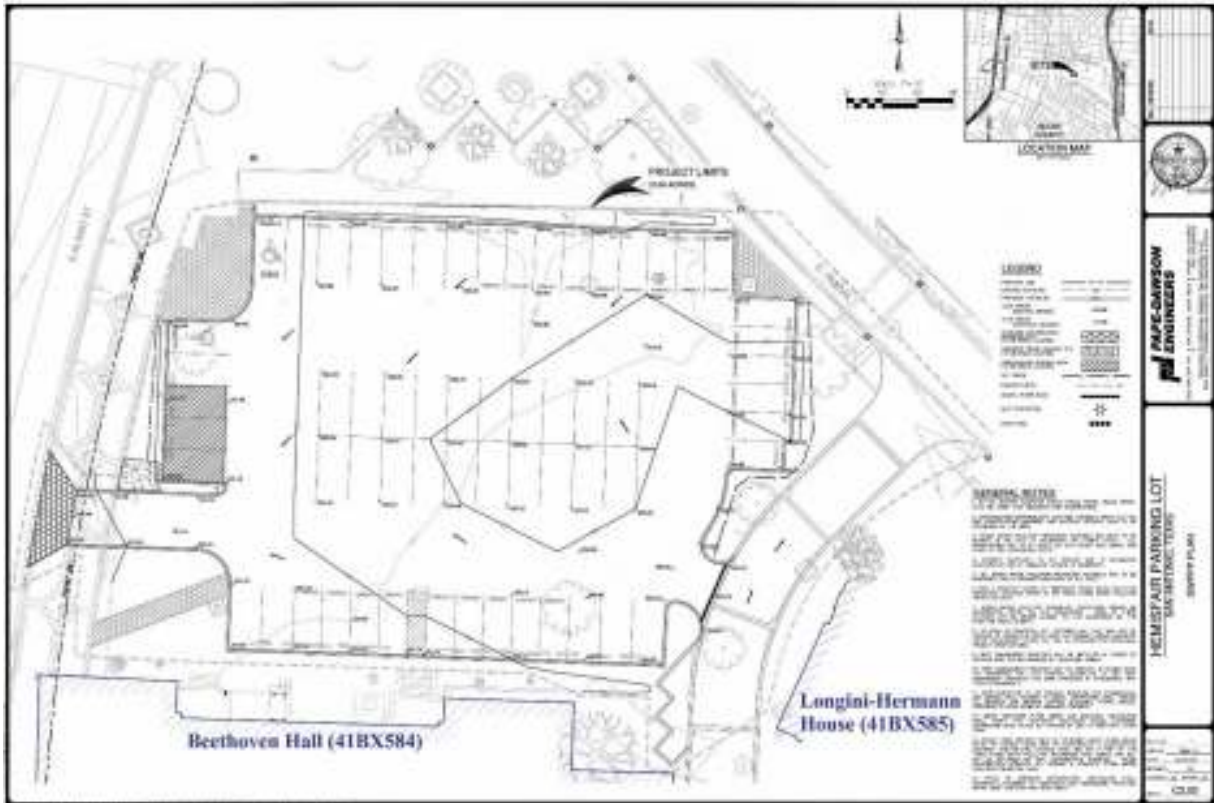


Figure 1-3. Pape-Dawson Engineering site plan with an enhanced view of 41BX584 and 41BX585.



Figure 1-4. Electrical crew in the process of drilling a pier hole at the eastend, April 12, 2016. View to the southwest.



Figure 1-5. Trenching between pier holes. Note red and buff colored brick fragments on either side of the trench in foreground, April 12, 2016. View to the west.

Ongoing research related to the Yanaguana Gardens Internal Streets Improvement Project located three features within close proximity to the APE. Two house foundations were identified at 402 and 404 S. Alamo (Lot 2, NCB 127), and a well or cistern was recorded at 410 South Alamo (Lot 4, NCB 127; Figure 1-6). The presence of these features highlights the potential for identifying additional cultural deposits and/or features during the construction of the parking lot.

Beethoven Hall (41BX584) and the Longini-Hermann House (41BX585) were registered with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in 1983, and both submittals were based on archival research and windshield survey (THC 2016). As noted, the Yanaguana Gardens project is ongoing, and two features have been recorded within that APE. Aside from several archaeological studies of the nearby *Acequia Madre* (41BX8), no studies are available for the current project APE. However, the UTSA-CAR is in the process of assembling an extensive archaeological survey report of the Hemisfair Park Project. Fieldwork for this study, comprised of three distinct components, began in January 2015 and, as of May 2016, is in progress.

