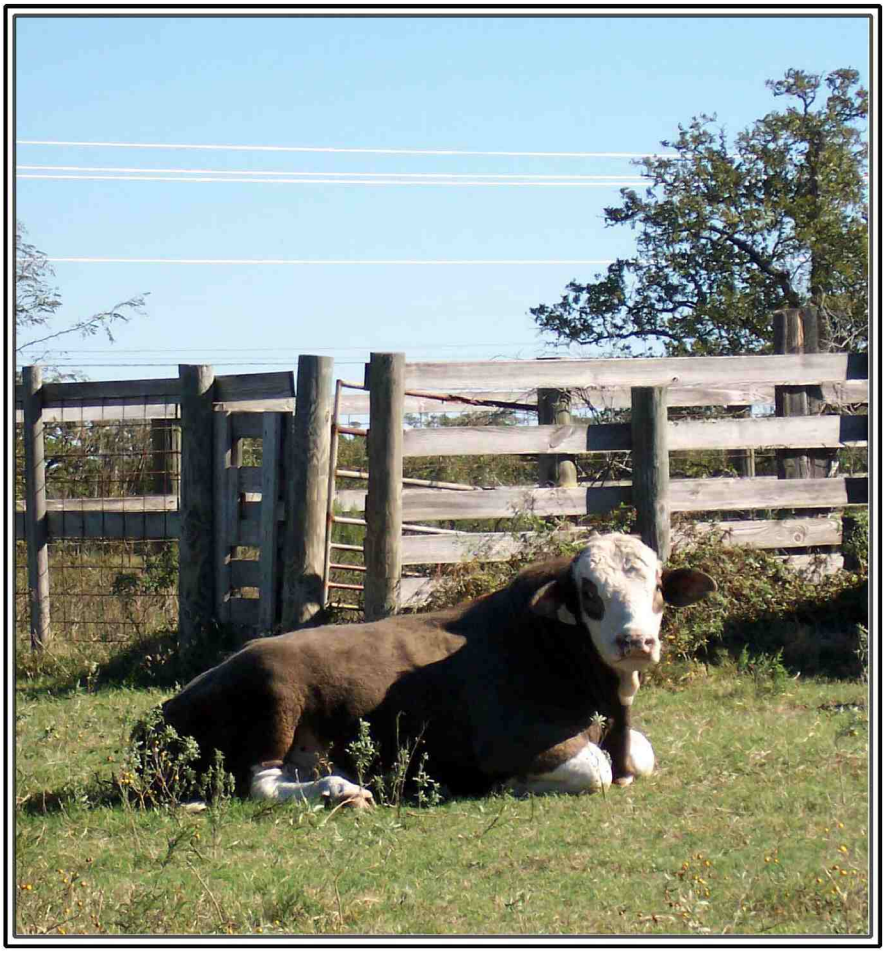
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE OLDEN PROPERTY IN CENTRAL BRAZOS COUNTY TEXAS

Antiquities Permit 3946



By
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Brazos Valley Research Associates
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE

OLDEN PROPERTY IN CENTRAL BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

BVRA Project Number 05-16

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ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey on property owned by the Olden family in central Brazos County, Texas was performed by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) in November of 2005 under Texas Antiquities Permit 3946. The State agency associated with this project is the Texas Historical Commission, and there is no Federal involvement. The area examined consisted of approximately 76 acres and is currently privately owned. The Principal Investigator for the project was William E. Moore, and Edward P. Baxter was the Project Archaeologist. The project area was investigated using the pedestrian survey method supported by shovel testing. No prehistoric sites were found. The project area is located within the boundaries of a former estate that once consisted of approximately 200 acres during the 19th century. The only standing structures present today are three modern mobile homes, one modern metal building, and six outbuildings – pole barns and feeders. No artifacts were observed or collected during this investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

William R. Cullen and Scott A. Schautschick of CSC Engineering & Environmental Consultants, Inc. (CSC) provided maps and obtained permission from the landowner (Ms. Dolly Olden) to examine the various tracts of land in the project area. The project was funded by the Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency, and BVRA is appreciative of the assistance provided by Pete Caler (Landfill Director) and Samantha Best (Landfill Superintendent) of this agency. The file search and general records check were performed by Jean L. Hughes, Assistant Curator of Records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL). Edward P. Baxter and Lili G. Lyddon prepared the figures that are presented in this report. Technical support was provided by Jennifer McMillan, and Nora Rogers served as editor and proofreader. The authors are especially grateful to Dolly Olden for sharing with us her memories of past use of the project area.

