

***AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR THE CITY OF FLATONIA  
7-ACRE PARK AND DOWNTOWN TRAILS PROJECT  
IN CENTRAL FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS***

Antiquities Permit 5481



By

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Brazos Valley Research Associates

Contract Report Number 228

2010

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR THE CITY OF FLATONIA  
7-ACRE PARK AND DOWNTOWN TRAILS PROJECT  
IN CENTRAL FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

BVRA Project Number 09-36

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## **ABSTRACT**

An archaeological survey of a proposed park site consisting of seven acres was conducted by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) on December 15, 2009 and December 17, 2009 for the City of Flatonia under Antiquities Permit 5481. The City of Flatonia also proposes to construct a 4000-foot hiking trail, but the area where the trail is to be constructed was too disturbed to warrant any subsurface investigation. No evidence of a prehistoric site was observed in the site of the proposed park. The lack of sandy soils and proximity to a major stream are the probable reasons. According to local informants, the project area had been used as pasture for cattle in the past. A small shed was present, and it is reported to have been used for hay storage. Since it is not fifty years of age, it was not recorded as a historic site. A wooden frame house stands in the southeast corner of the project area. It was constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Southern Pacific Railroad where it was used as a residence for railroad employees. It was moved to the project area from its original location in the 1950s, and it continued to house railroad employees. Its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or for consideration as a State Archeological Landmark is unknown at this time. It was recorded with TARL as 41FY557. The city plans to maintain this structure as a storage facility. In the northeast corner of the project area, a small scatter of modern trash was identified just below the surface. BVRA recommends that construction be allowed to proceed as planned. Copies of the final report will be made available to the Texas Historical Commission (THC), Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the Texas State Library, and the City of Flatonia.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful to those individuals who participated in this project. At BEFCO Engineering, Inc., project area maps were provided by Bradley Lehr and Gene Kruppa. Kenneth Knight is the City Manager for the City of Flatonia, and he signed the antiquities permit as the landowner. We were also assisted by two volunteers for the City of Flatonia. They are Bryan Milson (Chair of the City's Parks Committee) and Kent Milson (Landscape and Design). Kate Horn, President of the Rail Park Board in Flatonia and Elton Homesley provided information regarding site 41FY557. Randall Anderson was my assistant, and he helped with the shovel testing as well as being responsible for the digital photography. Lili G. Lyddon prepared the figures and edited the manuscript.

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## INTRODUCTION

The City of Flatonia has applied to the Recreation Grants Branch of the Texas and Wildlife Department for assistance with two projects (city park and hiking trail) in the city limits of the City of Flatonia (Figure 1). The projects were approved for award of grant funds provided a cultural resource survey be performed, and the results approved by the THC and the TWDB.

The park will be constructed within a seven-acre tract. The proposed improvements consist of a parking lot, two restrooms, a xeriscape garden, walking trail, skate park, and Frisbee golf course. According to city officials, the proposed construction will not affect the subsurface below a depth of 18 inches. The upper reaches of an unnamed tributary traverses the northern portion of the park site in an east-west direction. This phase of the park construction will not involve the old Southern Pacific Railroad station house (41FY557), and no grant funds will be utilized for this site.

The Downtown Trails project will consist of the construction of approximately 4000 feet of trail paralleling the downtown area. Virtually all of the footprint of the proposed trail is in TxDOT right-of-way and has been disturbed. The maximum depth of disturbance needed to construct this trail is six inches. The upper reaches of an unnamed tributary crosses the proposed trail in a north-south direction.

The project area is depicted on the 7.5' USGS Flatonia topographic quadrangle (2997-414). According to the engineering firm associated with this project, no federal agency is involved.

