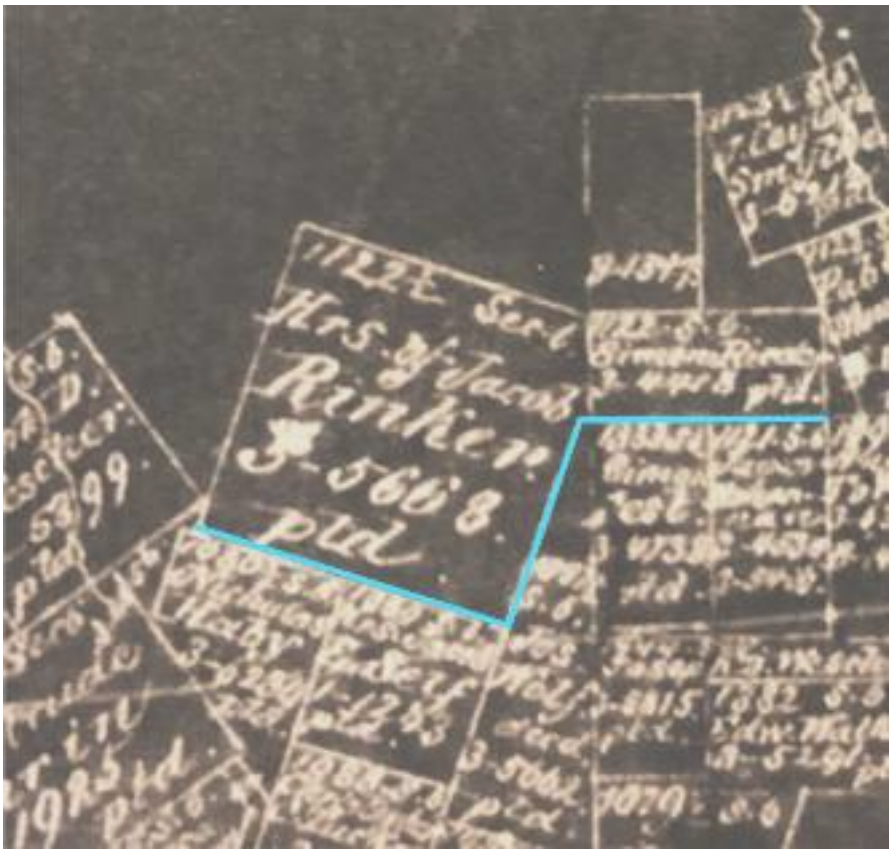
Finding Medina: Archaeological Auger Testing Within the Southern Right-Of-Way of Bruce Road, West of Old Pleasanton Road, Atascosa County, Texas

by
Clinton M.M. McKenzie



Texas Antiquities Permit No. 30476

Principal Investigator
Clinton M.M. McKenzie

Prepared for:
American Veterans Archaeological Recovery
P.O. Box 6483
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The University of Texas at San Antonio
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Technical Report, No. 97

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Abstract:

On May 5, 2022, the University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research conducted auger testing along 400 m (1,300 ft. or approximately 0.10 acres) of the southern right-of-way of Bruce Road, west from its intersection with Old Pleasanton Road. These tests were an effort to assess the potential for buried artifacts associated with the 1813 Battle of Medina which occurred in the near vicinity. A total of 16 tests were made and no artifacts associated with the Battle of Medina were encountered. All materials recovered were photo documented prior to discard and the photographs are part of the permanent curation package. No further work is recommended.

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Acknowledgements:

The Principal Investigator would like to thank Mr. Mark Gillespie, Atascosa County Commissioner, Precinct 1, for his help in facilitating this project. I would also like to thank Brandon Seale of Howard Energy for catalyzing the search for the lost battlefield sought in the current undertaking. Mr. Seale is also owed a debt of gratitude for operating the backhoe and auger. I would also like to thank the Texas Historical Commission, in particular Dr. Emily Dylla, the regional archaeologist for Atascosa County, and Rebecca Shelton, regional archaeologist, who superintends the volunteer Texas Archaeological Stewardship Network (TASN). Rebecca facilitated communication with local and regional stewards and this resulted in the identification of three TASN volunteers who directly assisted me with the field work of the project. The three are Gary McKee, Jim Schmidt, and Steve Davis. Their experience with field work and methodology was much appreciated and it is hoped that similar opportunities can be available for TASN Stewards to support additional Battle of Medina search projects. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Peggy Wall who provided constructive criticism and graphic support for this report as well as Dr. Mary Whisenhunt for her editing support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (UTSA CAR, or CAR) partnered with American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR) to search a number of both public and private properties beginning in February 2022 for evidence related to the August 18, 1813, Battle of Medina. One of the selected sites was within the right-of-way of Bruce Road on property owned by Atascosa County. The ROW in question is the southern side of Bruce Road running 400 meters due west from the intersection with Old Pleasanton Road (see Figure 1-1). No human remains, significant cultural features, or associated artifacts warranting trinomial designation were found. Further, no features or artifacts attributable to the 1813 Battle of Medina were found during the auger testing.