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FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

The Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency is in the process of acquiring a 76-acre tract of land within the city limits of College Station in central Brazos County, Texas (Figure 1). This site will eventually serve as a borrow area with an anticipated depth ranging from between 15 and 20 feet. The aerial extent of the borrow area is expected to be approximately 50 acres. Topographic coverage of the project area is found on the USGS Ferguson Crossing topographic quadrangle map dated 1977 and photo-revised 1980 (Figure 2).

The project area is roughly rectangular in shape and is bounded on the north by Rock Prairie Road, on the south by power line and pipeline easements, on the east by improved pasture land, and on the west by the landfill access road. The nearest drainage is Lick Creek that flows from west to east approximately 300 meters south of the project area.

Certain areas of Brazos County contain significant archaeological sites, both prehistoric and historic. Based on previous work in the area the potential for significant archaeological sites is considered to be low to medium. The City of College Station and the Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency would like to ensure that potentially important cultural resources are not affected by their plans for the 76-acre site. Therefore, BVRA has been retained to conduct an archaeological survey and report all findings to the THC in a final archaeological report.

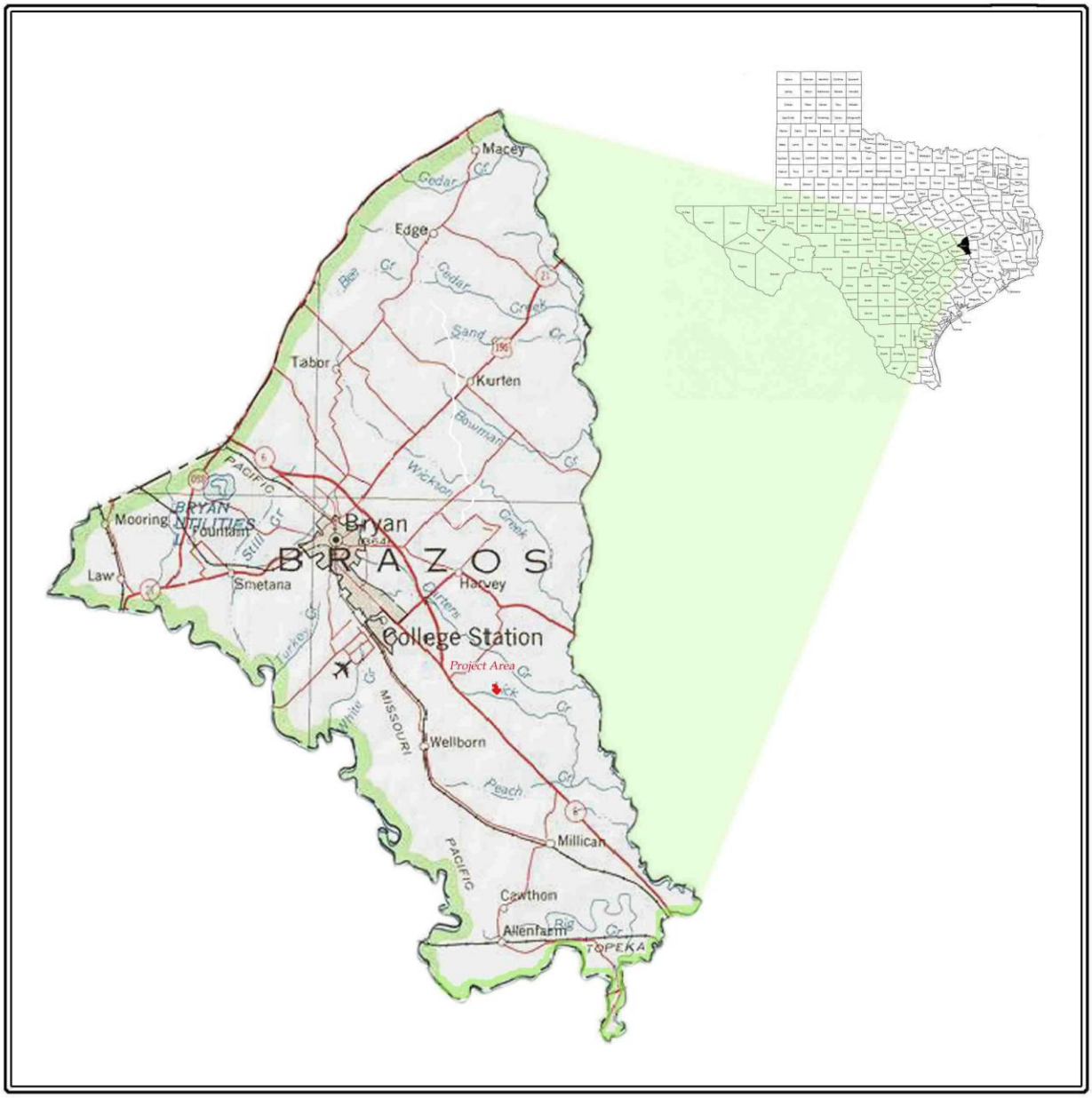

Figure 1. General Location

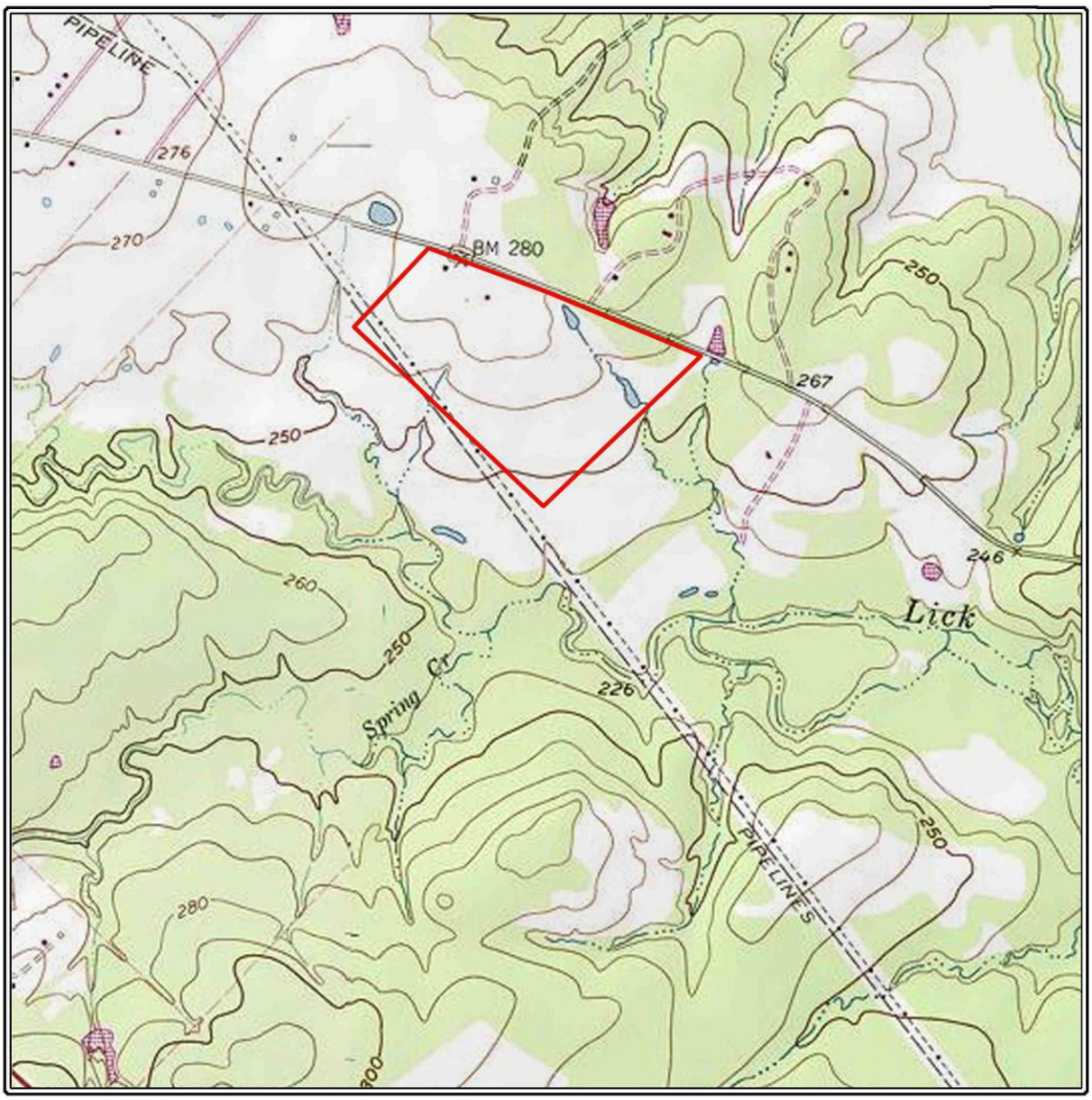

Figure 2. Project Area

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). Fenneman subdivides this province according to the age of the geological formations (Gulf series) that roughly parallel the Texas coastline. 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 mainly warm. Annual rainfall for Brazos County is 39.21 inches. A January minimum temperature of 42 degrees Fahrenheit and a July maximum temperature of 95 degrees Fahrenheit combine to produce a growing season of 274 days (Kingston and Harris 1983). The altitude varies from 200 to 400 feet. The project area is located