

Archaeological Services for Utilities Placement on Commerce Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas



by

Antonia L. Figueroa and José E. Zapata

NON-REDACTED

Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7893

Principal Investigator
Paul Shawn Marceaux

Prepared for:
M.J. Boyle General Contractor, Inc.
1919 North St. Mary's Street
San Antonio, Texas 78212



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Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249
Technical Report, No. 73

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Abstract:

In January and February of 2017, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) conducted archaeological monitoring of excavations associated with the utilities installation on Commerce Street, Bexar County, Texas. The CAR was contracted by M.J. Boyle General Contractor, Inc. to monitor excavation activities along Commerce Street in downtown San Antonio. The archaeological investigations and construction monitoring were conducted under Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 7893 with Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux serving as the Principal Investigator and Antonia Figueroa serving as the Project Archaeologist.

The project area is in a City of San Antonio right-of-way and within the River Improvement Overlay District. The site is also in an area reported as the possible site of the Battle of the Alamo funeral pyre; however, no evidence for this was encountered. Four trenches were excavated to accommodate utility installations. Two of the four trenches resulted in evidence of cultural material. CAR staff identified evidence of the historic electric railway system (41BX2163) that once traversed the APE in Trenches 3 and 4. Cultural material was observed and collected west of the *Acequia Madre de Valero* (41BX8) in Trench 3. This area appears to have been heavily disturbed by previously installed utilities, and the cultural material is likely refuse removed from the acequia during historical maintenance. CAR does not recommend further work on the site or in the Area of Potential Effect, and CAR recommends construction proceed as planned. All collected artifacts and project-associated documentation are permanently curated at the CAR facility.

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The project would not have been completed without the cooperation of many individuals. The contractors, M.J. Boyle, and sub-contractors, Bailey Excavators, worked closely with our staff to ensure we were notified of excavations in advance. Special thanks to Matthew Elverson and Kay Hinde with the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation for their support, project details, and coordination during work on the project. Mark Denton with the Texas Historical Commission also provided support for the Antiquities Permit for archaeological investigations. Thanks to St. Joseph's Catholic Church for allowing CAR staff to use their facilities when needed. Thanks to Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux for his help administering the project. The project records were processed at the CAR under the direction of Cindy Munoz. Jessica Nowlin provided maps for the report, and Kelly Harris edited the final report.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In January and February 2017, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas in San Antonio (UTSA), in response to a request from M.J. Boyle General Contractor, Inc., conducted archaeological monitoring for construction activities along Commerce Street in downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1-1). As the work was within the right-of-way (ROW) of the City of San Antonio (COA), the work fell under the Texas Antiquities Code and required a Texas Antiquities Permit. The archaeological work was conducted under Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 7893 with Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux serving as the Principal Investigator and Antonia Figueroa serving as the Project Archaeologist. The utility work took place in front of St. Joseph Catholic Church (Figure 1-2), a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark and a contributing building to the Alamo Plaza National Register District. The construction work involved backhoe trenching by the contractor for San Antonio Water System (SAWS) and CPS Energy utility lines that will be connected with existing utility lines located under Commerce Street.

The project area was located on the 600 block of East Commerce Street. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) focused on four trenches and the opening of a manhole. The trenches began at the property line of the church and extended into Commerce Street. CAR archaeologists monitored the excavation of the trenches.



Figure 1-1. Project APE (in red) on the San Antonio East USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle.



Figure 1-2. Project APE (in red) on satellite imagery, along Commerce Street.

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Chapter 2: History of Project Area and Previous Investigations

José Zapata

History of St. Joseph Catholic Church

Jean-Marie Odin, acting on behalf of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, began purchasing town lots and larger tracts of land as early as 1840 (Bexar County Deed Records [BCDR] A2:348, 430). In 1841, with the help of the French Legation in Austin, Odin successfully lobbied the Republic of Texas to return some of the Spanish Colonial properties (Diekemper 1983:31). Odin was consecrated a bishop in 1842 and continued working in Texas. In 1846, Bishop Odin petitioned for a diocese in Texas, which was created in May 1847 and to which he was appointed its first bishop. Having full authority, Bishop Odin went about reorganizing the Catholic Church in Texas (Diekemper 1983:32). Bishop Odin was elevated to Archbishop of New Orleans in 1861 and was succeeded in Galveston by Bishop Claude Dubuis, who continued in that role until 1892 (Diekemper 1983:33-34).

