

A PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED VILLA WEST PARK
IN CENTRAL BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

Texas Antiquities Permit Number 1946

by

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A PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED VILLA WEST PARK
IN CENTRAL BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

Brazos Valley Research Associates
Project Number 98-01

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ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey of a 10.592 acre tract, the site of the proposed Villa West Park, was conducted in February 1998 by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) of Bryan, Texas with William E. Moore acting as Principal Investigator under Antiquities Permit 1946. The area was investigated using the pedestrian survey method supported by shovel testing. The entire project area contained shallow soils and is considered a low probability area for the presence of prehistoric sites. No prehistoric or historic sites were found within the project area, and it is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned. Copies of the report and field notes are on file at BVRA and the City of Bryan. Copies of the report are also present at the Division of Antiquities Protection, Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The contract for this project was awarded to Brazos Valley Research Associates by the City of Bryan. The cooperation of Roy G. Ross, Administrative Specialist, throughout the project is appreciated. Lili Lyddon prepared the figures that appear in this report. I am also grateful to Herb Uecker of the Division of Antiquities Protection, Texas Historical Commission, for his input during the review process and to Carolyn Spock, Head of Records, and her staff 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 City of Bryan to conduct a cultural resources survey for the proposed Villa West Park in central Brazos County (Figure 1). The project area consists of 10.592 acres and is described in the field notes prepared by the City of Bryan (Appendix I). The project area is bounded on the south by Villa Maria Road, on the east by Mary Branch Elementary School, and on the north and west by private land holdings (Figure 2). The field survey was conducted on two days, February 11 and 13, 1998 and was performed by the Principal Investigator (William E. Moore).

No federal regulatory agency was involved in this project which was reviewed at the State level by the Division of Antiquities Protection (DAP), Texas Historical Commission. Since this project is being supported by state funds, an Antiquities Permit from DAP was required, and permit number 1946 was assigned to this project. The BVRA project number is 98-01. The project area is depicted on United States Geological Survey topographical maps, Chances Store dated 1962 and photorevised 1980 and Bryan West dated 1962 and photorevised 1971. The project area as superimposed on the topographic maps appears as Figure 3 in this report.

The nearest water source is Turkey Creek. The main channel of this drainage is about 450 meters south of the project area, and two of its tributaries are 200 meters to the west and 350 meters to the east. Topographically, the project area is on the southern slope of an upland, the apex of which is to the north and out of the area examined during this investigation. Prehistoric sites have been recorded in the vicinity. Site 41BZ2 is the nearest to the project area at approximately 100 meters to the southeast. Site 41BZ73 is approximately 1300 meters northeast, and site 41BZ89 is approximately 4000 meters southwest. Prehistoric sites found in Brazos County are typically situated on sandy ridges and uplands close to dependable sources of water, mainly creeks and rivers. No prehistoric sites in the county have been reported on clay hills or in areas where clay is close to the surface.

Proposed construction includes a soccer field, picnic areas, trails, basketball pavilion, playgrounds, volleyball court, outdoor classroom, restrooms, and horseshoe pits. The park has been designed to incorporate the wooded areas. It is the intention of the City of Bryan to remove as few trees as possible.