on a gently sloping tract of land that can be described as improved pasture land (Figure 3). The entire tract is fenced and currently used for grazing by horses and cattle. The western two-thirds of the property has been completely cleared of native vegetation, contoured, and is covered with short pasture grasses. The remainder is unimproved pasture with some intrusive weeds and scattered mesquite and oaks (Figure 4). Two small ponds are present in the extreme northeast corner. They were created by constructing dams across a tributary of Lick Creek. The highest point of the project area is along the northern boundary at the 280-foot contour. The project area is situated on a ridge or divide between two major streams, Carter Creek and Lick Creek – both of which flow into the Navasota River to the east. According to the recently published soil survey for Brazos County (Chervenka 2003), there are four soil types within the project area. They are Shiro loamy fine sand, 1 to 3 percent slopes (SkB), Zulch fine sandy loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes (ZuB). These soils are depicted in Figure 5. Skb soils are found in the uplands and are very gently sloping and rounded. A typical profile consists of the following: surface and subsurface layers (0 to 15” loamy fine sand) and subsoil (15 to 34” clay). These soils are well drained, and permeability is slow. Snb soils are found in the uplands, are very gently sloping, and have plane subsurfaces. A typical profile consists of the following: surface layer (0 to 9” fine sandy loam), subsoil (9 to 28” clay). These soils are moderately well drained, and permeability is very slow. TaA soils are found on stream terraces and are very gently sloping. A typical profile consists of the following: surface layer (0 to 6” fine sandy loam), subsurface layers (6 to 14” and 14 to 42” clay). These soils are moderately well drained, and permeability is very slow. Zub soils are found in the uplands, are very gently sloping, and have plane surfaces. A typical profile consists of the following: surface layer (0 to 5” fine sandy loam), subsoil (5 to 36” clay). These soils are moderately well drained, and permeability is very slow.

Figure 3. View of Project Area (Pasture)

Figure 4. View of Project Area (woods)