This introductory chapter is followed by a few notes regarding the field and laboratory methods, and Chapter 3 provides an outline of the results. Chapter 4 concludes the report with the summary and recommendations. This technical report precludes a narrative on the area's natural and cultural setting, but a comprehensive account can be found in a recent UTSA-CAR report of a nearby site (McKenzie et al. 2016:7-23).

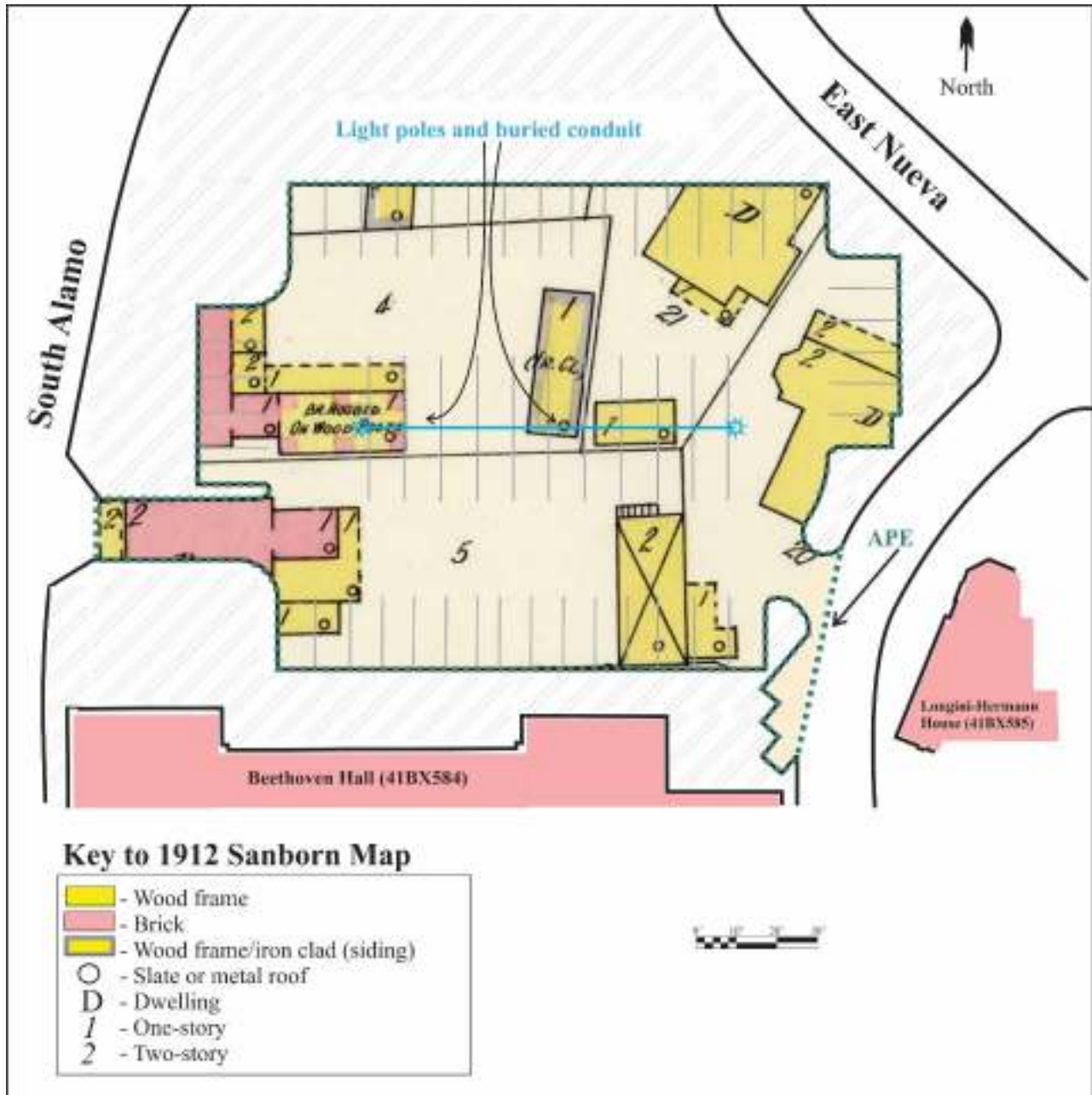


Figure 1-6. Image of 1912 Sanborn imbedded in project APE. Note structures on Lots 3, 4, 5, 20, and 21 of New City Block 127. Beethoven Hall and Longini-Hermann House are extant.