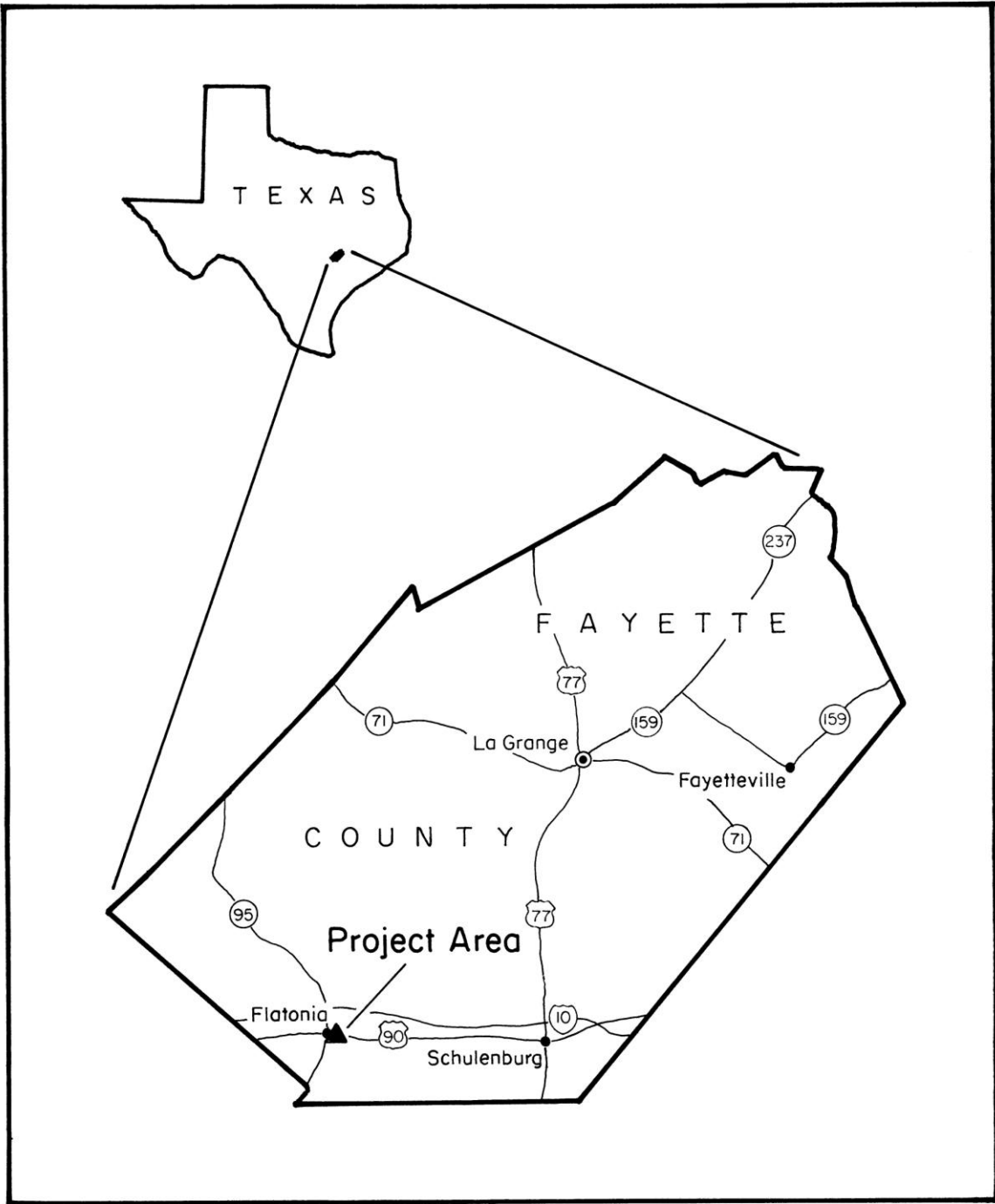


Figure 1. General Location



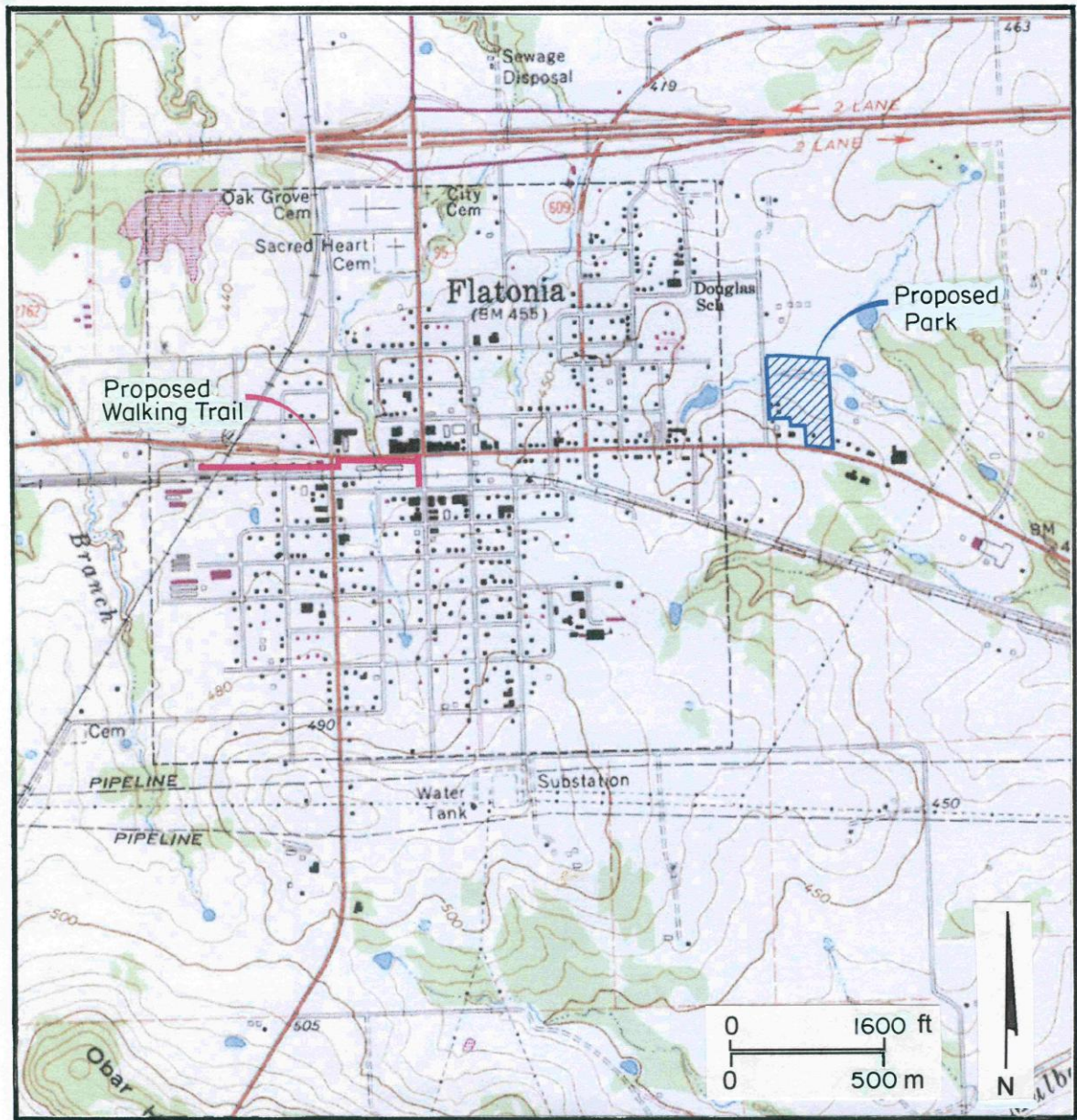


Figure 2. Project Area on Topographic Map



## ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The following discussion was taken from the published soil survey for Fayette County (Ressel and Brown 2004). Fayette County is located in the southeastern part of central Texas. The county has a total area of 614,100 acres (960 square miles). Of that total, about 4666 acres is water. The topography in most areas is nearly level to undulating, but some areas are hilly and steep. Elevation in the county ranges from 200 to 500 feet above sea level.