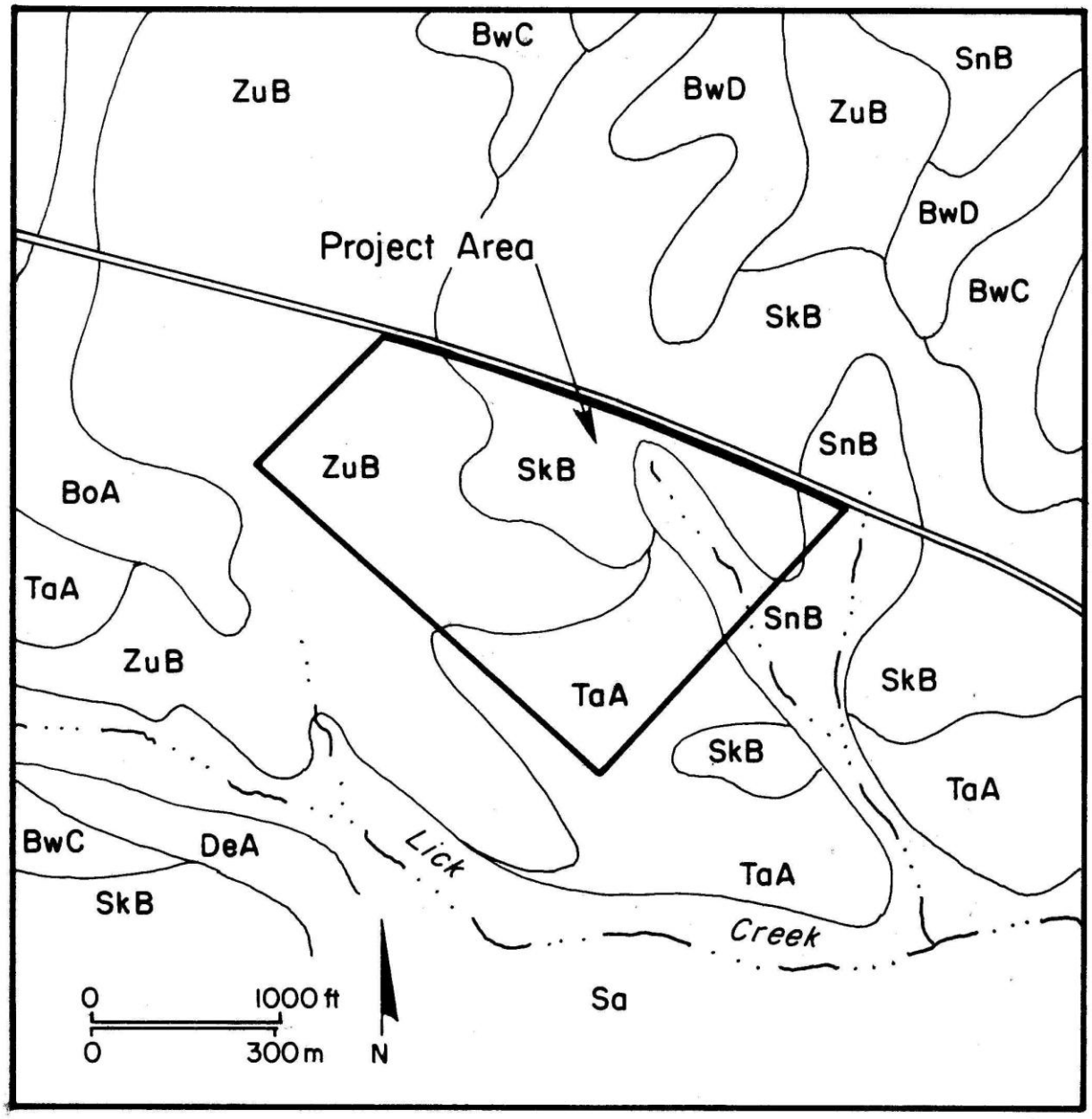

Figure 5. Project Area Soils

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

According to a published planning document for the Eastern Planning Region of Texas (Kenmotsu and Perttula 1993:Figure 1.1.2), Brazos County is situated within the Southeast Texas archeological study region. In 1985, according to a statistical overview published by the Texas Historical Commission (Biesaart et al. 1985:114), Brazos County contained 33 recorded sites. In 1985, 0 sites in the county had been excavated, 0 had been tested by hand, and 33 had been surface collected. Two recorded prehistoric sites in the county were listed as Paleoindian, 1 was listed as General Archaic, and 1 was listed as Late Prehistoric (Biesaart et al. 1985:114). The archaeological potential of Brazos County is reflected in part by the increasing number of recorded sites found as a result of cultural resource management studies. As a result of these investigations, the number of recorded sites now stands at over 150 sites (TARL site records).

The nearest recorded archaeological site is 41BZ98. It is located 0.4 km west/northwest of the western boundary of the current project area. It was recorded in 1990 by William E. Moore as part of an independent study. This site was described to Moore by an informant as being an area where prehistoric artifacts were found when the area was in cultivation for cotton. It is also the location of an abandoned farmstead. Moore visited the area and observed a few flakes and miscellaneous historic artifacts dating to the early 20th century. The site size and significance are unknown.

The nearest previous investigation by a professional archaeologist was a survey of a portion of the existing Rock Prairie Road Landfill site by AR Consultants of Dallas, Texas in October of 2002 (Skinner and Wheeler 2002). This study examined 6.5 acres of a 28-acre expansion project and found no previously unrecorded archaeological sites. The only artifacts observed were a “single utilized chipped stone tool.” The researchers found no evidence of previously recorded site 41BZ98. Skinner’s report does not present a map depicting his project area.