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Chapter 2: Field and Laboratory Methods

Field Methods

Archaeological monitoring was required for all below ground disturbances associated with construction within the APE. The Project Archaeologist met periodically with the site foreman in order to discuss construction progress and review proposed activities. A lab-based GIS/Illustrator downloaded and managed both Trimble GPS data as well as photographic data collected by the field monitor. A standard monitoring form, consisting of a daily log of activities, was maintained. All activities observed were documented in this log and are supported by digital data, including GPS observations and photographs, where appropriate. A photographic log was maintained in addition to the daily monitoring logs.

Laboratory Procedures

Only modern material, such as broken glass, plastic bottle caps, wire nails, brick fragments, sections of rebar, PVC fragments, and unidentifiable metal were observed but not collected. The amount of material observed was negligible. No features were encountered during the course of the monitoring. The area had been previously impacted by demolition and construction related to the development of HemisFair '68.

Field notes, forms, and drawings have been placed in labeled notebooks. Photographs and photo log forms have been digitally archived. Documents and forms were printed on acid-free paper. A copy of this report and all computer disks pertaining to the investigations have been stored in an archival box and curated with the field notes and documents. All records have been permanently curated at the CAR facility.

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Chapter 3: Survey Results

Results

Monitoring of this project occurred over an intermittent two-week period. It was often the case that the ongoing work did not require monitoring, especially as the construction crew loaded and transported spoils out of the work area. At other times, the crew was busy adding 4-5 in. (10-13 cm) of base and reshaping the area so that it would be higher at the center and sloped out toward the perimeter.

A 20-ft. (6.1-m) swath, east to west, was bladed 6-14 in. (15.2-35.6 cm) at the south and north end of the area. This removed what little sod was left and exposed a compacted, thin layer of caliche base. In a few places, primarily at the south end, fragments of brick and sandstone were observed, likely related to earlier construction. A negligible amount of modern litter, such as broken glass, plastic bottle caps, small sections of rebar, and fragments of irrigation-related PVC, was also observed. None of this material was collected.

During the second week of construction and as the construction crew was adding base material, the electrical crew bored, trenched, and installed piers and conduit for lighting see Figures 1-4 and 1-5. The holes for the pier supports were 1.5 ft. (0.5 m) in diameter and 8-ft. (2.4-m) deep. A light concentration of construction rubble was noticed in the backdirt, consisting of a dark grey clay matrix. The auger broke into the native layer of culturally sterile, caliche clay and gravel at about 5.5 ft. (1.7 m) below the surface. A 90-ft. (27.4-m) long trench was cut between the two pier holes; this trench was 1-ft. (0.3-m) wide by 1.5-ft. (0.5-m) deep. The trench was meant to accommodate electrical conduits that will service the new light fixtures. In the process of trenching, the crew exposed the main electrical conduit and were then able to tie the new electrical wiring to the existing electrical lines. Several sections of abandoned irrigation and electrical lines were excavated in the trench. Some construction rubble, in the form of fragmented brick and sandstone, was evident in the backdirt and was imbedded in the trench wall. The amount of construction rubble was negligible. A very thin, ashy lens was observed about 40 ft. (12 m) west of the pier hole at the east end. Closer examination of the lens and backdirt nearby failed to locate anything of significance.

An enhanced image of the APE on the 1912 Sanborn map notes that several structures were present, but the structures did not survive the HemisFair '68 development of the mid-1960s (see Figure 1-6). The pier hole at the west end was right on an early brick and timber constructed dwelling, but no rubble that might have been associated with this construction was observed. The features that were recorded nearby (Yanaguana Internal Streets, in progress) were located at between 2.5-3 ft. (0.76-0.9 m) below the surface. The lack of cultural material and features related to the pre-HemisFair development may be due to the shallow depth of these construction-related ground disturbances.

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Chapter 4: Summary and Recommendations

Summary and Recommendations

Monitoring of the parking lot construction occurred throughout the month of April 2016. On-site observation of the work-in-progress was intermittent, and when observation occurred, often it was for only for 2-3 hours a day. The project progressed slowly, often due to inclement weather. In considering the APE, of concern were a series of mid- to late nineteenth-century structures seen on the 1912 Sanborn Map and the ca. 1960 aerial photo (see Figure 1-6 and Figure 4-1).