Fayette County is in the Texas Claypan Area and Texas Blackland Prairie Major Land Resource areas. Sandy soils are found in the Texas Claypan area, and these soils were formed under post oak savannah and are mostly light in color. Clayey and loamy soils are found in the Blackland Prairie. These soils were formed under grass and are mostly dark. The Colorado River is the major drainage in the county.

Fayette County is hot during the summer months and cool in the winter when an occasional surge of cold air causes a sharp drop in otherwise mild temperatures. Rainfall is uniformly distributed throughout the year and peaks in the spring. Annual total precipitation is normally adequate for cotton, feed grains, and small grains. In winter, the average temperature is 54 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average daily minimum temperature is 43 degrees. In summer, the average temperature is 83 degrees, and the average daily maximum temperature is 94 degrees. Total annual precipitation is about 37 inches. Of this, 22 inches (60%) usually falls in April through September.

There is only one soil type in the seven acre tract. According to the soil survey for Fayette County (Ressel and Brown 2004:Sheet 45), this soil is described as Flatonia loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes (FaB). It is described in the soil survey as loamy soil on foot slopes, low ridges, and upland stream divides. The surface layer consists of dark gray loam from 0 to 4 inches, and the subsurface is clay from 4 inches to 33 inches. Below that is silty clay and clay loam containing weakly cemented tuffaceous siltstone. This soil type is used mainly for pasture.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### General

The project area is located in a region referred to in a statistical overview compiled by Biesart et al. (1985:Figure 15) as the Central Coastal Plain Cultural-Geographic Region (Figure 3). When the overview was published in 1985, there were 1067 recorded archaeological sites in the region. This figure represented 5.28% of the state. Of the 13 cultural-geographical regions in Texas, the Central Coastal Plain was 10<sup>th</sup> in number of sites recorded. In 1985, there were only 65 recorded sites in Fayette County. This was 6.10% of the region and .32% of the state. Site types were listed as Paleo-Indian (2), Archaic (19) and Late Prehistoric (6). Some sites are mentioned as being disturbed due to erosion, construction, and soil deflation. Four sites are mentioned as being destroyed. No sites had been excavated, 48 had been tested by hand, and 14 had been surface collected. Hearths and concentrations of burned rock are also noted.

According to Nightengale and Jackson (1983:6), Fayette County occupies a transitional zone between east, coastal, and central Texas cultures with the most influence being from the central part of the state. This statement is based on a comparison of projectile point types and, in some cases, pottery with those found in the Central Texas region. This thesis is presented in more detail in a report by Duford W. Skelton (1977:13-16).

### Previous Investigations in Fayette County

The amount of work conducted in Fayette County has increased considerably in the 20 years since the statistical overview was published. The number of recorded sites, for example, has increased from 65 to over 500. The earliest work in the area was conducted by A. M. Wilson who surveyed portions of Bastrop, Fayette, and Travis counties in June of 1930. An unpublished report is on file at TARL (Wilson 1930). The first systematic study was performed by J. P. Nunley (1963) in the 1960s, when he surveyed the area to be inundated by the proposed Columbus Bend Reservoir. Of the 65 prehistoric sites recorded in the county in 1985, one is Paleoindian, 19 are Archaic, and six are Late Prehistoric. Two individual sites were investigated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These are the Frisch Auf! site (41FY128) which produced the first association of *Scallorn* arrow points as grave goods in Central Texas burials (Hester and Collins 1969) and the Meier site (41FY59) which contained a Paleo-Indian component (Meier and Hester 1972). The Frisch Auf! site, in contrast to other sites in the county, lies within the Colorado River floodplain. Typically, sites in Fayette County were found during these studies to be on the higher sand and gravel terraces above the floodplain. Although these higher landforms protect sites from flooding, they are subject to sheet erosion and slope wash, making them appear as surface sites due to a very thin layer of soil, often less than six inches deep.

