# A CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE WEST CAMPUS STREET DEVELOPMENT AND ATHLETIC FACILITY RENOVATION/ADDITION PHASE II ON THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY CAMPUS BRAZOS COUNTY TEXAS

Texas Antiquities Permit Number 1651

by

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Brazos Valley Research Associates

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Brazos Valley Research Associates

Project Number 96-01

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## ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey of a 47 acre tract on the Texas A&M University campus in Brazos County, Texas was conducted in February of 1996 by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) of Bryan, Texas under the supervision of William E. Moore. The area was investigated using the pedestrian survey method supported by shovel testing. No prehistoric site or significant historic remains were found within the project area. It is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned. The final report and field notes will be provided to the Office of Facilities Planning and Construction, The Texas A&M University System, and the Department of Antiquities Protection, Texas Historical Commission. Copies of these documents are also on file at Brazos Valley Research Associates for the interested researcher. A copy of the final report will also be given to the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The contract for this project was awarded to Brazos Valley Research Associates by the Facilities Planning and Construction Department, Planning Division. The cooperation of Dan H. Kennedy, P.E., Assistant Manager, and his staff, especially Eduardo A. Menchaca (Surveyor), throughout the project is appreciated. In addition, to the effort expended by the Principal Investigator, other individuals are thanked for their participation. Michael R. Bradle served as Project Archeologist and directed the fieldwork with assistance by Floyd Kent. Lili Lyddon prepared the figures that appear in this report. I am also grateful to Mark H. Denton of the Department of Antiquities Protection, Texas Historical Commission, for his input during the review process and to Carolyn Spock, Head of Records, at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory for assisting with the background check.

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# INTRODUCTION

Brazos Valley Research Associates was retained by the Facilities Planning and Construction Department, Planning Division, of The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) to conduct a cultural resources survey for the proposed West Campus Street Improvement (TAMUS Project Number 1-2777) and Athletic Facilities Renovation/Addition - Phase II projects (TAMUS Project Number 1-2784) on the university campus in central Brazos County (Figure 1).

The project area consists of 47 acres and is bordered on all sides by TAMUS property (Figure 2). No federal regulatory agency is involved in this project which will be reviewed at the State level by the Department of Antiquities Protection (DAP), Texas Historical Commission (THC). Since this project is being supported by state funds and is located on land controlled by Texas A&M University, an Antiquities Permit from DAP was required and permit number 1651 was awarded to this project. The project number assigned by BVRA is 96-01. The project area is depicted on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographical map, Wellborn dated 1916 and photorevised 1980 (Figure 3).

The nearest water source is White Creek. The main channel of this drainage crosses the western corner of the project area and a small tributary or recent gully parallels the northwestern boundary (Figure 2). The close proximity of the project area to this creek makes it a likely location for a prehistoric or historic site. In fact, two prehistoric sites (41BZ124 and 41BZ125) are located on this drainage just to the south of the current project area. These sites were recorded during a recent survey of the Bush Presidential Library Center site that is adjacent and to the southwest of the current project area (Figure 2).

Wetlands delineation and an assessment of endangered plants and animals is part of this investigation. Biologist, Steiner Charles Kierce, performed these tasks. Although his work is independent of the archaeological survey and his reports will be submitted as separate documents, the biological and archeological manuscripts will be maintained as one file and be available to other researchers.