By the late 1850s, the increasing German Catholic population of San Antonio began to petition for a church of their own. The Spanish speaking population had San Fernando, the Irish had St. Mary's, and the Germans held service at Mission San José (Valentine 2014:88). Given the burgeoning German neighborhoods to the immediate east and south of the stated property, it made sense to construct St. Joseph in its present location (Fox and Renner 1999:12).

St. Joseph Catholic Church is directly south of Mission San Antonio de Valero, the Alamo (41BX6), and is within an area that was mission farmland. At one time, the west branch of the *Acequia Madre del Alamo* (41BX8) served as the site's property boundary. Bishop Odin purchased the lot on the north side of the Alameda (present-day Commerce Street) and west of the Alamo Ditch from José Leonardo de la Garza Trudo and his wife, Juana Montes de Oca for \$591.65 in September 1859 (BCDR R1:584-85). The deed required that de la Garza and his wife be allowed "the right of way or of crossing the Lot sold ...so as to get water from the Alamo Ditch for the use of his house and family," and that "the purchaser dig through the Lot a ditch...so as to enable the vendor to use the water of the Alamo Ditch for irrigating the portion of the Lot that remains unsold" (BCDR R1:584-585). Figure 2-1 is a copy of the plat with the acequia and lateral highlighted and part of the original script rewritten so that it is legible (BCDR R1:584-585). Based on the stipulation that the seller (vendor) be allowed to cross the lot, it would appear that de la Garza and his wife lived directly west of the lot they sold to Bishop Odin.

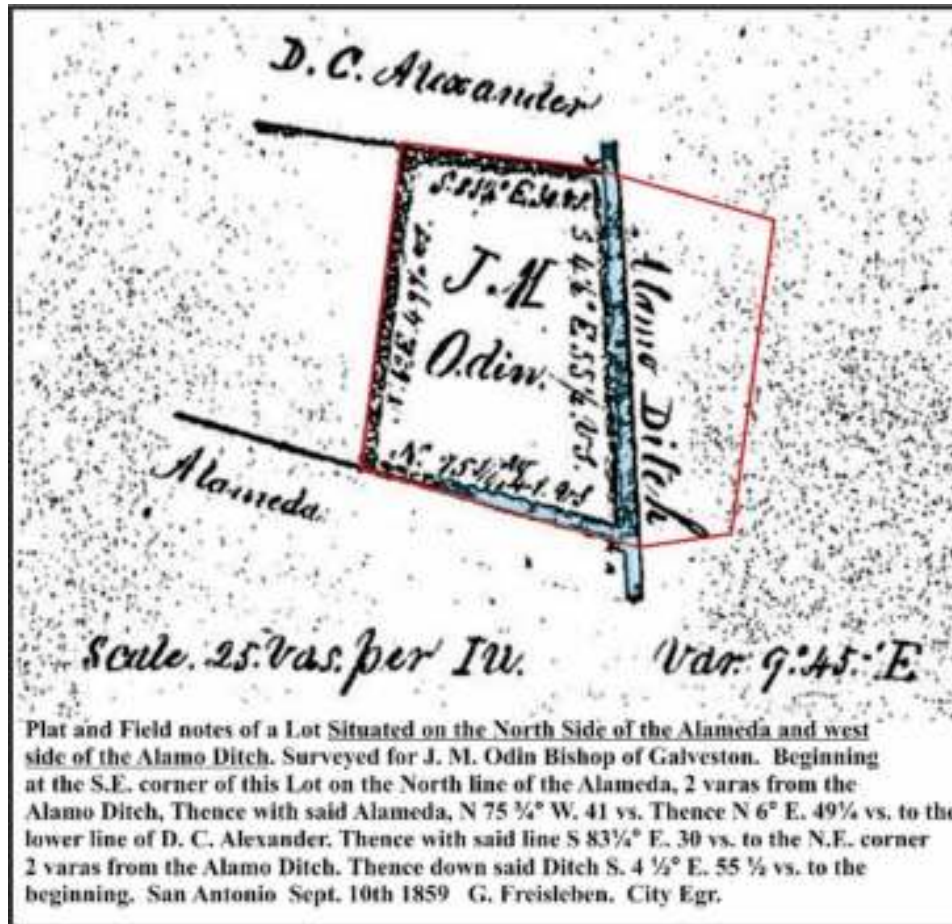


Figure 2-1. An 1859 Plat of the St. Joseph property (BCDR R1:584) with an overlay of the 2013 Plat footprint outlined in red and the acequia highlighted in blue (BCDR 9657:163), which includes the 1946 addition to the property (BCDR 2229:392; COSA Ordinance 3141).

