

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE BRYAN
EAST SIDE (SAM RAYBURN) PARK AREA IN
THE CITY OF BRYAN, BRAZOS COUNTY TEXAS**

Texas Antiquities Permit 837

**By
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ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey was conducted at a 23.074 acre tract in the city limits of Bryan, Texas at the site of the Bryan East Side (Sam Rayburn) Park by Brazos Valley Research Associates. Fieldwork was carried out during the period of September 11-14, 1989. A pedestrian survey produced one chert flake and one uniface in a disturbed context. Shovel testing failed to recover any cultural materials and no prehistoric site was recorded.

A review of historic maps for the county did not disclose the presence of structures present in the project area and no evidence of a historic site was observed in the field. Local informants stated that the area was used for pasture for many years and it is likely that no homestead was ever located there.

Virtually the entire project area has been disturbed due to landscaping activities. It is highly unlikely that undisturbed cultural materials are present beneath the surface anywhere in the project area.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am appreciative of the help I received during this project. C. L. Tate, Jr. assisted during the pedestrian survey and shovel testing and David S. Pettus researched the geology and geomorphology of the Project Area.

Roy Ross provided my link with the City of Bryan during the project and was very cooperative. He made sure I had the necessary maps and papers to complete the survey. The City of Bryan made their drafting department available and Louis Delacruz (Engineering Aide) assisted in preparing the figure used in this report.

During the survey Frank Kubin, Maintenance Supervisor for the Bryan Independent School District answered questions concerning changes in the landscape resulting from land clearing and contouring.

James E. Holster, an architect with Holster and Associates, met with me and discussed the various methods used during the landscaping activities. He also provided me with maps showing the original and modified contours.

Amy Stephenson is a librarian who works in the Map Room at Texas A&M University. She assisted me during my search for old maps of Brazos County that might depict standing structures in the Project Area.

Mark Denton of the Texas Antiquities Committee helped with the research design for this project and the paperwork necessary for acquiring a permit. The cooperation of the staff at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin, Texas is also appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Bryan plans to construct a city park on a tract of land approximately 23 acres in size. Its location in Brazos County is depicted in Figure 1. The UTM coordinates for the approximate center of the project area are Northing 754760 and Easting 3396880. The site is situated in an upland setting drained by two intermittent streams, one of which is in the project area.

Prior to this survey the City of Bryan contracted to have the project area landscaped. All of the original topsoil was removed and redeposited over the site with some going to other locations in the city. The details of the landscaping operations are described in specifications book prepared by the architects (HA/RWS 1988). The elevation of the project area originally ranged from 293-315 feet above sea level. Following landscaping, the elevation has changed and now varies between 298-307 feet.

Due to the proximity of two streams to the project area, it was considered a likely place for a prehistoric site. The abandoned town of Boonville (41BZ91) with its cemetery is less than one mile away. Therefore, the presence of historic structures dating to the 19th century had to be considered.

Since little is known about the archaeology of Brazos County at this time, any additional information will add to a limited data base. At this time there are 94 archaeological sites recorded at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin, Texas for Brazos County. Of this number, 13 are historic sites and 81 are prehistoric sites. Except for the excavation of a mammoth that may have been butchered by prehistoric man (Carlson et al. 1984), not one of the prehistoric sites has been formally tested or excavated, and only a few have been shovel tested. As a result, virtually all of our knowledge concerning the prehistory of this county comes from artifacts collected from the surface. One historic site (41BZ74), a 19th century homestead owned by Richard Carter, was excavated by Texas A&M University (Carlson 1983, 1987) and provides some data for this period of settlement.

Because of these reasons and the fact that part of the funds for this park will be provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, an archaeological survey and a permit from the Texas Antiquities Committee are required.

In order to fulfill this obligation the City of Bryan contracted with Brazos Valley Research Associates of Bryan, Texas to conduct the fieldwork and prepare a report documenting the results of the survey to be presented to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Antiquities Committee. This work was conducted under Antiquities Permit 837.