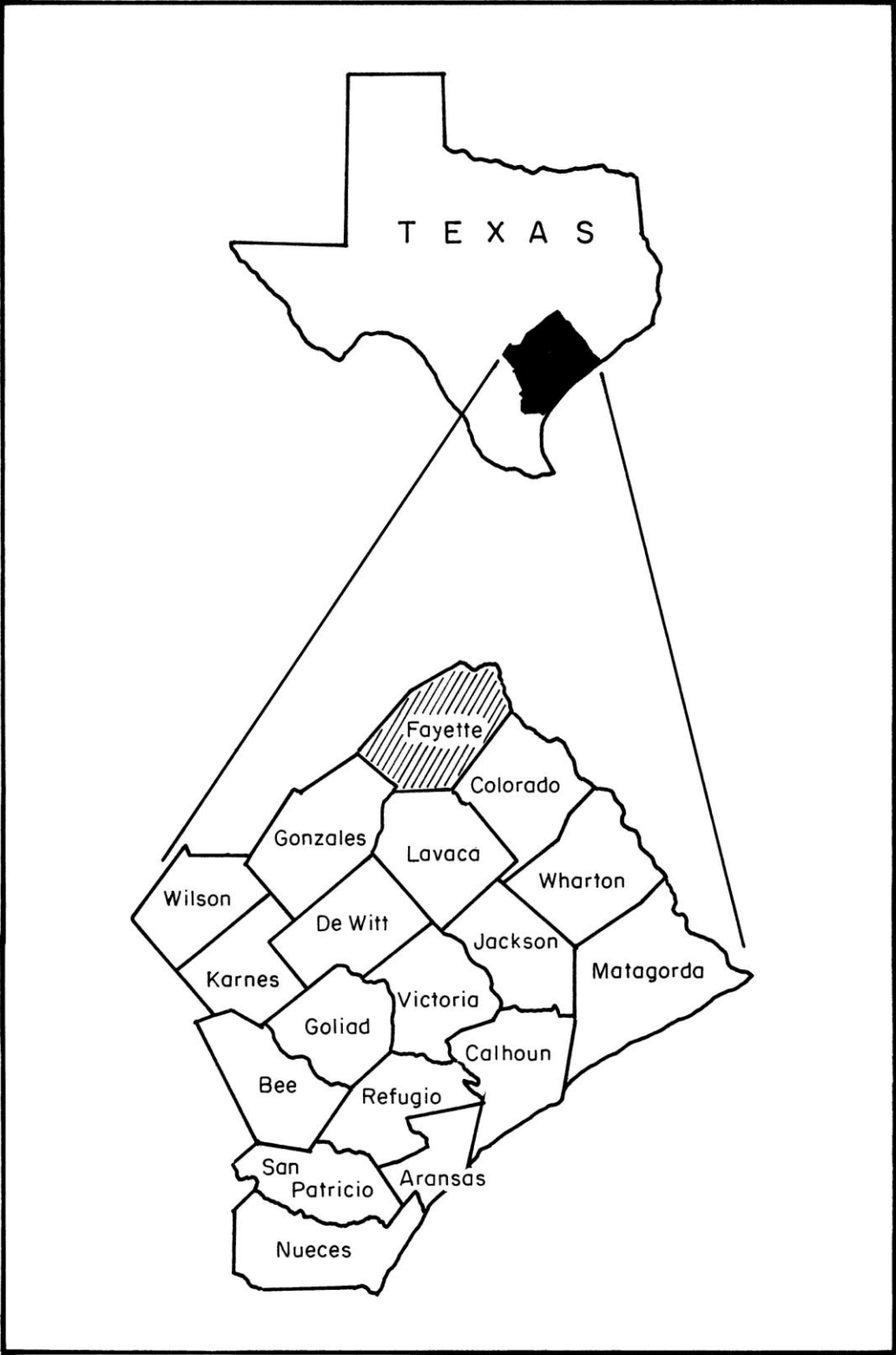


Figure 3. Central Coastal Plain Cultural-Geographic Region

In the 1970s, archaeological activity in Fayette County increased as work was done in conjunction with highway projects and transmission corridors. In the 1980s, the most extensive survey was conducted over a 13,000 acre tract destined to become a lignite mine (Nightengale and Jackson 1983). This study identified 56 prehistoric and 34 historic sites. Overall, the prehistoric sites were found to be adjacent to creeks as only five sites were found on upland interfluves. In the Cummins Creek Prospect area, 80% of the project area is overlain by Quaternary fluvial terrace deposits of gravels containing large quantities of chert and quartzite. Two percent is overlain by the Manning Formation, which contains quantities of knappable petrified wood. This tract is located on the divide between the Brazos and Colorado rivers and, as such, would have been easily accessible to groups from both basins as well as from the northwest and southeast (Nightengale and Jackson 1983:7). The Texas Highway Department continued work in the county in the 1980s and into the 1990s when significance testing was conducted at two prehistoric sites (41FY170 and 41FY509) (Price 1991).

Several studies involving historic sites have also been performed in the county. These include:

- Historic sites research at Biegel Settlement, a German community established in 1838, by the Texas Archeological Survey as part of the Fayette Power Project (Carter and Ragsdale 1976)
- A study of historic sites located along Baylor Creek recorded during a span of 20 years as a result of projects conducted for the Lower Colorado River Authority (Utley and Eling 1994). The sites were field checked and archival research was carried out. The majority of sites are 19<sup>th</sup> century farmsteads, although two cemeteries were part of the study. Most of the houses have been razed, and the remains are not considered significant.
- Archaeological excavations at the Kreische Brewery (41FY128)

In addition to archaeological reports, historical accounts are documented in local county histories. Those identified during this survey include *Fayette County, Her History and Her People* (Lotto 1902); *Chronicles of Fayette* (Sinks 1975); *Early History of Fayette County, 1822-1865* (Weyand 1932); *An Early History of Fayette County* (Weyand and Wade 1936); and *Fayette County: Past and Present* (Williams 1976).