This Technical Report (TR) is intended to satisfy the reporting requirements for Texas Antiquities Permit number 30476 signed and issued by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) on January 14, 2022. We requested and were granted approval to discard the few twentieth century artifacts collected during this project. All records generated during this project were curated at the CAR in accordance with THC guidelines in accession file number 2953. As no cultural features or artifacts warranting curation or the assignation of an archaeological site trinomial were encountered, this report follows the format suggested by the Short Report Content Guidelines of the Council of Texas Archaeologists (CTA 2020). The TR is broken into four chapters: Introduction, Project Settings and Methods, Results of Field Investigations, and Summary and Recommendations.

As this investigation was purely exploratory and not driven by imminent development and compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas, CAR and the project team does not make recommendations for eligibility of resources identified within this permitted project area over the course of the investigations.

Project Area

The original Project Area also included the western right-of-way of Old Pleasanton Road, south of the intersection

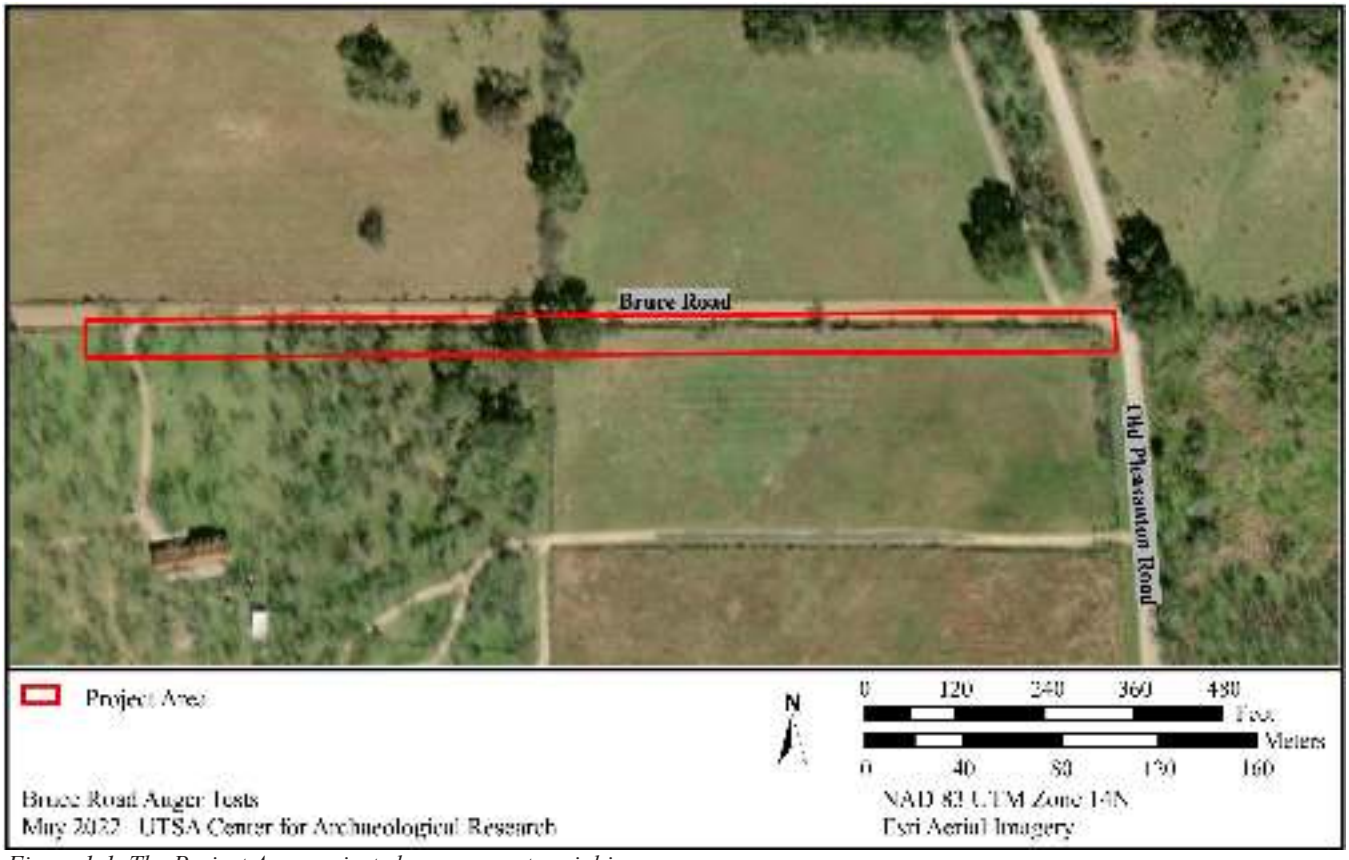

Figure 1-1. The Project Area projected on a current aerial image.

with Bruce Road. This area had to be abandoned due to a pre-existing water line buried at an unknown depth and unknown location within the ROW. As a result, only the first 400 m of the southern ROW of Bruce Road were auger tested. The section of Bruce Road investigated lies within the Losoya Quadrangle (USGSX24K26638 2016) in southwestern Bexar County, Texas. The Gallinas Creek watershed lies 250 m east across Old Pleasanton Road from its intersection with Bruce Road.

The site is atop an alluvial stream terrace and composed entirely of Nusil-Rhymes association soils, described as interdunes perched on stream terraces (Figure 1-2). These soils are typified by sands and sandy loams derived from eolian deposits combined with alluvial loams. Typical soil profiles consist of fine sands from 0-76 cmbs (0 to 30 in.) with sandy loam deposits from 76-142 cmbs (30 to 60 in.; United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Web Soil Survey, accessed July 17, 2022). The Bruce Road ROW is generally level and gently slopes from west to east at the intersection with Old Pleasanton Road. The southern ROW as a whole shows clear signs of mechanical alteration from original road construction and long-term ROW clearance and maintenance. The agricultural field adjacent to the south, across the fence line, is as much as 50 to 70 cm (20 to 26 in.) higher than the low side of the ROW where it meets the road. The ROW space itself slopes variably from the fence line to the road, with the top of the slope level with or slightly below the ground level across the fence line.