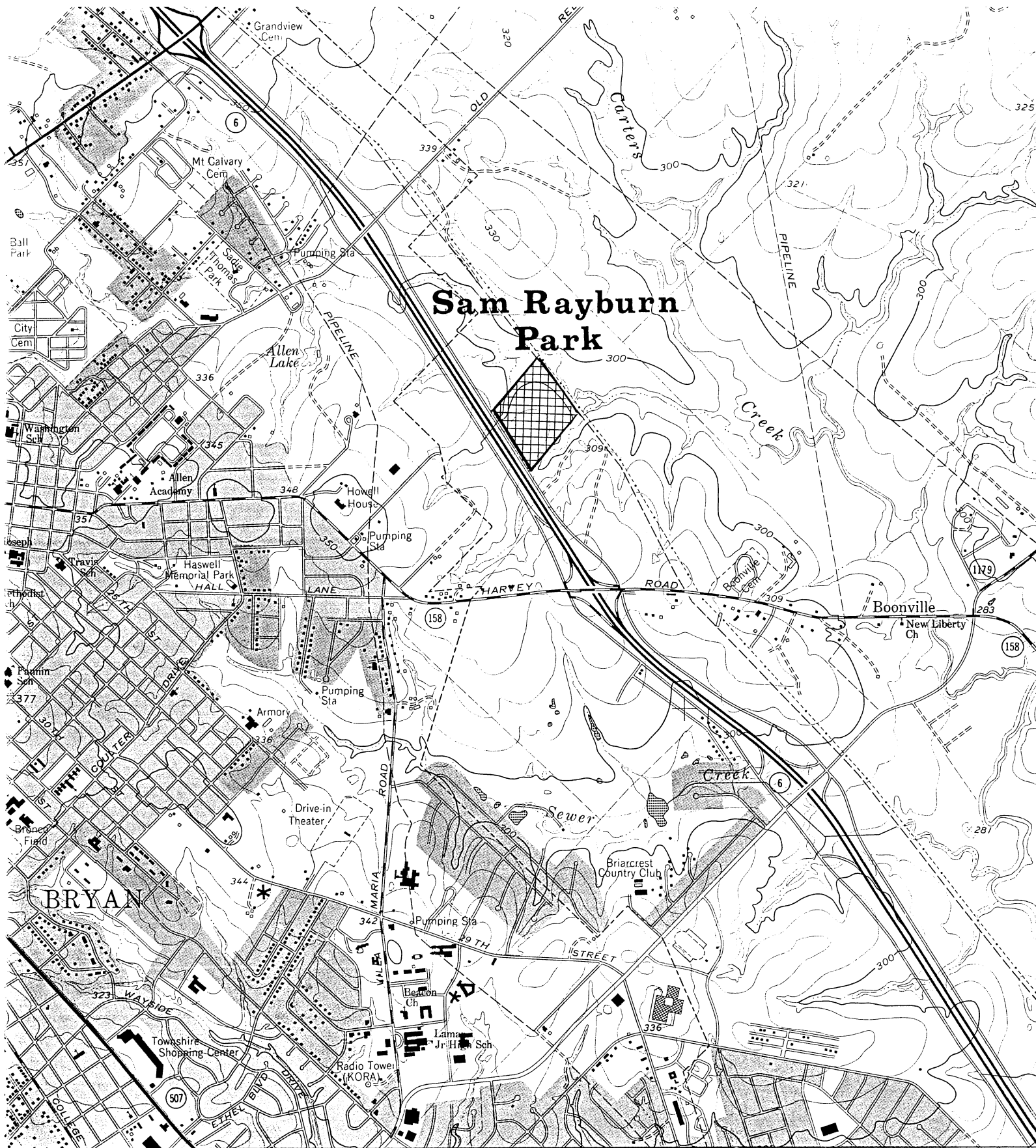


Figure 1. Location of Project Area on USGS Bryan East Quadrangle.

Improvements planned for the East Side (Sam Rayburn) Park include a concrete trail, softball/baseball fields, football/soccer field, tennis courts, pavillion, picnic tables, benches, playgrounds, landscaping, and utilities. A detailed description of the facilities to be constructed appears as Appendix I.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for the East Side (Sam Rayburn) Park conforms to guidelines outlined by the Texas Antiquities Committee (TITLE 13, Part IV, Chapter 41.3).

As mentioned above, the location of the project area in an upland setting drained by two streams was considered a likely area for prehistoric occupation. In order to find out if any prehistoric or historic sites have been recorded in the project area as well as the kinds of sites known in the area and where they are likely to occur, site records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin, Texas were checked. In addition, old maps of Brazos County in the map room at Texas A&M University were examined for the presence of standing structures.

In the field, a pedestrian survey, shovel testing, and auger probing were utilized to examine surface and subsurface deposits. A geomorphologist was present and recorded his observations concerning the geology and geomorphology of the project area. The fieldwork was documented by notes and color slides which will be turned in to the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory for permanent curation. A report following guidelines recommended by the Council of Texas Archeologists will be prepared and submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Antiquities Committee, and the City of Bryan.

FIELD METHODS

The project was divided into three phases - background and archival research, field reconnaissance, and report writing. Prior to commencement of the field survey, the files at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory were checked for previously recorded sites in the project area and vicinity. Data concerning the geology and geomorphology of the project area were researched and written by David S. Pettus of Southwest Geoservices.