Also in 2000, personnel from the Center for Ecological Archaeology, Texas A&M University examined 527 acres at the site of the proposed Lick Creek Park located southeast of the current project area. The area was examined through shovel testing and surface inspection of eroded areas. Four prehistoric sites (41BZ141, 41BZ144, 41BZ145, and 41BZ146) and three historic sites (41BZ142, 41BZ143, and 41BZ147) were recorded at the referenced location. The prehistoric sites are described in the report by Dering and Mason (2001) as three concentrations of chipped stone occurring along the terrace edge adjacent to Lick Creek (41BZ144), a lithic scatter represented by seven chert flakes recovered between 25 cm and 60 cm in shovel tests along the lower part of the terrace slope of Lick Creek (41BZ146), a lithic procurement and initial reduction area located on the surface on the terrace slope where natural outcrops of sandstone and chert cobbles occur (41BZ141), and a lithic procurement and initial reduction area located on the top of a bench-like landform overlooking Lick Creek (41BZ145).

The authors state that the location of the prehistoric sites on the edges of terraces nearest the creek afforded the prehistoric inhabitants easy access to a wide variety of important resources (Dering and Mason 2001:71-72). The three historic sites are described in the report as farmsteads dating to the 20th century or during the latter part of the 19th century and reflect a farming or ranching economy. All three historic sites have been virtually destroyed.

Some of the more notable investigations conducted in Brazos County include the Millican project (Navasota River Basin) (Kotter 1982), the Richard Carter site (41BZ74) (Carlson 1983, 1987), the Brazos Valley Slopes Archaeological project (Thoms 1993a), White Creek Archaeological project (Thoms 1993b), the Bush Presidential Library (Moore and Warren 1993), and the Tradition Golf and Country Club at University Ranch (Moore 2000, 2001)

The single largest archaeological project in the area was a 20-year study at the Texas Municipal Power Agency site in Grimes County. This study resulted in the recording, testing, and mitigation of numerous prehistoric and historic sites. The Project Archaeologist for this project, Edward P. Baxter, supervised all phases of this project. The interested reader is advised to consult the library at the TARL in order to gain access to the many reports that were generated as a result of this investigation.