Construction of St. Joseph Catholic Church began in 1868, and the church was partially completed, dedicated, and in use by 1871 (Valentine 2014:88). However, the steeple was not completed until 1898, and the imported stained glass windows were not installed until 1902 (Valentine 2014:88-89). Constructed prior to 1885, the east elevation of the Rectory runs parallel to the *Acequia Madre* (41BX8). The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1885 and 1892 show the acequia as it runs along the site's east property line (Figure 2-2). The 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance map and those published after that year do not show the acequia, which would indicate that it was finally abandoned and paved over sometime between 1896 and 1912 (Figure 2-3).

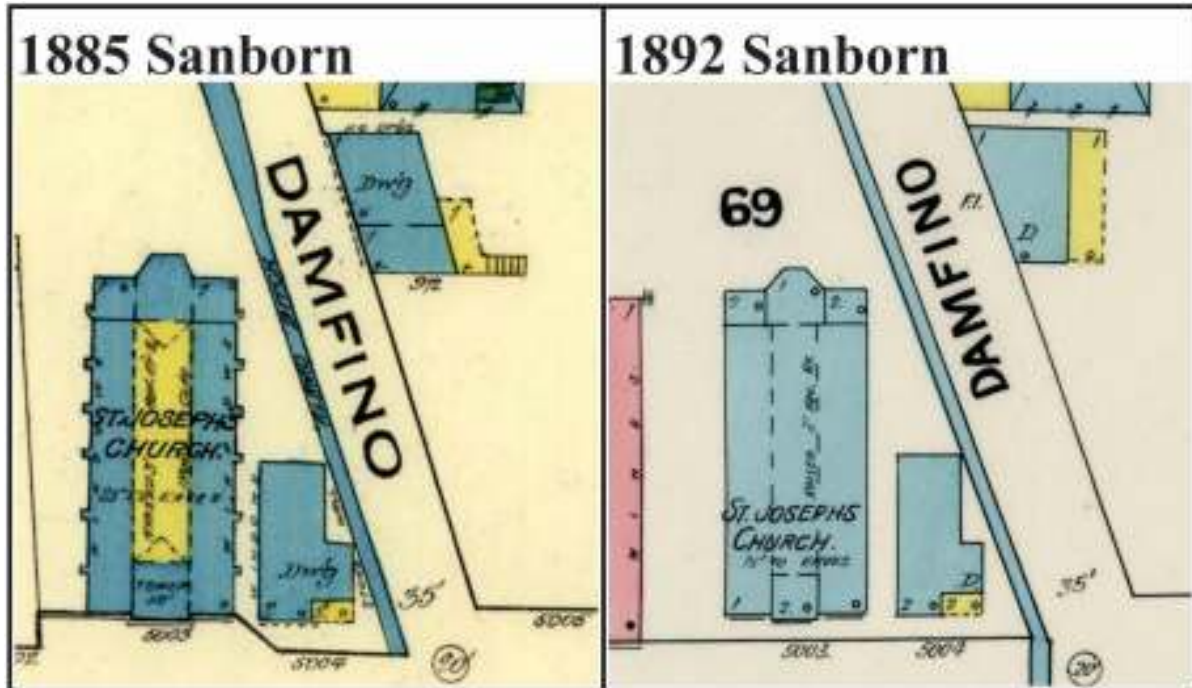


Figure 2-2. The 1885 and 1892 Sanborn Maps (cropped), note the acequia running diagonally and adjacent to the Rectory.