The field crew consisted of William E. Moore (Principal Investigator), David S. Pettus (Geological Consultant), and C. L. Tate, Jr. (Field Technician). A 100% pedestrian survey of the 23.074 acre tract, accompanied by shovel testing and limited auger probing, was conducted. Due to the absence of vegetation in the area surveyed it was possible to walk straight transects over the entire project area. During the survey we relied on the project map supplied by the City of Bryan and a USGS topographic sheet (Bryan East Quadrangle) for locational data.

Thirty shovel tests were excavated and three auger probes were conducted. Due to the disturbed condition of the area, auger probing was considered not productive. All shovel tests were screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth and terminated when we reached what we thought was the surface of the Yegua formation. Thirteen of the shovel tests were placed in the south end of the project area roughly parallel to the intermittent stream that is located several hundred feet to the south. The remaining 17 shovel tests were dug in the north part of the project area along the south bank of the stream that drains this part of the tract. Two artifacts, a flake and uniface, were observed on the surface. Because no provenience could be assigned to them they were not collected.

Because of the absence of sites or features, photographs were taken only of the project area to show the area surveyed and disturbance present during the survey.

When the survey began, landscaping activities had already been carried out over the entire tract and construction of the Sam Rayburn Junior High School and a tennis court had been completed. The disturbance was so thorough that it believed no intact, undisturbed soil remains in the project area, either on the surface or in the subsurface.

CHRONOLOGY

Paleoindian Period

The common conception of the Paleoindian period is the time following the last ice age (Pleistocene) in North America when man wandered about the continent in pursuit of megafauna such as mammoth, mastodon, and earlier species of bison. Although not much is known about their diet, plants and other smaller animals probably were as important to the Paleoindians as an occasional mammoth or other large animal. They are also noted for the manufacture of unique projectile point types such as Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview. Descriptions of these and other types mentioned in this section are found in Turner and Hester (1985) and Suhm and Jelks (1962). Although dates for this period are tentative, Paleoindians probably occupied the general area between 7000 and 8000 years ago (Prewitt 1981; Bond 1977; Shafer et al. 1975).

Evidence of this period, often projectile points found on the surface, has been found over much of Texas. Sites with in situ deposits, however, are rare. In Brazos County, three sites (41BZ2, 41BZ32, and 41BZ73) have been recorded as Paleoindian based on artifacts collected from the surface of disturbed deposits. One site (41BZ76) is believed to represent an area where a mammoth was butchered by Paleoindians about 10,000 years ago (Carlson et al. 1984). Based on the fragment of a well-made biface, Kotter (1981:349) believes site 41BZ70 may also be Paleoindian.

Archaic Period

The Archaic period is generally defined as the time following the extinction of Pleistocene megafauna during which small bands of hunters and gatherers roamed the countryside in search of food in the form of plants and animals. The addition of horticulture, pottery, and the bow and arrow are viewed as major technological changes which led to the end of this period. During this time the overall population gradually increased as evidenced by a greater number of sites. A study of the site records at TARL indicates that at least 16 sites in Brazos County probably belong to this period.

Historic Indians

Very little evidence of historic Indian groups has been found in the region. Mallouf (1979) reported the presence of Poyner Engraved ceramics at some sites. This type has been found at historic Indian sites in East Texas and may date from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1700 (Suhm and Jelks 1962:123-125). The possibility of metal arrow points in this region has been noted by Duffield (1960). The two historic Indian groups most likely to have lived in Brazos County are the Bidai and Tonkawa.

Kotter (1981:34) believes archaeological sites with evidence of historic contact may exist in all portions of this area. The scarcity of such sites, he believes, is due to the short time span of occupation and the limited sample of cultural materials available from surface examinations. Site records at TARL do not list any sites in Brazos County as Historic Indian.

European Explorers

The earliest European activity in the area was by French and Spanish explorers who were interested in claiming Texas for their countries. During the 17th and 18th centuries many explorers passed through the area in an attempt to establish missions and gain footholds in Texas. Of the many roads and trails created during this time, the Old San Antonio Road (OSR), to the north of the project area, connected Saltillo, Mexico with Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Anglo-American Settlement (1821-1860)

By the early 1800s, Texas was under the control of Mexico following a revolt against Spain in 1810. Actual settlement of the area began in 1820 with the arrival of Stephen F. Austin's Old Three Hundred settlers. Mexico viewed American settlement as a means of developing its northern state and raising capital through land sales (Miller 1986:8). Andrew Millican moved to the area in 1821 and is recognized as the first Anglo-American settler to establish a home in Brazos County.

During this period the area was sparsely settled with most inhabitants depending on agriculture for their livelihood. According to McKay (1986:2), only two families were living in the County Seat of Boonville (about a mile southeast of the project area) as late as 1852. These pioneer communities, according to Walker (1986:21), "retained their rural, agricultural nature well into the twentieth century."

Anglo-American Settlement (1860-1900)

Victor (1981:239) credits the arrival of the railroad in 1860 as the beginning of the second phase of settlement in Brazos County. McKay (1986:1) writes that before the railroad Brazos County was populated primarily by Southern agrarians living on scattered farms and plantations along the river bottoms. The railroad changed the way people lived.