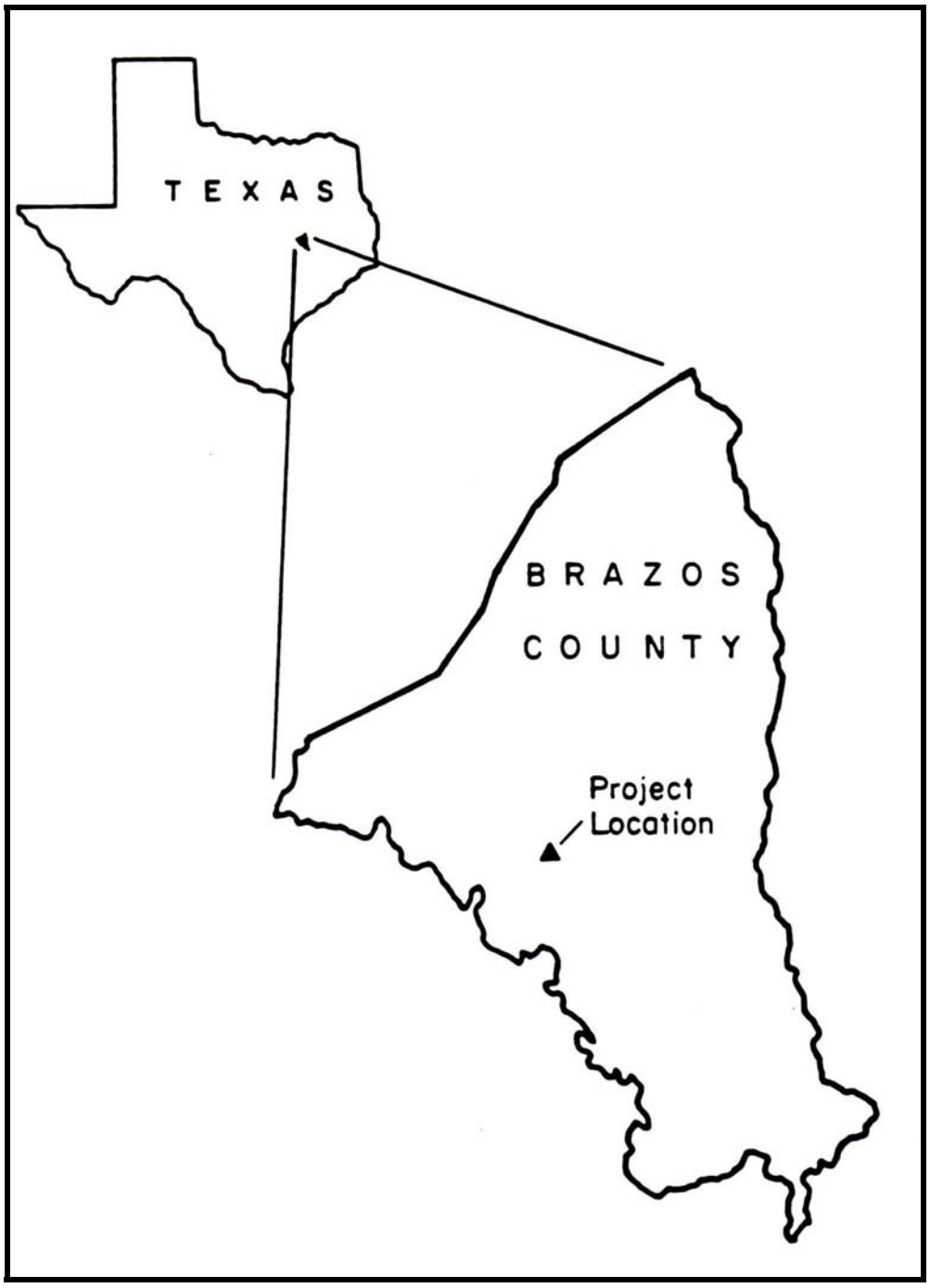


Figure 1. General Location Map

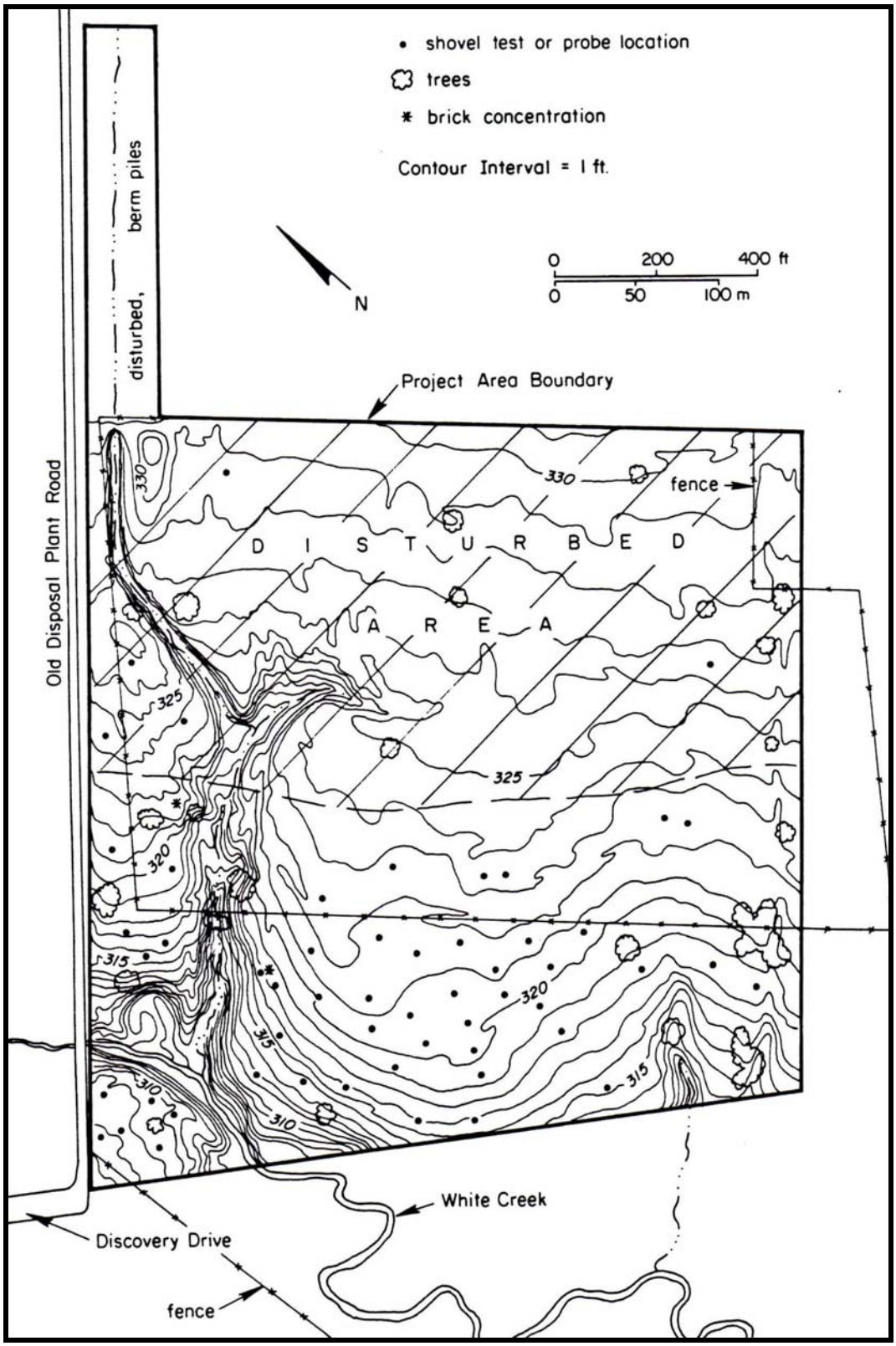


Figure 2. Project Area Map

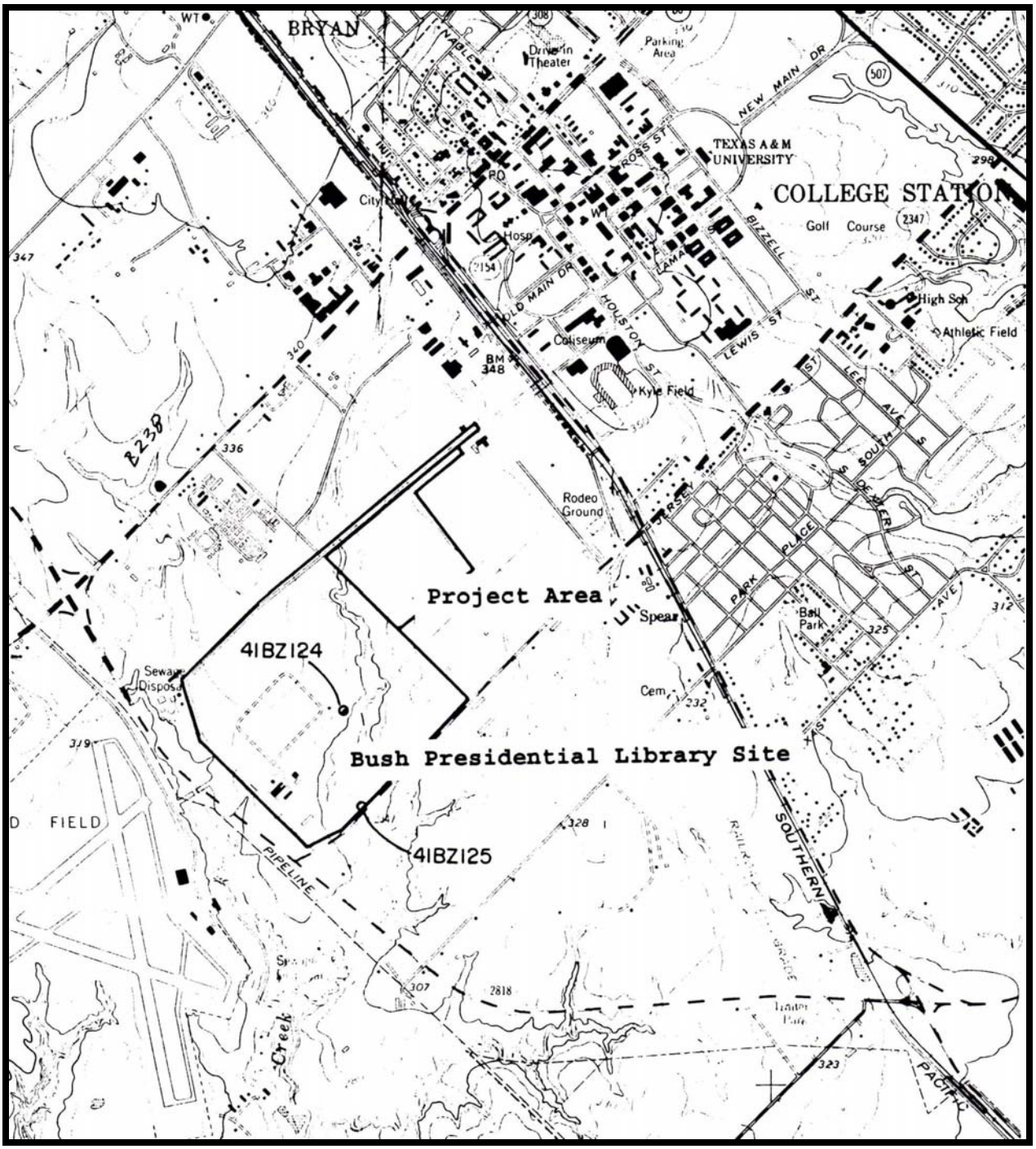


Figure 3. Project Area on Topographic Map

## METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The field survey was supplemented by a check of records housed at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas and an examination of archaeological site reports, county histories, and other manuscripts. The records at TARL were checked for a listing of known sites in the project area. In addition, all previous investigations in Brazos County were identified. All background research was done by the Principal Investigator. The area was examined in the field by means of a pedestrian survey with William E. Moore acting as Principal Investigator. The field survey was performed by Michael R. Bradle who was the Project Archeologist and Floyd Kent under the direct supervision of the Principal Investigator. The entire tract was walked by the field crew and Principal Investigator. Surface visibility was estimated to be between 0-25%.