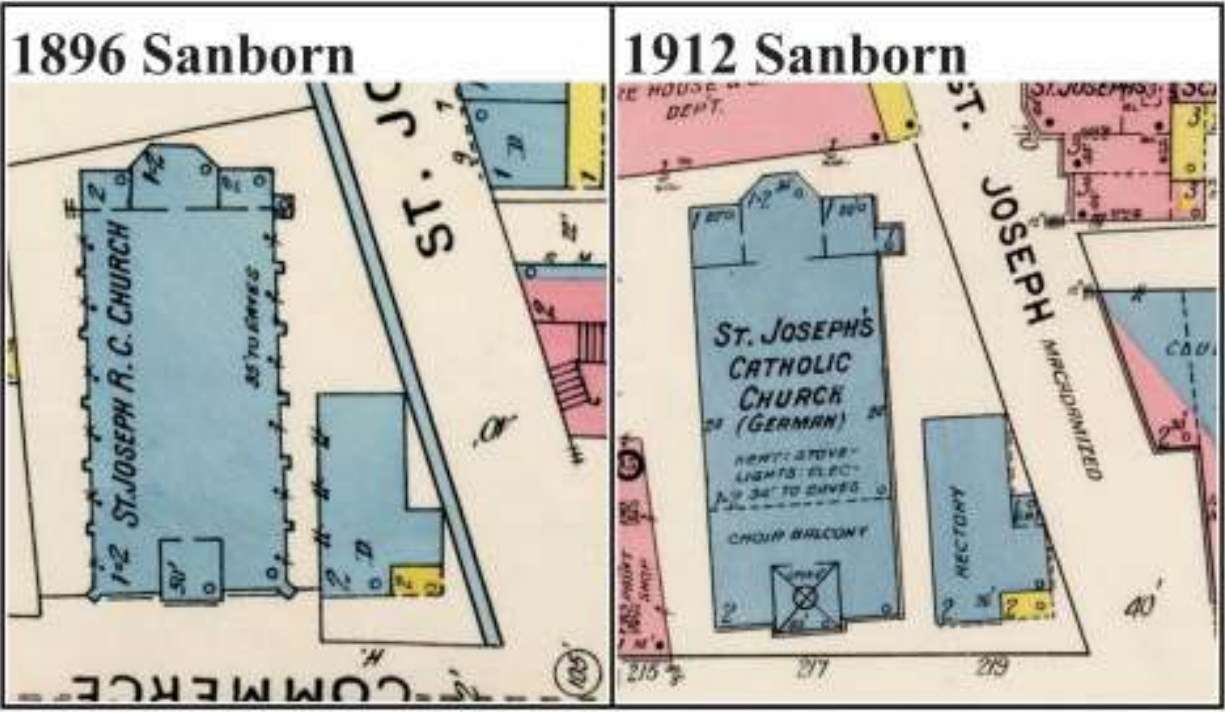


Figure 2-3. The 1896 and 1912 Sanborn Maps (cropped), note the acequia is no longer shown on the 1912 map.

The current configuration of the St. Joseph property began to take shape on March 7, 1946, when the City of San Antonio abandoned St. Joseph Street and sold the tract to the Catholic Archdiocese for \$5,000.00 (COSA Ordinance 3141 1946). On June 13, 1946, the Archdiocese sold Lots 64 and 65, NCB 151, to Joske Brothers Company for \$30,875.00 (BCDR 2260:100-103). Not long after, Joske Brothers Company began enlarging its footprint and effectively walled in St. Joseph Church on three sides.

Previous Investigations

As detailed in Zapata (2017), the project area is within the River Improvement Overlay District and has been reported as the possible site of the Battle of the Alamo funeral pyre (Menchaca 1937). CAR’s recent work directly to the north of the current project APE uncovered a section of the *Acequia Madre de Valero* (41BX8). In addition to 41BX8, a search of the Texas Historical Commission (THC 2017) Texas Site Atlas identified 40 additional sites within 500 m of the APE (Table 2-1; Figure 2-4).

Background research suggests that most of the known archaeological resources are historic in age, with the majority of sites reflecting residential or commercial enterprises conducted in early San Antonio. Sites are primarily concentrated to the south and north/northeast of the APE. This southern concentration results from work undertaken at the Convention Center and Hemisfair Park area (Dase 2013; Fields and Dase 2014; Smith 2015). To the north and northwest of the APE, several sites are present, including 41BX6 (*San Antonio de Valero*, Alamo; see Ivey and Fox 1997; Schuetz 1966; Zapata 2017) and several sites with Spanish Colonial material, such as the Radio Shack (41BX438) excavations (Ivey 2005).