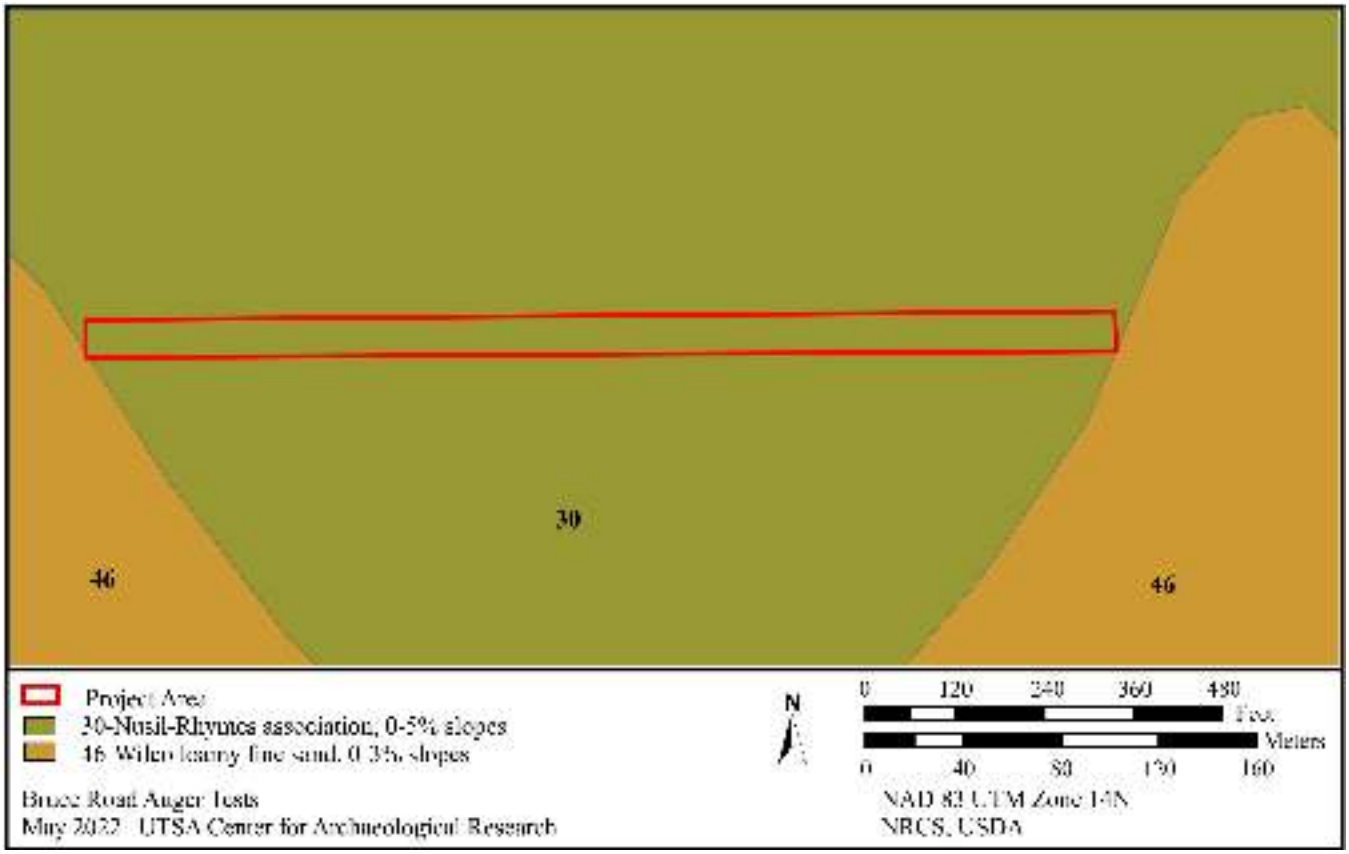

Figure 1-2. NRCS soil map of the Bruce Road right-of-way Project Area.

Chapter 2: Project Setting and Methods

This chapter presents a land-use and ownership history of the subject property and a discussion of previous archaeological investigations. It concludes with field, laboratory, and curation methods.

History of the Project Area

Bruce Road was selected on account of its proximity to the reported Battle of Medina site on the adjacent property to the south and on account of its being within the Gallinas Creek watershed, a prime locale for potential association with the conflict of 1813. The actual site of the battle currently remains unknown, but research by Schwarz and Thonoff (1985), Moses (2020), and others strongly suggests that the actual battle site was within the general area of the Bruce Road location, somewhere along Gallinas Creek.

The entirety of the Bruce Road site was formerly the southern property line of the Simon. Rieder tract, awarded by the Republic of Texas for service during the Texas War of Independence. Figure 2-1 outlines the Reider parcel within the 1862 Atascosa County Abstract Map. The current alignment of Bruce Road is shown in light blue. The alignment of Bruce Road dog-legs around the Jacob Rinker tract before making an oblique turn to the east along the southern line of the Rieder property. This parcel, along with many others in the immediate vicinity, was granted during the Texas Republic period (1836-1846). These land grants were used for both farming and ranching and the north and south adjacent properties to Bruce Road continue in agropastoral use.

Previous Archaeological Investigations

There are no recorded archaeological sites with a 1-kilometer radius (ca. 985 feet) around the Project Area. A review of the Texas Historical Commission Texas Archeological Sites Atlas identified the 2011 archaeological reconnaissance by Ted Schwartz and Robert Marshall on the south adjacent property. A second large reconnaissance project was performed by Ted Schwartz and Robert Thonhoff in 2004 approximately 500 meters west of the current Project Area.