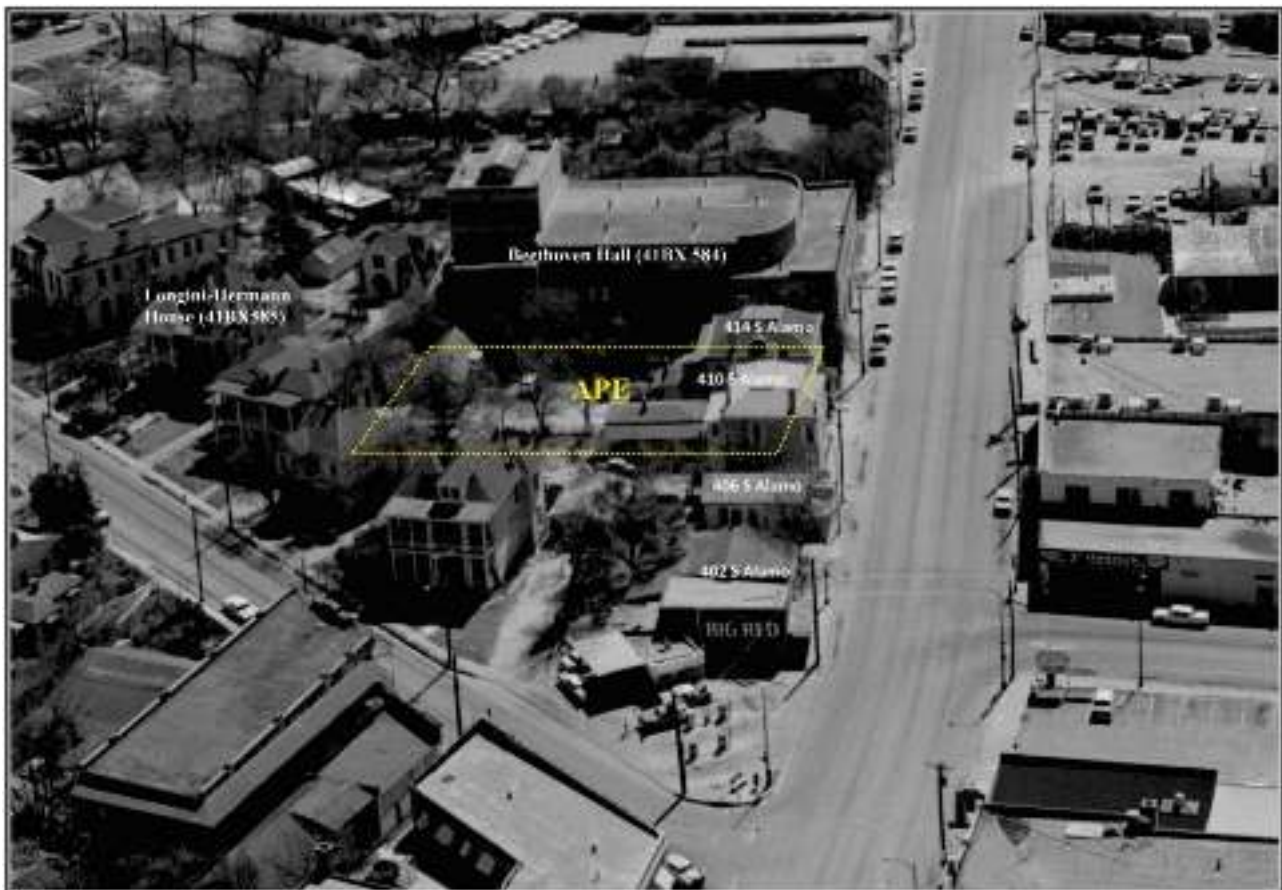


Figure 4-1. Approximate location of APE on ca. 1960 aerial photograph of the northwest corner of Goliad Road and South Alamo Street (UTSA-ITC Collection, H-0746-0199).

As seen in the referenced figures, a portion of two brick buildings and eight wood-framed structures were present within the APE as late as 1960. These structures were razed in ca. 1964 to make way for HemisFair '68. Evidence of these may exist in the form of stone-constructed wall foundations or construction material, but not within the top 24 in. (61 cm) below the surface. Figure 4-1 also shows several wood-framed

structures strewn about the entire APE. Evidence of these would be slightly less, given that these may have been constructed on more ephemeral pier-and-beam foundations.

The project APE, consisting of 0.63 acres (0.25 hectares), was not significantly impacted by the construction of the parking lot. No historic features were exposed or otherwise revealed during construction, and no culturally significant artifacts were observed. However, additional construction and ground disturbance greater than 24 in. (61 cm) below the surface may unearth intact house foundations and related features. Additional monitoring should be planned for this same area if, and when, the parking lot is razed to make way for more substantial structures and installation of related utilities.

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