The interested reader is referred to the site records at TARL for information regarding these projects. And A*rcheology in the Eastern Planning Region, Texas: A Planning Document* published by the Texas Historical Commission (Kenmotsu and Perttula 1993).

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Pre-Field Tasks

Prior to entering the field, the site records at TARL were checked for the presence of previously recorded archaeological sites in the project area and vicinity. Relevant archaeological reports documenting work in Brazos County were reviewed in order to become familiar with the types of prehistoric and historic sites found in the area.

Field Survey

A 100% Pedestrian Survey with shovel testing was conducted on November 14 - 16, 2005. The Principal Investigator was William E. Moore, and Edward P. Baxter was the Project Archaeologist. Virtually the entire project area was in pasture with scattered trees in one area and two man-made ponds. The surface was examined visually, and 44 shovel tests were excavated in an attempt to locate buried cultural materials if present. All excavated earth was screened through quarter-inch hardware cloth. Data obtained from shovel tests were recorded on a shovel test log (Appendix I). All shovel tests were backfilled after evaluation and mapping, and the location of each test was plotted on the topographic map (Figure 5). Photographs of the project area were taken with a digital camera, and a hand-held GPS was used to create waypoints to help locate project area boundaries.

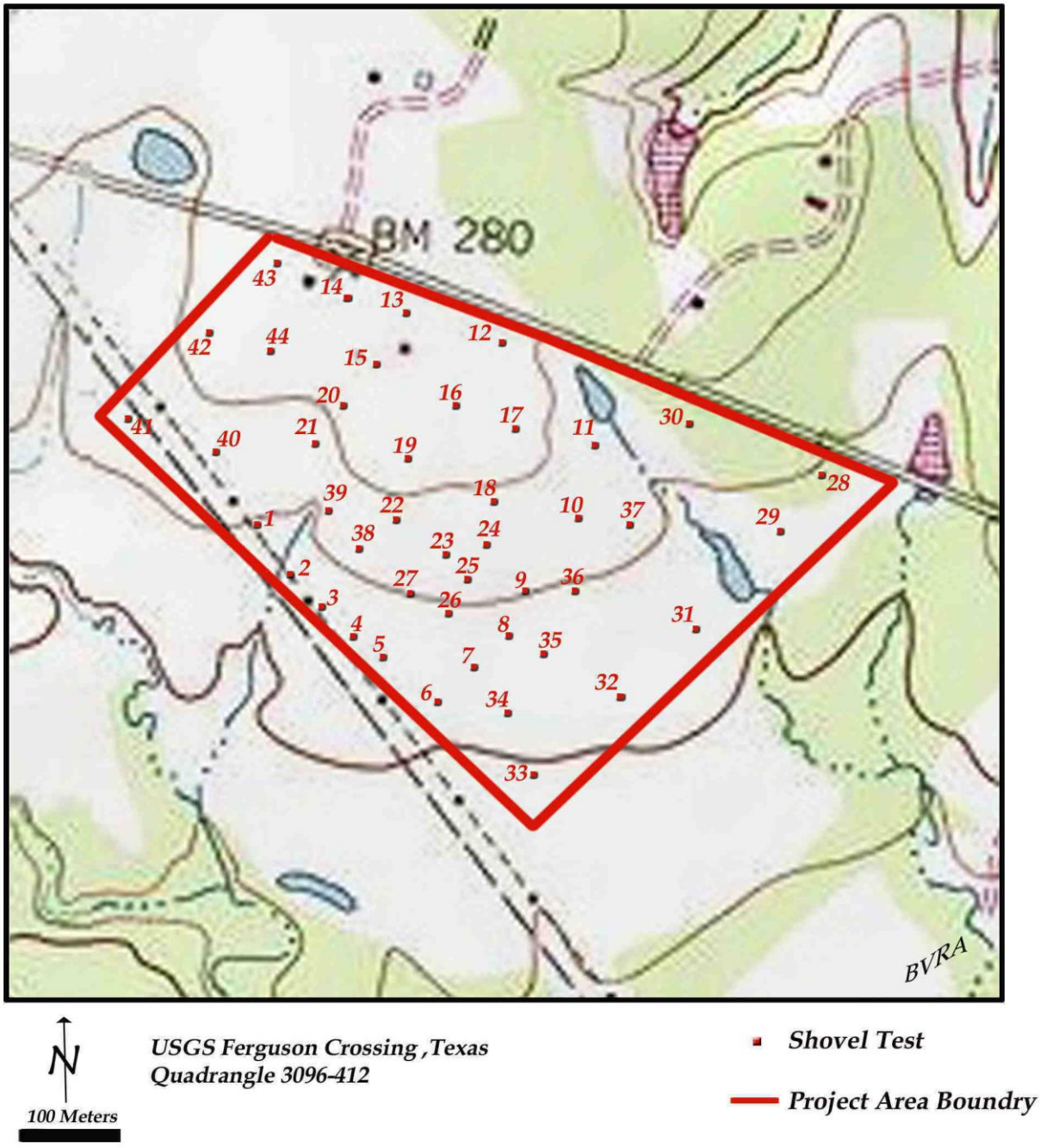

Figure 6. Shovel Test Locations

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Background Research

Examination of the files at TARL in Austin, Texas revealed no sites have been recorded in the project area, and a professional archaeologist had not previously examined the tract. AR Consultants of Dallas, Texas surveyed an adjacent tract of 6.5 acres. No archaeological sites were found, and no evidence of previously recorded site 41BZ98 was observed. The original footprint of the landfill was constructed in 1981 and consisted of approximately 70 acres. Currently, the Rock Prairie Road Landfill encompasses an area of 170 acres with a permitted fill boundary area of approximately 95 acres.

Field Survey

This survey did not discover evidence of prehistoric utilization or occupation of the project area. No cultural materials were found in any of the 44 shovel tests, which were dug to depths of 10 to 90 cm below the existing ground surface to the clay subsoil. BVRA believes that the lack of a major prehistoric site in the area surveyed is due to the distance from the project area to permanent sources of water. The distance to the nearest point where Lick Creek is mentioned other than an intermittent stream on the topographic map is 2.44 km to the southwest, and the same interval for Carters Creek is 1.82 km to the north and northeast. It should be stated here that the prehistoric component of 41BZ98 may have been a small, non-permanent site; or, some of the information provided to the recorder by the informant may have been incorrect.