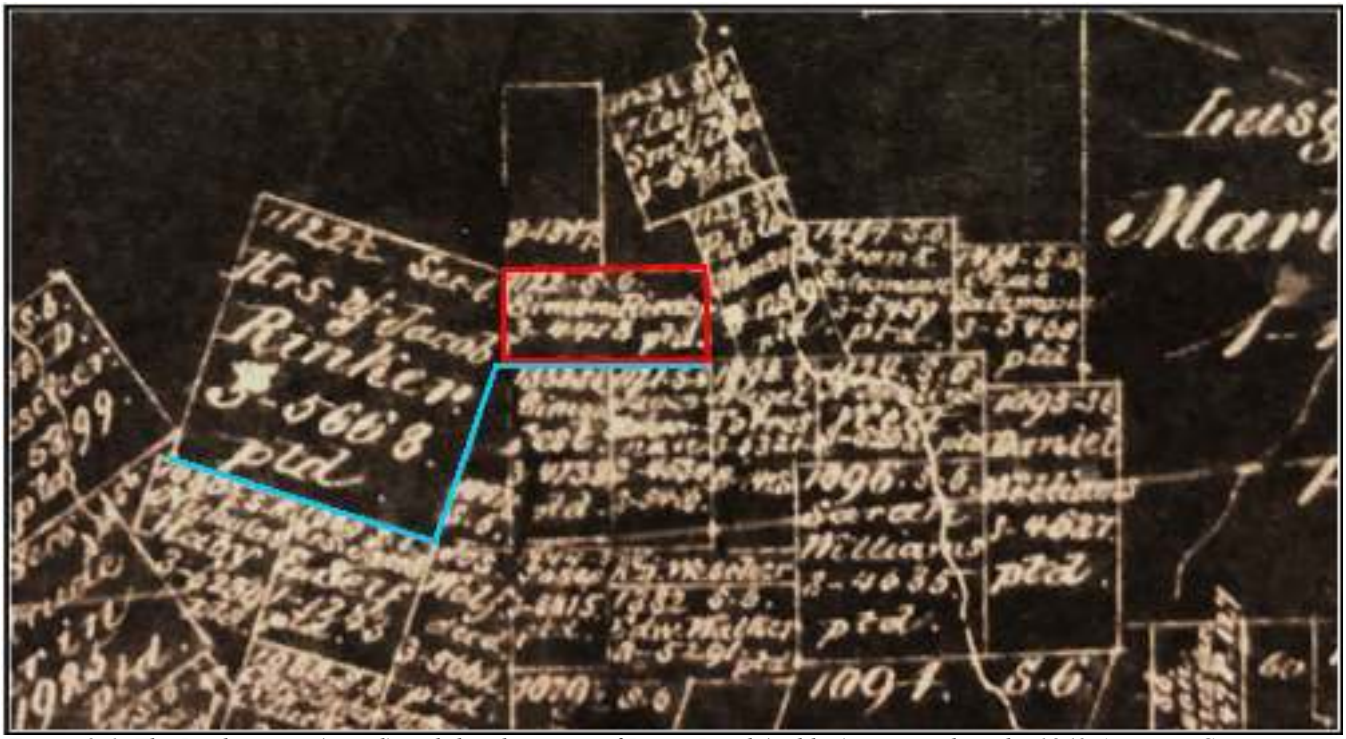

Figure 2-1. The Rieder tract (in red) and the alignment of Bruce Road (in blue) projected on the 1862 Atascosa County abstract map.

Field, Laboratory, and Curation Methods

Field Methodology and Sampling

The Council of Texas Archaeologists (CTA) standard for auger testing is a minimum of one auger test per 100 linear meters of ROW, equal to 10 auger tests per kilometer or 16 auger tests per mile (CTA 2022). CAR initially proposed to increase the density of auger tests three-fold to 1 auger test per 33.3 linear meters of ROW (30 auger tests per kilometer or 48 auger tests per mile). The variable accessible width of the ROW and the need to avoid existing driveway and gate access required the relocation of several auger tests. This is more fully discussed in the results section.

Auger tests were 40 cm in diameter and excavated down to a maximum depth of 80 cm below surface unless an impenetrable surface or obstacle was encountered. The auger tests were not excavated in arbitrary units or on the basis of stratigraphy. They were completely excavated and the full backdirt screened. We recorded the excavations on a per auger basis on standard forms, with all sediment screened through ¼ inch mesh screen. Sediment characteristics were recorded and representative tests photographed. All cultural items were collected, with items from a given auger test assigned a unique field specimen number.