Table 2-1. Sites within 500 m of the APE (THC 2017)

	Site # (41BX...)	Time Period(s)	Site Type	Site Name
1	6	Spanish Colonial, Early Texas	Mission	<i>San Antonio de Valero</i>
2	8	Spanish Colonial, Early Texas	Irrigation Ditch	<i>Acequia Madre de Valero</i>
3	304	Historic-Mid 19th c.	Residential	NCB 155
4	329	Historic-19th c.	Residential	Dolores Aldrete House
5	369	Spanish Colonial, Early Texas	Residential	Gresser-Hayes House
6	436	Historic	Residential	Lopez-Losoya House
7	437	Historic	Industry/Commercial	Ice Plant
8	438	Spanish Colonial, Early Texas	Mission	Radio Shack
9	507	Historic-1800-1850	Residential	Thielepape House
10	572	Historic-Mid 19th c.	Residential	Wietzel House
11	573	Historic-1855-1873	Residential	Amaya House
12	574	Historic-Early 20th c.	Structure/Commercial	O.K. Bar
13	575	Historic-Late 19th c.	Structure/Commercial	Schultz Store
14	576	Historic	Residential	Sweeny House

Table 2-1. Sites within 500 m of the APE (THC 2017), continued....

	Site (41BX...)	Time Period(s)	Site Type	Site Name
15	577	Historic	Residential	Schultz House
16	578	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Half House
17	579	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Kush House
18	584	Historic-Early 20th c.	Structure	Beethoven Hall
19	585	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Acosta House
20	586	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Kampmann/Half House
21	587	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Eagar House
22	588	Historic-Early 20th c.	Residential	Hermann Carriage House
23	589	Historic-1850s	Residential	Smith House
24	590	Historic-Mid 19th c.	Residential	Solis House
25	591	Historic-Late 19th c.	Residential	Pereida House
26	677	Historic-Early 19th c.	Military	La Villita Earthworks
27	829	Prehistoric, Spanish Colonial, Early Texas	Multiple	River Bend Site
28	917	Late Prehistoric	Burial	Little Church of La Villita
29	983	Historic	Commercial	Half Warehouse
30	1296	Historic-post 1850	Multiple Structures	NCB 668
31	1297	Historic-post 1850	Multiple Structures	NCB 692
32	1298	Historic-Late 19th c.	Structure/Privy/ Irrigation	n/a
33	1299	Historic-post 1850	Structure	n/a
34	1894	Historic	Well	n/a
35	1952	Historic-Mid to Late 19th c.	Residential-Midden	James Family Homestead
36	2024	Historic	Structure/Pier Foundation	n/a
37	2025	Historic-Late 19th and Early 20th c.	Midden	n/a
38	2027	Historic-Late 19th c.	Structure/Foundation	n/a
39	2049	Historic	Structure/Foundation	Field Site 6
40	2051	Historic-Late 19th c.	Structure/Foundation	Field Site 8



Figure 2-4. Previously recorded archaeological sites within 500 m of the APE.

Chapter 3: Field and Laboratory Methods

Field Methods

CAR staff monitored all below-ground disturbances associated with the utility trenching construction that had the potential to impact known or anticipated archaeological resources within the APE. The fieldwork occurred intermittently in January and February 2017. The monitor used standard forms to maintain a daily log of activities. All activities observed were documented in this log, and supported by digital data, including GPS observations and photographs, where appropriate. CAR staff also maintained a photographic log.

The principal concern of the project was potential impacts to 41BX8. Intact sections of the *Acequia Madre de Valero* were recently uncovered just north of the APE (Zapata 2017). The possibility of encountering the Battle of the Alamo funeral pyre was also of concern during the project. When historic cultural remains were encountered during the course of the monitoring, the Project Archaeologist interrupted the excavations to identify the artifacts and to determine whether the materials were in intact or disturbed contexts.