According to Dolly Olden (personal communication to William E. Moore, November 17, 2005), the entire project area is part of a larger tract once owned by the Cooper family. Originally, their holdings consisted of approximately 2000 acres and dated to the 1850s. The Cooper farmstead occupied land on both sides (north and south) of what is now Rock Prairie Road. The original structure was on the north side of the road, was made of hand-hewn logs, and consisted of five rooms.

On the south side of the road (current project area) there were no standing structures associated with the Cooper place. This area was used as pasture for cattle. Later, the area was used for the cultivation of corn and cotton. Today, the project area is considered to be improved pastureland.

In 1948, Dolly Creagor Olden and her husband moved into an existing wood-frame house in the northwest corner of the project area. Family members originally constructed this house, but Ms. Olden does not remember who built it or when it was erected. When it burned in 1949, the Olden family constructed a new wood-frame house and a barn. In 1992, this house was demolished and replaced by a new mobile home on a concrete slab that was placed at the location of the older house. All of the existing outbuildings are modern as well.

Virtually the entire project area has been disturbed. Land clearing to remove trees and brush, especially mesquite, disturbed at least the first few feet of the ground surface. In addition, the area had been plowed and contoured in the recent past. Other forms of disturbance include a house and outbuildings, driveways and roads, fences, and ponds.

This survey was conducted in accordance with the Minimum Survey Standards as outlined by the Texas Historical Commission, Archeology Division.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The project area is located on a tract that once contained a wooden house and outbuildings. No physical evidence of this structure was observed during this field investigation. Since this site has been virtually destroyed, BVRA does not believe this site is significant, and no formal site number is warranted. Therefore, it is recommended that the project should proceed without further consultation with the Texas Historical Commission. Should evidence of an archaeological site not discussed in this report be encountered during construction, all work must be temporarily suspended in the area of the find until assessed by a professional archeologist in consultation with the Texas Historical Commission.

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1993b *The White Creek Archaeological Project: Cultural Resources Assessments for the Proposed Texas A&M University Wastewater Treatment Plant, Brazos County, Texas.* Archaeological Research Laboratory, Texas A&M University, Reports of Investigations Number 13. College Station.