Data and Records Handling, Analysis, and Curation Preparation

A variety of different data types were generated in this project. These included paper records, digital files, artifacts, ecofacts, and analysis records. These data types were generated at the site mapping, excavation, analytical, and reporting stages of the project. Digital files were routinely maintained and included Microsoft Word documents, Excel data bases, Esri ArcGIS projects, and Trimble pathfinder files as appropriate. UTSA CAR is connected to a series of data backup systems both at the individual computer and laptop level and by daily backups on a University wide system.

All data were returned to the CAR-UTSA facility at the end of the field session and were processed in the Center's laboratory. Note that all paper records generated at CAR, including photo logs, bag logs, unit excavation forms, shovel test forms, and feature excavation forms, were printed on acid-free paper, and all forms were completed with pencil. Artifacts collected during the project were brought to the CAR laboratory, washed, air-dried, and stored in archival quality bags to await detailed descriptions and analysis. All temporary storage at the Center was in acid-free boxes in an environmentally controlled facility. All project related materials, including the final report, are permanently stored at the CAR curation facility in accession file number 2594.

Chapter 3: Cultural History and Previous Investigations

A total of 16 auger tests were excavated along the southern ROW of Bruce Road (see Figure 3-1). This equates to a density of 40 tests per kilometer, greatly in excess of the CTA minimum and greater than the 30 per kilometer proposed in the original Scope of Work. The increased density compensated for the loss of access along the western ROW of Old Pleasanton Road. Field conditions required adjustment to the placement of auger