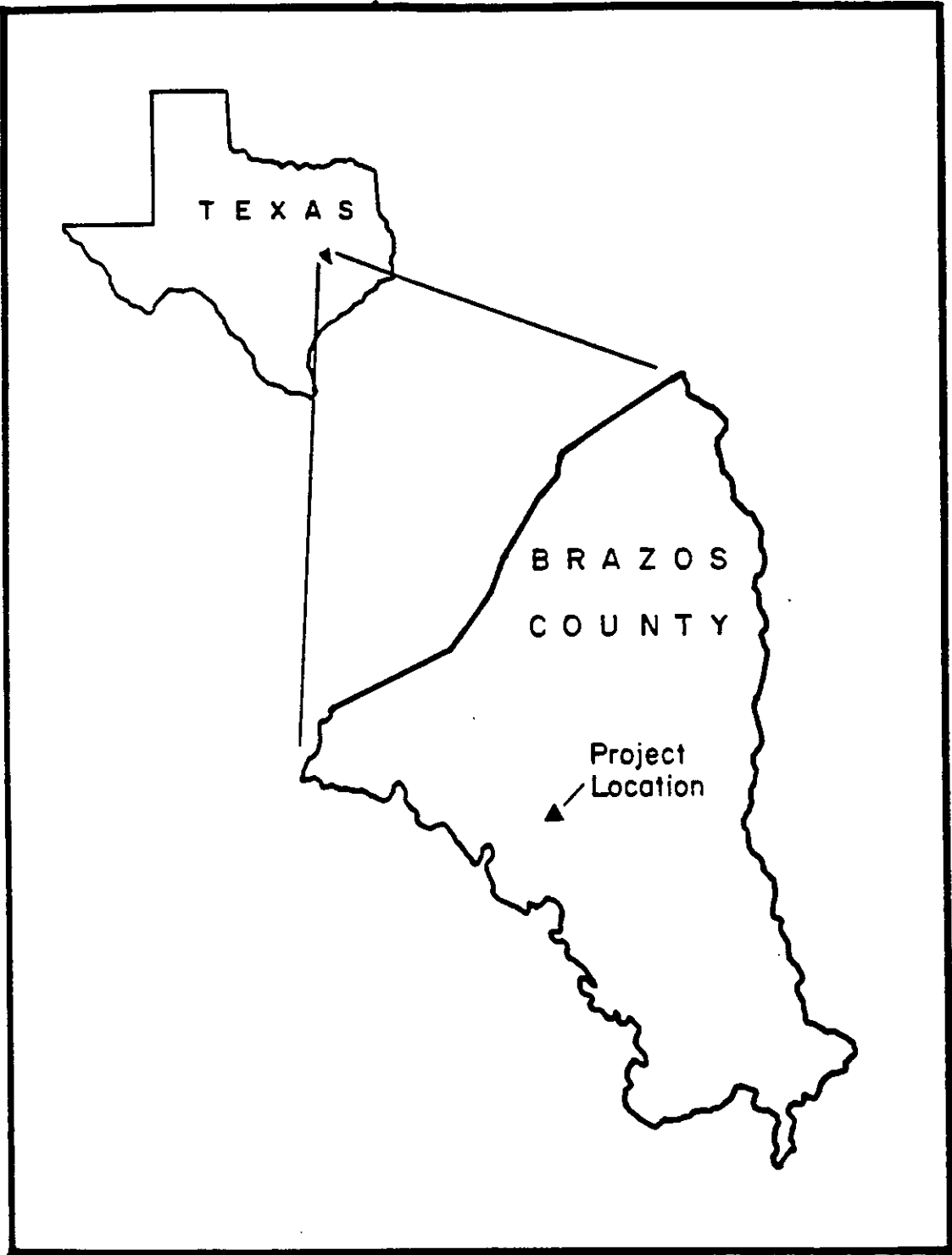


Figure 1. General Location Map.