## METHODS

### Background Check

Prior to entering the field, the site records at TARL on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin were checked for the presence of previously recorded archaeological sites in the project area and vicinity. The Texas Archeological Sites Atlas was checked for previous surveys in the area. In addition, a thorough review of the existing literature for Fayette County was conducted.

The Principal Investigator and three assistants conducted a 100% Pedestrian Survey of the proposed park site and evaluated the proposed hiking trail. At the site of the proposed park, the subsurface was examined by shovel tests. The soil throughout the park site consisted of firm clay that could not be passed through the screen. Therefore, it was broken apart by hand. The tests were dug in a grid pattern over the seven acre tract (Figure 4). In all, twenty-nine shovel tests were excavated, and a shovel test log was maintained (Appendix I). Shovel tests were excavated to depths of 20 to 50 centimeters despite the presence of very firm clay. The deepest tests were dug in the northeast corner on the only high ground above the creek. Two structures were observed in the project area. Only one (41FY577) is older than fifty years, and it was photographed and plotted on the project area map (Figure 3).

In the northeast corner of the project area there is a small ridge of higher ground. One shovel test produced a glass bottle, pieces of copper wire, and unidentified metal fragments. Additional tests were excavated in order to delineate a historic site that might be present. All cultural materials were found within the top ten centimeters, but the tests were dug to 30 and 60 centimeters to ensure that no buried site was present. Except for the bottle, the cultural materials are modern and are unidentifiable as to age. They were described and returned to the shovel tests where they were found.

The footprint of the proposed hiking trail was visited and photographed. The entire 4000 feet is in a developed area that has been greatly disturbed. The only water source is a small gully that is depicted on the topographic quadrangle as the upper reaches of an unnamed tributary. Therefore, no shovel tests were excavated. Figure 5 illustrates the disturbed condition of the site of the proposed hiking trail.