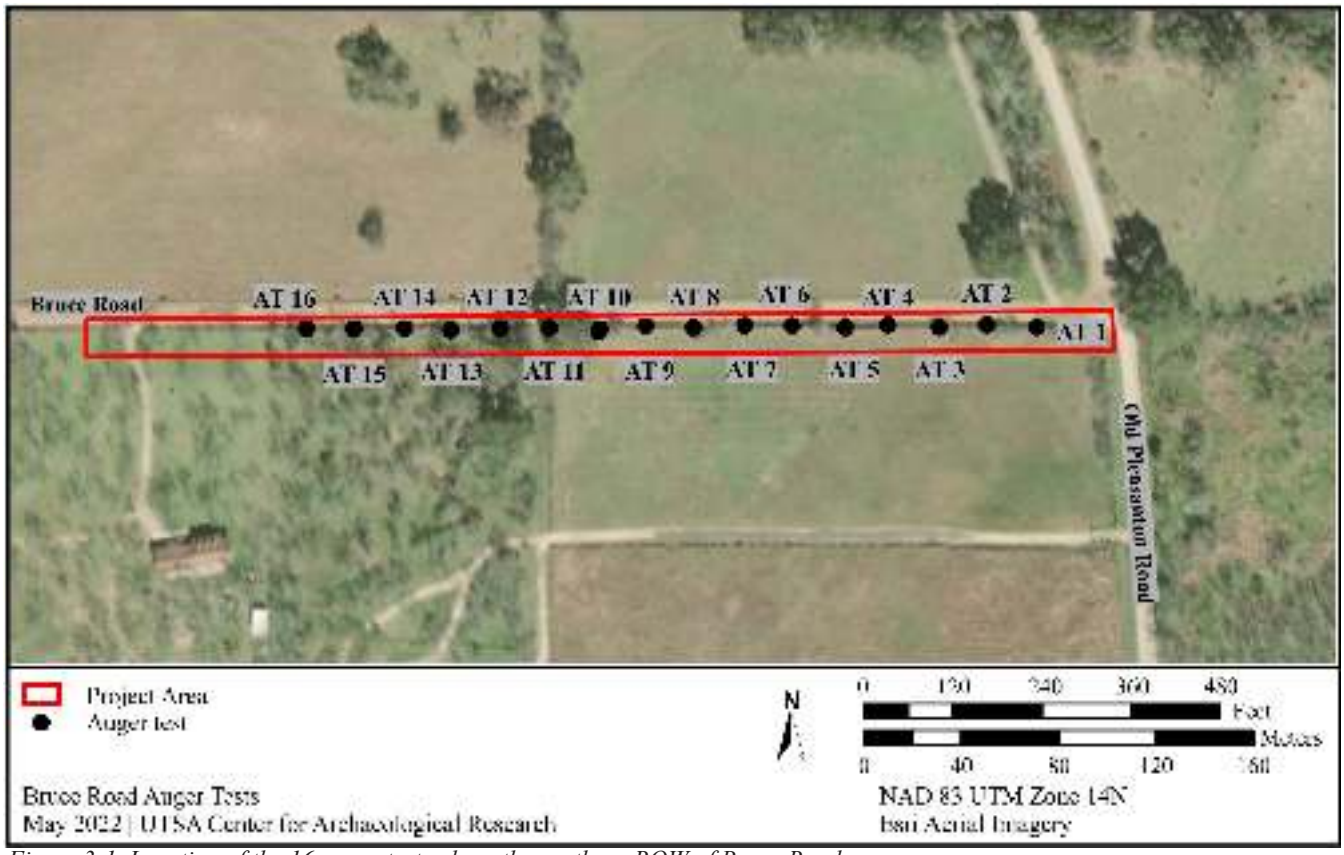

Figure 3-1. Location of the 16 auger tests along the southern ROW of Bruce Road.

tests. Existing vegetation as well as access gates required adjusting the location of auger tests. While there is considerable soil loss from the fence line to the roadway, the placement of auger tests was as close to the fence line as practical. The soil loss between the fenced side and the ROW ranged from 0 to 20 cm.

Twelve of the 16 auger tests produced a total of 54 artifacts. Four auger tests were dispositive. A single prehistoric artifact was recovered, with the balance of 53 artifacts dating to the historic or modern period. The single prehistoric artifact was a tertiary flake found in AT 1. All of the historic/modern artifacts were twentieth or twenty-first century in age with the majority (n=30) being fragments of clear or amber glass from bottles thrown onto the ROW. Metal scrap formed the second largest category and was comprised of fencing wire and scraps of degraded metal cans (n=12). Fragments of asphalt and other construction debris were the third largest category (n=8). No archaeological features were identified or encountered in the field or as a result of subsequent laboratory analyses. Further, no artifacts were recovered that had any association with the Battle of Medina in 1813.

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Chapter 4: Summary

The principal research objective for the auger testing within the southern ROW of Bruce Road was to confirm the presence or absence of metal artifacts attributable to the August 18, 1813 Battle of Medina. Very few artifacts were recovered and all of these represented twentieth century trash thrown onto the ROW shoulder of Bruce Road. None of those artifacts were remotely attributable to the Battle of