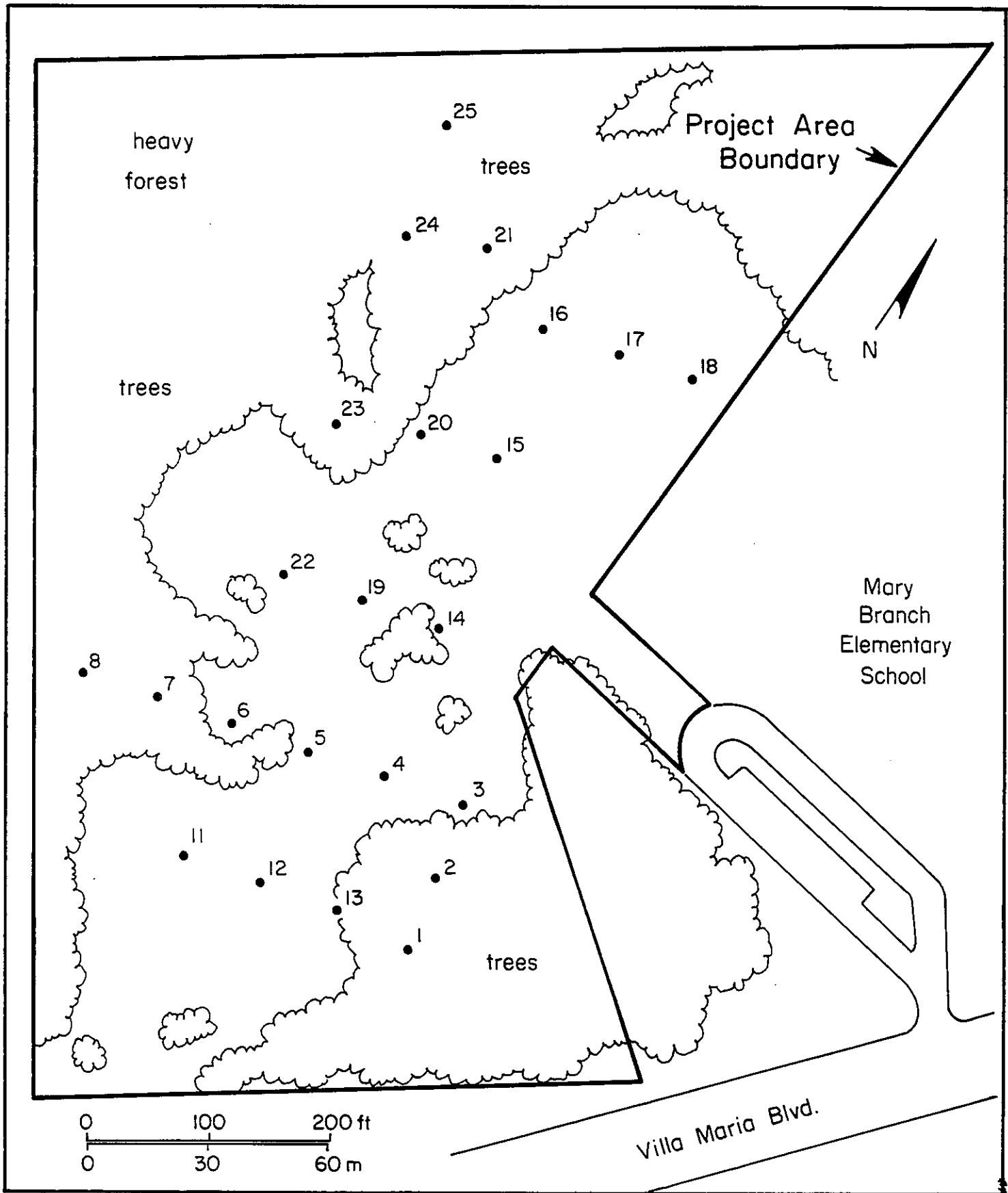


Figure 2. Project Area Map.