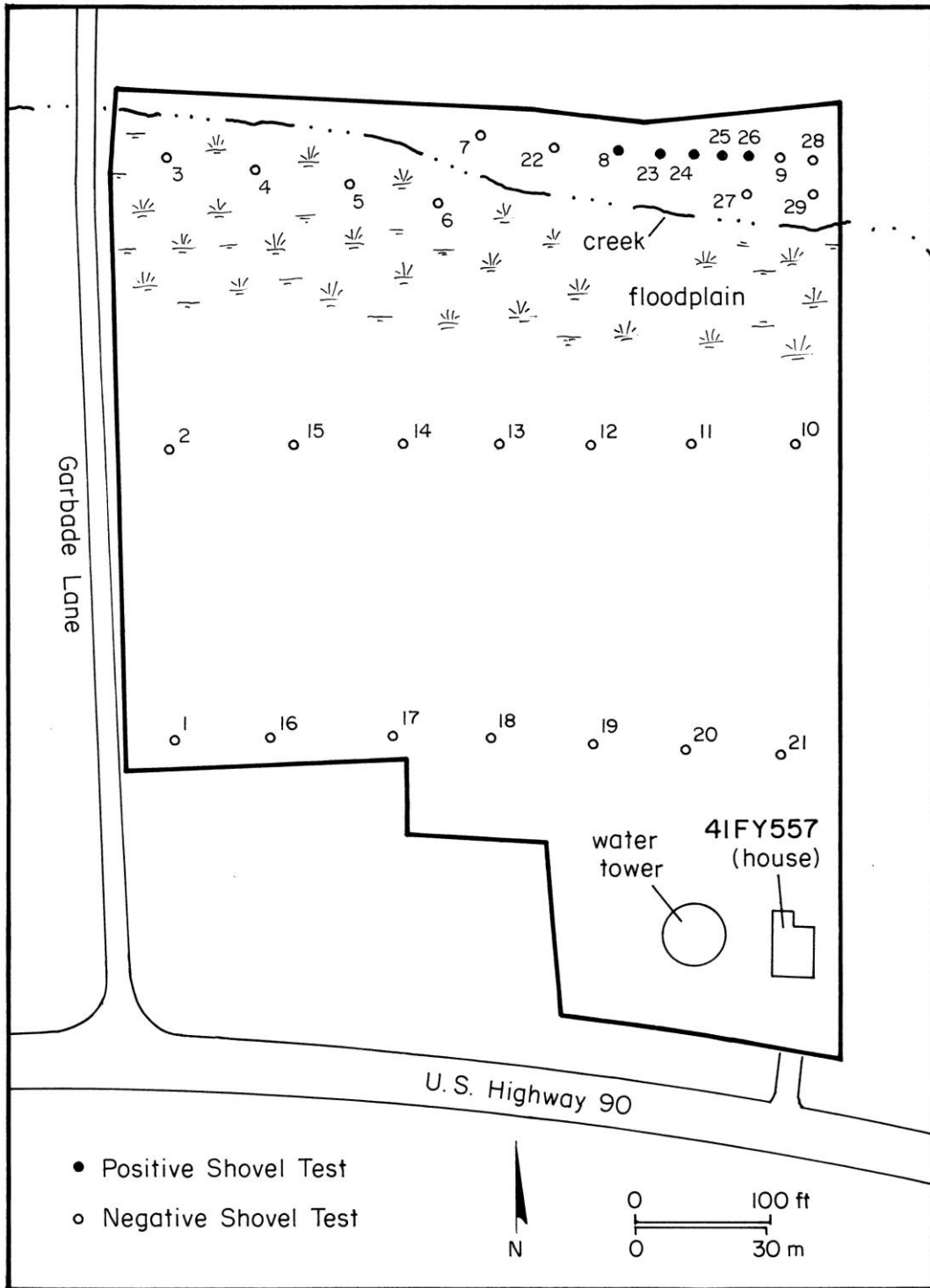


Figure 4. Shovel Tests in the Proposed Park Area



Figure 5. Proposed Hiking Trail (looking west)



## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

No prehistoric sites were found in the seven acre tract. The lack of prehistoric utilization of the project area is probably due to the fact that the entire area consists of firm clay at the surface, and the nearest water source is a very minor stream that is best described as ephemeral. According to the soil survey, the soil in this area contains about four inches of loam on the surface; however, loamy soil was observed at only one shovel test. The area consisted of a very firm clay throughout. At the time of this survey, there was no water in the creek. Historic utilization of the project area prior to acquisition by the City of Flatonia was pasture for cattle. A barn and stock pen relating to this activity had been removed from the landscape, and they were not present at the time of this survey. Two small structures, believed to be tenant farmer houses, and a shed were also present in the past, but they had also been demolished. They are depicted on the topographic map that was prepared in 1965 and photorevised in 1981.