Laboratory Methods

All cultural materials and records obtained and/or generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulation 36 CFR part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. Artifacts processed in the CAR laboratory were washed, air-dried, and stored in 4-mm, zip-locking, archival-quality bags. Organic materials and materials needing extra support were double-bagged. Acid-free labels were placed in all artifact bags. Each laser-printed label contains provenience information and a corresponding lot number. A paper label containing the site number and a catalog number or an accession number was applied to selected artifacts, such as lithic tools, decorated ceramics, and personal items, using a clear acrylic coat as an adhesive and protected by another acrylic coat. In addition, a small sample of unmodified debitage from each lot was labeled with the appropriate provenience data.

Artifacts were separated by class and stored in acid-free boxes. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper, labeled with archival appropriate materials, and placed in archival-quality sleeves. All field forms were completed with pencil. All field documentation was printed on acid-free paper and placed in an archival folder. A copy of the report was printed on acid-free paper, and all digital data associated with the investigation and analysis was transferred to an archival-rated computer disk. The report and the computer disk are stored in an archival box and curated with the field notes and documentation. Upon completion of

the project, all collected materials and records were permanently curated at CAR, a State Held-in-Trust facility.

Artifact classes to be discarded specific to this project may include, but are not limited to, burned rock, snail shell, unidentifiable metal, soil samples, and recent (post-1950) materials. In all instances, however, discarded materials were documented and their counts included in the final report.

Chapter 4: Results of the Archaeological Investigations

Four locations were excavated in the project area between the dates of January 23, 2017, and February 7, 2017 (Figure 4-1). Three of the trenches were associated with SAWS utility lines, while one excavation was for a CPS Energy line. All trenches contained old utilities and showed evidence of some disturbance. Cultural material was noted in two of the trenches (Trenches 3 and 4), located just west of the acequia. After excavations, utilities were installed, trenches were filled, and asphalt was replaced. Trench 4 continued into the church property, outside this project's defined APE, and the acequia was encountered again (see Zapata 2017).

Trenches 1 and 2

Trench 1, associated with a CPS Energy line, was located to east of the church gate entrance (Figure 4-2). The trench spanned from the church fence line to a manhole located in Commerce Street (Figure 4-3). The trench was orientated slightly northeast/southwest and was 6-m long, 1-m wide, and 1.5-m deep. There were few areas with undisturbed soils, but the natural soil was a dark brown clay loam. Several preexisting utilities encased in concrete were present in Trench 1. The contractors implemented hand digging to uncover these utilities. Directly under the blacktop and base is a layer of Portland cement that was seen in all the trenches. No cultural material was observed in this excavation.

Trench 2 was orientated slightly northeast/southwest and was 6-m long, 1-m wide, and 1.8-m deep. There were few areas with undisturbed soils, and the natural soil was a dark brown clay loam followed by a light tan soil with calcium carbonates. Several preexisting utilities were present in Trench 2 (Figure 4-3). The contractors hand dug around all encountered preexisting utilities.



Figure 4-1. Utility trenches monitored by CAR.



Figure 4-2. Trench 1 excavated for CPS Energy line, connecting to manhole.



Figure 4-3. Trench 2 excavated to the west of Trench 1 and associated with SAWS utilities.

Trenches 3 and 4

Trenches 3 and 4 were excavated just south of the Rectory (see Figure 4-1). The trenches were orientated north/south and were 5.5-m long and 1.5-m wide. Both trenches contained remnants of the historic electrical railway tracks (41BX2163) that functioned in the early 1900s (Kemp et al. 2017). In Figure 4-4, Trenches 3 and 4 are shown with intact and disturbed remnants of the historic railway system. Trench 3 contained an intact wooden track tie, while Trench 4 had evidence of a metal track.



Figure 4-4. Trenches 3 and 4, intact wooden ties (orange circle) and disturbed metal track fragment (blue circle) associated with 41BX2163 (facing northwest).