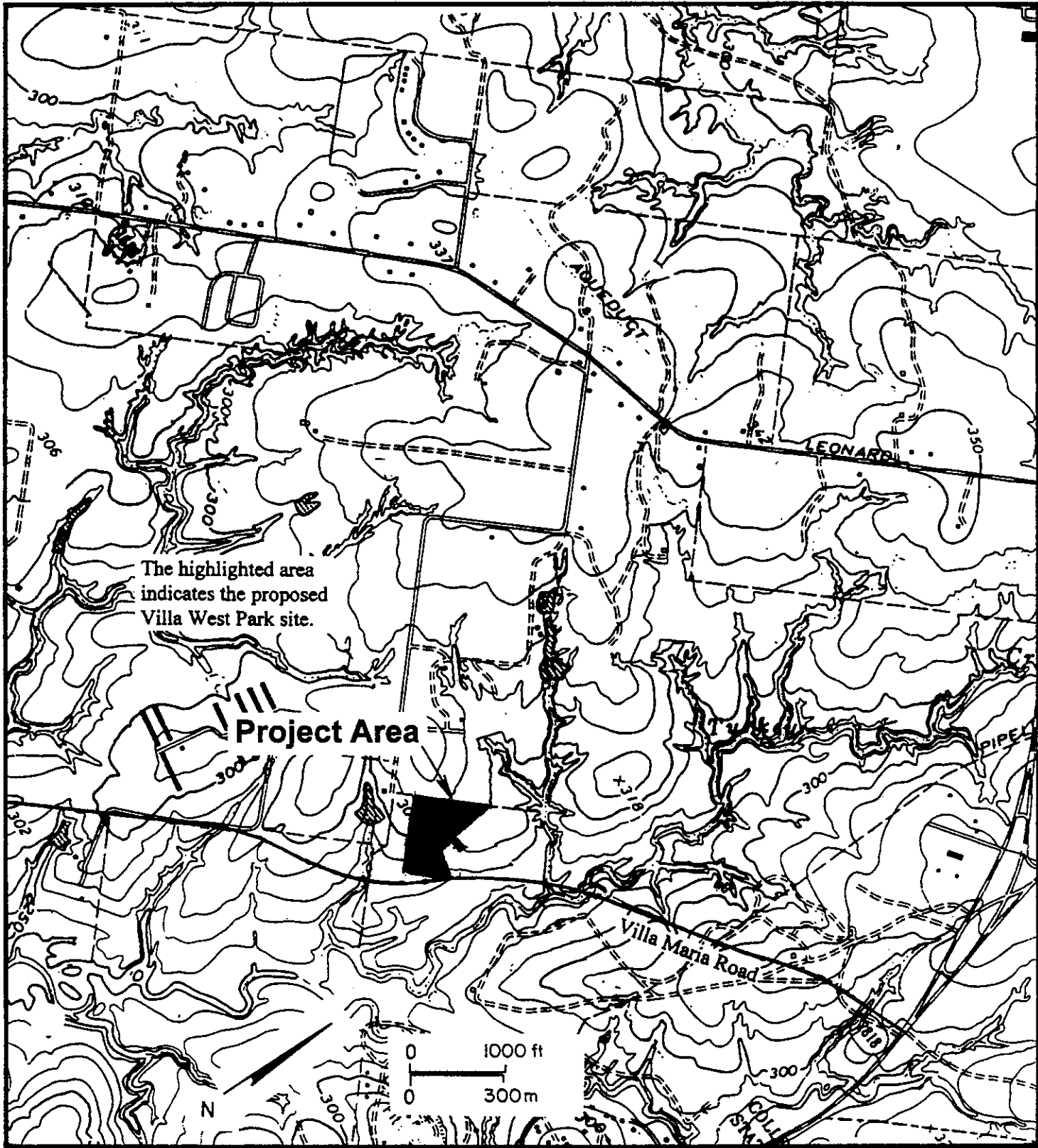


Figure 3. Project Area on Topographic Map.

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 and other manuscripts. The records at TARL were checked for a listing of known sites in the project area. The Principal Investigator did all background research.

The area was examined on February 11 and 13, 1998 with William E. Moore acting as Principal Investigator. The project area was investigated utilizing the pedestrian survey method supported by shovel testing. Shovel tests were excavated on the higher elevations and randomly across the project area. All excavated fill was screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth.* Data obtained from shovel testing were recorded on a shovel test log (Appendix II). In all, 25 shovel tests were dug, and each test was backfilled. The western boundary of the project area was not flagged and, as a result, shovel tests 9 and 10 were excavated to the west of and outside the project area. This error was discovered on the second day of survey when Roy G. Ross of the City of Bryan visited the project area and defined the western boundary.

Shovel tests were dug to clay. They averaged 30 centimeters in diameter and varied in depth from clay at the surface (05 cm) to 40 centimeters below the existing ground surface. The average depth of the 25 tests was 18.52 centimeters. 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.

* Due to the wet conditions, all soil was placed in the screen and examined by hand.

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 bounded on three sides by Turkey Creek and its tributaries.