In terms of prehistoric site location, White Creek and its small tributary or gully are the areas of highest probability. Therefore, shovel tests were concentrated along this drainage and the small tributary or gully of this drainage, randomly across the project area, and in areas where historic materials were observed. All excavated fill was screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth and data obtained from shovel testing were recorded on a shovel test log (Appendix I). In all 22 shovel tests were dug and each test was backfilled. Shovel tests were dug to clay. They averaged 30 centimeters in diameter and varied in depth from clay at the surface to 51 centimeters below the existing ground surface. In addition, 25 shovel probes were dug throughout the project area. These probes helped identify areas for formal shovel tests, were not screened, and are not included on the shovel test log. When exposure was favorable, the creek bank was examined for cultural materials. Basic soil descriptions were taken from Soil Conservation Service (SCS) soil surveys published for the area obtained at the local SCS office (Mowery et al. 1958). This office is now referred to as the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Field notes were taken by the Project Archaeologist and the Principal Investigator. A computer generated map of the project area was provided by The Texas A&M University System, Department of Facilities Planning and Construction.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is located within the West Gulf Coastal Plain section of the Coastal Plain physiographic province as defined by Fenneman (1938:100-120). This physiographic section is subdivided according to the age of the geological formations (Gulf series) that roughly parallel the Texas coastline. The area is hilly and situated within the East Texas timber belt. Gould (1969) describes it as an area characterized by gently rolling to hilly topography with light colored soils that are acid sandy loams or sands. The climate is subhumid to humid and the weather is considered to be predominately warm. Annual rainfall for the county is 39.21 inches. A January minimum temperature of 42 degrees and a July maximum temperature of 95 degrees combine to produce a growing season of 274 days (Kingston and Harris 1983:180). The altitude varies from 200-400 feet. The project area is located on a tract of land that is bisected in part by White Creek and a tributary or 5-gully. Elevations vary from 300 feet along the lower creek terraces to 330 feet on the higher terraces away from this drainage. According to the soil survey for Brazos County published in 1958 (Mowery et al. 1958:Sheet 31), two soil types are found within the project area. They are Tabor fine sandy loam (Ta), 1 to 3 percent slopes and Lufkin fine sandy loam (Lc), 0 to 1 percent slopes.