In 1870, for example, self-contained farmers were dominant and less than half of Texas had been settled. By 1900, the entire state had been transformed into an empire with commercial agriculture the main industry (Spratt 1983). In less than 30 years, Bryan became a permanent trade and population center with

cotton the main crop (McKay 1986:4). The population of Brazos County in 1870 was an increase of 232% since 1860 (McKay 1986:3).

According to Diem (1981), Brazos County settlers were not town builders. He states that Boonville was the only real town in existence before 1860. Most of the development in the county resulted from the railroad. Bryan, Millican, Benchley, and Wellborn were towns created because of the Houston and Texas Central Railway.

Recent Settlement (1900-Present)

This period is marked by increased growth, primarily due to the continuation of the railroad as a major influence on the local economy and the emergence of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A&M University) as a major institution of learning. Small farms, often managed by tenant farmers and sharecroppers, continued to exist and subsistence farming with an occasional cash crop, usually cotton, was common.

GEOLOGIC AND GEOMORPHIC OBSERVATIONS

Geology

The project area is situated on the outcrop of the Yegua formation of Eocene age (36 - 58 million years ago), the second oldest of the five major epochs of the Cenozoic Era. No more recent formations are on top of the Eocene in the project area. Therefore, archaeological sites can only occur in the recently deposited top soil.

This formation consists of sandstone, clay, and lignite; sandstone, mostly quartz, some chert, fine-grained, subangular to subrounded, indurated to friable, calcareous, glauconitic, massive, locally cross-bedded; clay, lignite, bentonitic, sandy, silty, mostly well laminated, chocolate brown to reddish brown, lighter colored upward; lentils of lignite common; flat ironstone concretions and spherical calcareous concretions of a foot or more in diameter common; some fossil wood; thickness 750-1000 feet (Bureau of Economic Geology).

Soil in the project area consists of fine sandy loam of the Lufkin series. Soils in this series consist of moderately fertile, crusty, claypan soils. They occur on level to sloping uplands throughout most of the county and are the most extensive soils in the area. Lufkin series soils were developed from alkaline to weakly calcareous clay and sand clay. The native vegetation is post oak-savannah woodland with a thin undergrowth of coarse bunchgrass (Mowery et al. 1958). Soils in the project area were observed to be a grayish-brown. In general, soils of the Lufkin series are not well suited for crops or pasture.

Geomorphology

The tract is bounded on three sides by intermittent streams. In the northern part where huge pieces of petrified wood and chert were seen is uncharacteristic of the Yegua formation and indicates that it may consist of fill brought in from somewhere else.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological survey of the Bryan East Side (Sam Rayburn) Park failed to locate any prehistoric or historic sites in the project area. Thirty shovel tests and three auger probes revealed the entire tract had been disturbed through such land modification activities as clearing, scraping, pushing, moving, and filling. No original topsoil was encountered. Two lithic artifacts, one flake and one uniface, were found during the pedestrian survey in the area of the proposed soccer field on a clay surface.

A meeting with architect James Holster, revealed that all of the topsoil was removed during the landscaping operations. This information, unfortunately, was obtained after the shovel testing had been conducted.

It is believed that there is no intact topsoil left in the project area. The presence of the two lithic artifacts suggest the presence of a prehistoric site but they were found out of context and their original provenience cannot be determined. It is, therefore, possible that a prehistoric site did exist in the project area but was not only destroyed by landscaping operations but transported to other locations in the county with the removed topsoil. Should any cultural materials remain in the project area they are also out of context and of no value to researchers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the absence of an intact prehistoric or historic site in the project area, it is recommended that the City of Bryan be allowed to proceed with construction of the Bryan East Side (Sam Rayburn) Park. It is not considered necessary for an archaeologist to monitor the construction phase of the project.

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APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES PLANNED FOR THE
BRYAN EAST SIDE (SAM RAYBURN) PARK

The following narrative is taken from the grant application on file at the City of Bryan.

This project would allow City of Bryan to lease and initially develop 23.074 ac. with facilities designed specifically to meet the need of handicapped individuals and the general public. Facilities include a lighted .5 mile X 6' concrete trail with 10 exercise stations designed for the seeing and physically impaired, 2 unlighted softball/baseball practice fields, 1 lighted multiuse football/soccer field, 1 multiuse unlighted football/2 soccer field, 4 lighted tennis courts, lighting for 4 tennis courts, a 3 basketball/ 2 volleyball lighted mulituse pavilion with shuffleboard/checkerboard and designed for wheelchair basketball, 6 lighted picnic tables with grills, 3 benches, .3 ac. of handicapped playgrounds, area lighting, landscaping, utilities, etc.