According to the soil survey for Brazos County published in 1958 (Mowery et al. 1958:Sheet 31), the majority of the project area contains soils belonging to the Tabor Series. Soils in this series are of moderate to low productivity and occur on gently sloping uplands in most parts of the county. They were developed from alkaline to slightly acid sandy clay. The natural vegetation consists of a scrubby hardwood forest and an understory consisting of shrubs and vines and a thin stand of bunchgrass (Mowery 1958:13). The specific soil type in the project area is described as Tabor fine sandy loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes (Ta). A characteristic profile for Tabor fine sandy loam contains a pale brown, slightly acid fine sandy loam (friable when moist, slightly hard when dry) from 0-7 inches; a very pale brown, acid fine sandy loam (very friable when moist) from 7-10 inches; and a light yellowish-brown, strongly acid clay mottled with yellow and with a few yellowish-red spots (very slowly permeable; very firm when moist; very sticky and plastic when wet; and extremely hard when dry) from 10-26 inches. 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 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 10.592 acre tract had been surveyed by professional archaeologists. The reader is referred to recent contract reports by BVRA for a discussion of previous work in the county (Moore 1989a, 1989b, 1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1996). 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 contains soils of the Tabor Series (see *Environmental Setting* above).

No prehistoric or historic sites were found in the project area. The soils were shallow with the deepest shovel test encountering clay at only 40 centimeters. The average depth of the 25 shovel tests was 18.52 centimeters of sandy loam above a reddish clay. It is, therefore, assumed that the landform along this segment of Turkey Creek was not a desirable location for prehistoric settlement. The project area was adequately assessed. First, the entire 10.59 acres was walked with the Principal Investigator walking 20 meter transects in an attempt to locate any surface indication of prehistoric or historic sites. Next, a close inspection was made of all exposed areas, primarily eroded hillsides and the existing trails. The subsurface was examined through the excavation of 25 shovel tests. An average of 2.38 shovel tests per acre was achieved in an area that was determined to be low probability for prehistoric site occurrence due mainly to the presence of shallow soils overlying a firm clay containing red and yellow mottlings. Of particular note, is the presence of numerous pieces of silicified wood throughout the project area, on the surface and in the shovel tests. Several large logs were observed as well as large sandstone boulders. No sandstone was encountered in any of the shovel tests or noted except in the form of scattered boulders throughout the project area.

The extent of disturbance to the project area is not known. However, there currently exists a network of trails that has subjected parts of the tract to erosion. Along the eastern boundary, adjacent to Mary Branch school, is a slope that was obviously created during construction of the school. The project area at this point overlooks the school grounds below. Along the slope erosion is currently active. It is in this area where the surface exposure was the greatest. The aerial photograph in the soil survey for Brazos County shows the project area to be partly wooded and cleared, perhaps for pasture or cultivation.

The survey was conducted on two days following heavy rains, and the presence of standing water and wet soils throughout the project area combine to create a landscape that would not be favored for prehistoric sites. Sites in the vicinity are all located on sandy ridges containing well drained soils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the opinion of Brazos Valley Research Associates that there are no significant cultural resource sites present in the 10.592 acre project area. As a result of this investigation, it is recommended that the City of Bryan be allowed to proceed with construction as planned. It is always possible that cultural materials are missed during any cultural resources survey. Should areas containing prehistoric or historic artifacts be discovered during construction, the Division of Antiquities Protection must be notified immediately and work stopped until the situation can be evaluated.

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- 1992 An Archaeological Survey of a Twenty Acre Tract of Land Owned by the Bryan Independent School District in Brazos County, Texas. Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 19.
- 1993 An Archaeological Survey of the 12.536 Acre Proposed Tiffany Park Site, Brazos County, Texas. Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 27.
- 1994a A Cultural Resources Survey of the 14 Acre Support Services Building Site for Texas A&M University in Central Brazos County, Texas. Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 30.
- 1994b A Preliminary Assessment of the Proposed 9.07 Acre Woodway Park in Brazos County, Texas. Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 34.
- 1994c A Cultural Resources Assessment of the 5 Acre Site of the Proposed Texas A&M University Development Foundation Headquarters Building. Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 35.

Moore, William E. (continued)

1996 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. Brazos Valley Contract Report Number 40.