The soils of the Tabor series are of moderate to low productivity and occur on gently sloping uplands in most parts of the county. Soils in this series were developed from alkaline to slightly acid sandy clay. The native vegetation consists of a scrubby hardwood forest and an understory of shrubs and vines and a thin stand of bunch grass (Mowery et al. 1958:13). In the project area this soil is found along White Creek and its tributary.

The Lufkin series consists of moderately fertile, crusty claypan soils that occur on nearly level to sloping upland soils throughout most of the county and are the most extensive soils in the area. These soils were developed from alkaline to weakly calcareous clay and sandy clay. Sandy mounds occur in many areas but seldom occupy 10 percent of the total area. These mounds range from 1 to 3 feet in height and from 20 to 60 feet in diameter. Native vegetation is post oak-savannah woodland with a thin undergrowth of coarse bunchgrass (Mowery et al. 1958:8). In the project area these soils are found in the uplands.

Although the soils in Brazos County are being reevaluated, the field survey appeared to confirm the soils in the project area are at least similar to the Tabor fine sandy loam and Lufkin fine sandy loam as described above.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Examination of the files at TARL in Austin, Texas revealed no sites have been recorded in the project area. There was also no indication that any part of the 47 acre tract had been surveyed by professional archaeologists. Several archaeological studies, however, have been conducted along White Creek in recent years (see discussion in *Previous Investigations*) above. Aerial photography present in the *Soil Survey of Brazos County, Texas* taken in the 1950s (Mowery et al. 1958:Sheet 31) depicts a tract that is partly wooded and crossed by several roads or trails. Personal communication with Dan H. Kennedy, P.E. of Facilities, Planning and Construction (TAMUS) revealed that the project area has been owned by the University since the late 1800s. During this time it has been utilized for various agricultural activities such as farming and grazing; these activities extending at times to the bank of the creek.

No prehistoric sites were found in the project area. The soils were shallow with the deepest shovel test encountering clay at only 51 centimeters. The majority of the 22 shovel tests contained only 20-30 centimeters of sandy loam above clay with an average of 26 centimeters of sandy loam above clay. It is, therefore, assumed that this segment of White Creek was not a desirable location for prehistoric settlement.

Evidence of recent historic activities and disturbance was present over the entire 47 acre tract and included manhole covers, underground electric wires, pipeline routes, and a brick concentration in the southwest corner of the project area on the east side of White Creek (Figure 2). This feature consists of a depression in the ground with some intact brick walls. The bricks in this concentration are not new and may be as old as 50 years. The area was shovel tested and no historic artifacts were recovered. It seems likely that this brick feature may be related to some of the various agricultural activities that have taken place on this tract prior to this study. Because of its disturbed condition and absence of associated historic artifacts, the exact function of this feature may never be known. This feature does not warrant official designation to State Archeological Landmark (SAL) status and is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The easternmost portion of the project area has been severely impacted by dredging, bulldozing, and other forms of mechanical alteration. A large spoil pile stands in marked contrast to the lower surrounding areas. It appears that the ditch along the road has continually been dredged in order to maintain adequate drainage for run-off. Evidence of disturbance was also observed when small pockets of clay interspersed with the silty sand deposits were found during shovel testing. The upland area has been used for various forms of agriculture by the previous owner and later by the university. Given the shallow nature of the topsoil, the entire upland area away from the creek has been significantly disturbed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the opinion of Brazos Valley Research Associates that there are no significant cultural resource sites present in the 47 acre project area. Overall, the tract is very disturbed and any site present would most certainly lack *in situ* deposits. As a result of this investigation, it is recommended that Texas A&M University be allowed to proceed with construction as planned. It is always possible that cultural materials are missed during any cultural resources survey. Should additional areas containing prehistoric or historic artifacts not discussed in this report be discovered during construction, the Department of Antiquities Protection must be notified immediately and work stopped until the situation can be evaluated.

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APPENDIX I: SHOVEL TEST LOG

| Shovel Test | Depth | Results |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | 51 cm | sterile |
| 02 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 03 | 23 cm | sterile |
| 04 | 45 cm | sterile |
| 05 | 30 cm | sterile |
| 06 | 35 cm | sterile |
| 07 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 08 | 35 cm | sterile |
| 09 | 40 cm | sterile |
| 10 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 11 | 22 cm | sterile |
| 12 | 18 cm | sterile |
| 13 | 25 cm | sterile |
| 14 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 15 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 16 | 25 cm | sterile |
| 17 | 30 cm | sterile |
| 18 | 20 cm | sterile |
| 19 | 15 cm | sterile |
| 20 | 15 cm | sterile |
| 21 | 25 cm | sterile |
| 22 | 20 cm | sterile |