Medina. Regarding the principal research objective, the auger testing demonstrated a complete lack of nineteenth century artifacts, including any related to the Battle of Medina. The fact that anywhere from 0 to 50 cm of soil had previously been removed makes it impossible to say conclusively that the battle did not take place at this location, but it is a strong indicator of that probability. Further work in the immediate area may provide additional supporting evidence of that probability. The auger testing results support a recommendation of no further investigation of the subject property. Finally, CAR respectfully requests approval to discard the entirety of the artifact assemblage collected as none of them warrant curation or provide any avenues for further research.

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Appendix A: Auger Test Results

Auger Test #	Depth cmbs	Class	Type	Description	Count
AT 001	0-55	Glass	Container	Clear, slightly opaque	1
AT 001	0-55	Glass	Container	Amber	5
AT 001	0-55	Lithics	Debitage		1
AT 002	0-80	Construction	Asphalt		1
AT 002	0-80	Construction	Brick		1
AT 002	0-80	Glass	Container	Clear	2
AT 002	0-80	Glass	Container	Amber	7
AT 003	0-45	Glass	Container	Clear	1
AT 004	0-30	Construction	Other		2
AT 004	0-30	Construction	Plastic		1
AT 006	0-64	Glass	Container	Clear	1
AT 006	0-64	Glass	Container	Amber	1
AT 007	0-60	Construction	Asphalt		1
AT 007	0-60	Glass	Container	Amber	1
AT 008	0-64	Glass	Container	Amber	2
AT 009	0-80	Glass	Container	Amber	1
AT 011	0-80	Glass	Container	Amber	1
AT 012	0-74	Construction	Other		3
AT 012	0-74	Glass	Container	Amber	3
AT 013	0-80	Construction	Plastic		1
AT 013	0-80	Glass	Container	Amber	1
AT 013	0-80	Metal	Unknown	Scraps	1
AT 016	0-80	Glass	Container	Amber	3
AT 016	0-80	Metal	Unknown	Scraps	1
AT 016	0-80	Metal	Wire	Barbed	1