The northern portion of Trench 3 continued outside the APE and onto church property (see Zapata 2017). Figure 4-5 illustrates the hand digging of Trench 3 due to encountered utilities. A small amount of cultural material was recovered from back dirt during Trench 3 excavations, which abutted the fence line and extended to a depth of one meter. Materials included faunal material (bovine), ceramics, glass, and metal mixed with loose limestone cobbles (Table 4-1). The trench was located immediately west of the path of the acequia wall (41BX8). The cultural material appeared to be in disturbed context based on the presence of utilities (Figure 4-6). The deposits likely represented debris removed from the acequia during historical

maintenance of the water feature. Although the acequia lateral may have crossed this area, there was no evidence present in the excavations. The fence and utilities also impacted the deposits observed in both trenches. The presence of white earthenware and olive glass are representative of nineteenth-century material (Figure 4-7). There was no evidence of burning on the bone or other artifacts (Figure 4-8).



Figure 4-5. Trenches 3 and 4, just east of acequia's path.

Table 4-1. Cultural Material from Trench 3

Cultural Material	Count	Weight (g)	Temporal Affiliation
faunal (bovine)	n/a	364.74	n/a
faunal (bovine)	n/a	236.57	n/a
undecorated white earthenware	1	n/a	1825 to early 1900s
olive bottle glass	2	n/a	18th to 19th c. (McKearin and Wilson 1978)
metal	1	n/a	n/a



Figure 4-6. Utilities in Trench 3 where cultural material was observed.

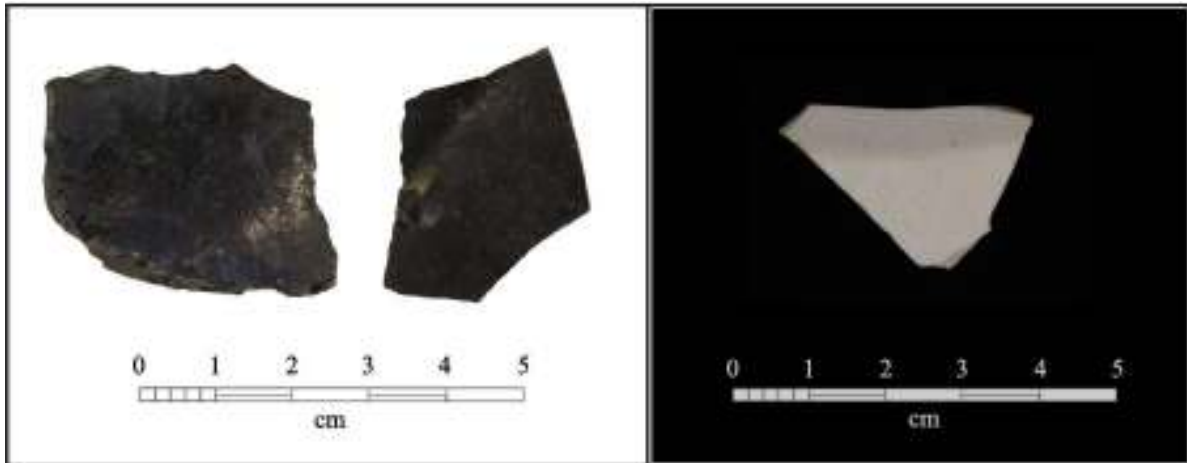


Figure 4-7. Olive glass (left) and whiteware (right) recovered from Trench 3.



Figure 4-8. Cut bone (dotted line indicates cut edge) recovered from Trench 3.

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Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

In January and February of 2107, CAR staff performed archaeological monitoring related to SAWS and CPS Energy utility lines along Commerce Street in downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The utility work took place in front of St. Joseph Catholic Church, a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark and a contributing building to the Alamo Plaza National Register District. Archaeologists monitored four backhoe trenches that were excavated on Commerce Street by M.J. Boyle General Contractor, Inc. The work was within the right-of-way (ROW) of the City of San Antonio (COSA), and as the utilities were within the public ROW, the work fell under the Texas Antiquities Code and required Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7893.

Archaeologists observed cultural material related to sites 41BX8 and 41BX2163 in Trenches 3 and 4. Both trenches were associated with SAWS utilities. In Trenches 3 and 4, disturbed and intact portions of the electrical railway (41BX2163) that once traversed Commerce Street were encountered. During the monitoring of the northern portion of Trench 4, cultural material likely associated with the historical maintenance of the acequia (41BX8) was found. Due to the disturbance caused by previous utilities in both trenches, further work was not recommended by CAR, and work can proceed as planned.

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