Mowery, Irvin C., Harvey Oakes, J. D. Rourke, F. Matanzo, H. L. Hill, G. S. McGee, and B. B. Crozier

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Appendix I: Field Notes

**FIELD NOTES
10.592 ACRES OUT OF
LOT 1 & LOT 2, BLOCK ONE
VILLA MARIA WEST SUBDIVISION**

Being all that certain tract or parcel of land lying and being situated in the ZENO PHILLIPS LEAGUE, A-45 in Bryan, Brazos County, Texas and being all of the 10.435 Acre Lot 1 and a portion of the 13.164 Acre Lot 2, Block One, Villa Maria West Subdivision as recorded in Volume 1232, Page 575 of the Official Records of Brazos County, Texas and being more particularly described by metes and bounds as follows:

BEGINNING at a point marking the common most southerly corner of Lots 1 and 2, Block One of the said Villa Maria West Subdivision;

THENCE S 43° 17' 33" W along the most southerly boundary line of said Lot 1, same being the north right-of-way line of Villa Maria Road, for a distance of 490.37 feet to a point for corner; said point being the most southerly corner of said Lot 1;

THENCE N 45° 44' 39" W along the common line of the said Lot 1 and the Ramiro A. Galindo 5.366 Acre Tract as recorded in Volume 1101, Page 36 of the Official Records of Brazos County, Texas, for a distance of 849.42 feet to a point for corner;

THENCE N 43° 50' 50" E for a distance of 795.02 feet along the most northwesterly property line of said Lot 1 to a point for corner; said point being the common most northerly corner of said Lots 1 and 2;

THENCE S 08° 46' 30" E along the common line of said Lots 1 and 2 for a distance of 566.14 to a point for corner;

THENCE through the interior of the said Lot 2, Block One for the following three (3) calls:

- (1) S 89° 51' 35" E for a distance of 135.72 feet to a point for corner at the back-of-curb line of a concrete driveway,
- (2) 73.11 feet in a counter-clockwise direction along the arc of a curve and said curb line, said curve having a central angle of 103° 53' 39", a radius of 40.32 feet, a tangent of 51.51 feet and a long chord bearing S 37° 54' 44" E at a distance of 63.50 feet to a point for corner,
- (3) N 89° 51' 35" W for a distance of 167.01 feet to a point for corner; said point lying in the aforementioned common line of Lots 1 and 2;

THENCE S 08° 46' 30" E along said common line for a distance of 56.12 feet to a point for corner;

THENCE S 63° 39' 23" E continuing along the said common line for a distance of 325.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING and containing 10.592 acres of land, more or less.

Appendix II: Shovel Test Log

Shovel Test	Depth	Results
1	20 cm	sterile
2	40 cm	sterile;
3	38 cm	sterile
4	15 cm	sterile
5	15 cm	sterile
6	20 cm	sterile; terminated because of petrified wood log
7	05 cm	sterile; reddish clay at surface, much petrified wood and gravels
8	15 cm	sterile; much petrified wood and gravels
9*	30 cm	sterile; much petrified wood and gravels
10*	30 cm	sterile; much petrified wood and gravels
11	05 cm	sterile; downslope from ST 6
12	15 cm	sterile; downslope from ST 5
13	05 cm	sterile; downslope from ST 4
14	15 cm	sterile; upslope from ST 4
15	15 cm	sterile; upslope from ST 14
16	20 cm	sterile; upslope from ST 15
17	15 cm	sterile; 20 meters due east from ST 16
18	15 cm	sterile; 10 meters due east of ST 17
19	20 cm	sterile (red clay); 40 meters due north of ST 18

Shovel Test	Depth	Results
20	25 cm	sterile (red clay); 45 meters due north of ST 19
21	15 cm	sterile (red clay); 50 meters due north of ST 20
22	10 cm	sterile (red clay); 40 meters due north of ST 6
23	15 cm	sterile (red clay); 40 meters due north of ST 22
24	20 cm	sterile (red clay); 50 meters due north of ST 23
25	25 cm	sterile (yellowish-brown clay); 30 meters due north of ST 24

ST = Shovel Test

* out of project area