Appendix I

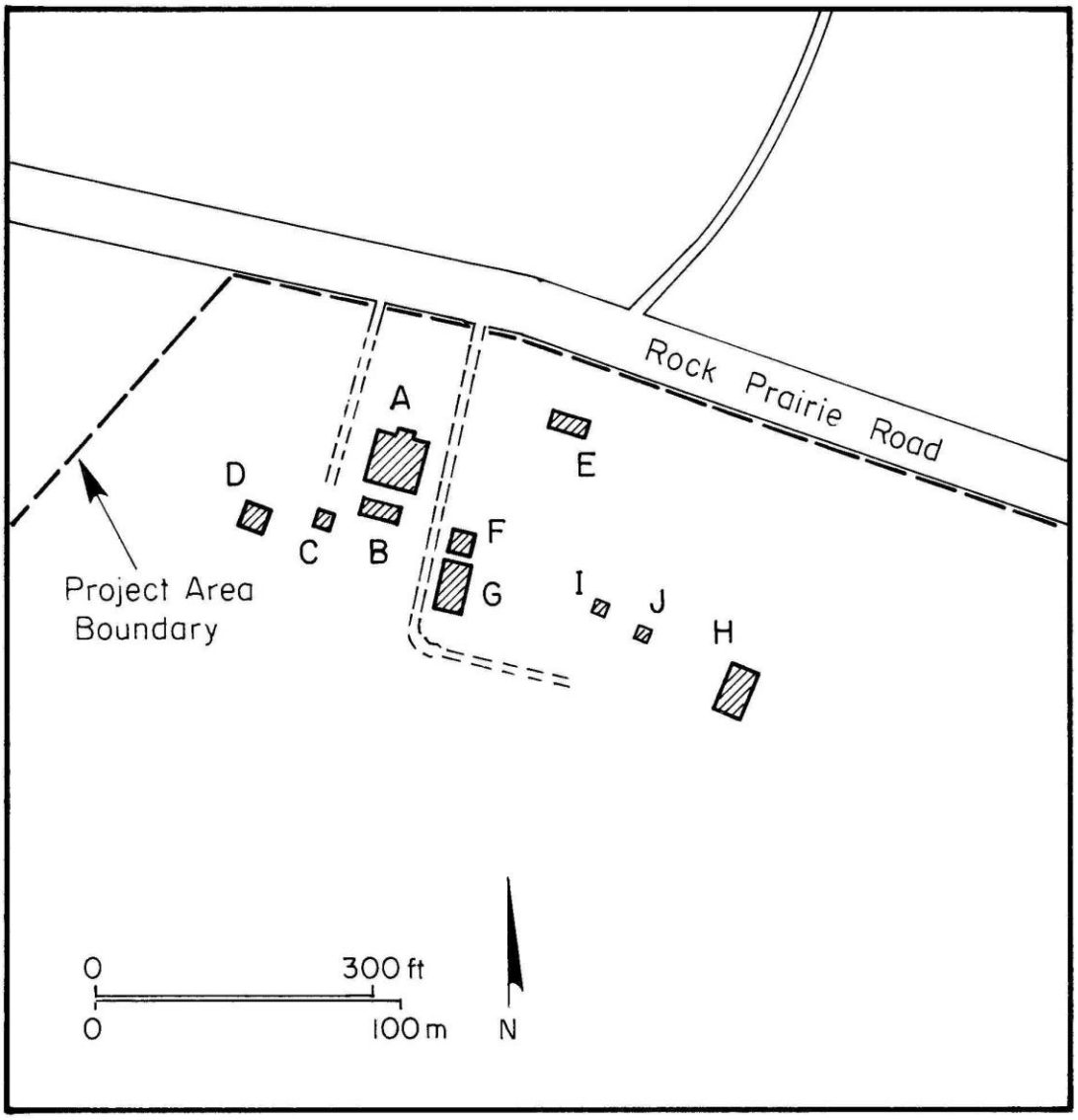
Shovel Test Log*

Shovel Test	Depth (cm)	Soils	Comments
1	40	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
2	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
3	70	Sand and gravels/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
4	50	Sand and gravels/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
5	50	Sand and gravels/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
6	40	Sand and gravels/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
7	40	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
8	80	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
9	70	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
10	70	Sandy loam/clay	Pasture
11	60	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
12	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
13	10	Clay	Pasture
14	10	Clay	Pasture
15	10	Clay	Pasture
16	10	Clay	Pasture
17	10	Clay	Pasture
18	40	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
19	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
20	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
21	10	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
22	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
23	50	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
24	50	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
25	90	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
26	60	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
27	60	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
28	60	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture and woods
29	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture and woods
30	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture and woods
31	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
32	50	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
33	40	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
34	50	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
35	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
36	40	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
37	30	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
38	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
39	20	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
40	20	Clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
41	10	Clay	Pasture, gravels in fill.
42	10	Clay	Pasture
43	10	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture
44	10	Sandy clay loam/clay	Pasture

*All Tests Were Negative

APPENDIX II

STANDING STRUCTURES



Plan of Standing Structures in Project Area

Structure A (occupied mobile home)

Structure B (unoccupied mobile home)

Structure C (pole barn)

Structure D (pole barn)

Structure E (unoccupied mobile home)

Structure F (collapsed pole barn)

Structure G (modern metal building)

Structure H (pole barn)

Structure I (pole barn)

Structure J (pole barn)