Two standing structures were present. One is a railroad station house that was constructed for use by the Southern Pacific Railroad that was moved to this site from its original location adjacent to the railroad siding in Janice west of Flatonia (Figure 6). The house was constructed for the purpose of housing railroad employees who controlled the switches at the siding. It was moved to its current location in the 1950s by the railroad, where it continued to be used as housing for railroad employees. A small addition was added, and the exterior was covered with asbestos siding. The house was measured as 30 feet by 30 feet without the porch and an addition to the back which is 6 feet by 12 feet. It has six rooms plus the addition. This house dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and meets the age requirements for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. There are no plans by the City of Flatonia to remove this structure. The only modifications planned are the removal of an addition to the back of the house (circa 1930s), and the house will be used by the city for storage. This structure was recorded at TARL as 41FY557. Former resident Elton Homesley shared his knowledge of this house, and this appears in this report as Appendix II. The other structure is a small wooden shed that was used by a previous landowner to store hay for cattle. According to local informants, this shed was constructed following the removal of the barn, and it was used for hay storage. It is less than fifty years of age. The city plans to demolish it.

In the northeast corner of the project area, a small glass bottle that probably dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from a shovel test near the surface. In an attempt to delineate a possible historic site seven additional tests were excavated. Of the ten tests dug in the area, five contained cultural materials. A small clear glass bottle and a whiteware sherd are the only items that can definitely be dated as older than fifty years. Therefore, this area is believed to be a small trash scatter or dump.

A portion of the subsurface of the project area was disturbed due to the placement of buried sewer lines in the southwest portion of the project area where two travel trailers served as rental property. PVC pipe and a sewer main were observed in the area. This disturbance was also noted through mixed soils at shovel tests 16 – 18.



Figure 6. Site 41FY557 (looking north)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposed construction will not affect any prehistoric sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Properties or designation as a State Archeological Landmark. Historic site 41FY557 will not be affected by the proposed construction. Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Flatonia be allowed to proceed with construction as planned including the removal of the shed. If construction plans change that will incorporate areas not investigated under Antiquities Permit 5481, the THC and TPWD must be notified. Should cultural materials be encountered during construction that indicate the presence of a prehistoric or historic site not mentioned in this report, all work in the area of the find must stop until the situation can be evaluated by the THC and the TPWD. This project was conducted following the Minimum Survey Standards defined by the Texas Historical Commission, Archeology Division.

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APPENDIX I: SHOVEL TEST LOG

Test	Depth	Reason for Termination	Results
01	50 cm	clay	negative
02	50 cm	clay	negative
03	30 cm	clay and water	negative
04	30 cm	clay and water	negative
05	30 cm	clay and water	negative
06	50 cm	clay	negative
07	50 cm	clay	negative
08	50 cm	clay	glass bottle; copper wire; metal fragments (n=2)
09	33 cm	clay	negative
10	40 cm	clay	negative
11	32 cm	clay	negative
12	35 cm	clay	negative
13	30 cm	clay	negative
14	30 cm	clay	negative
15	30 cm	clay	negative
16	20 cm	mixed soils	negative
17	20 cm	mixed soils	negative
18	20 cm	mixed soils	negative
19	30 cm	clay	negative
20	30 cm	clay	negative
21	30 cm	clay	negative
22	30 cm	clay	window glass fragments (n=4);
23	30 cm	clay	negative
24	30 cm	clay	clear glass bottle fragment; window glass fragments (n=2) metal bottle cap
25	30 cm	clay	window glass fragment
26	30 cm	clay	window glass fragments (n=3) white ware sherd metal fragments (n=2)
27	30 cm	clay	negative
28	30 cm	clay	negative
29	30 cm	clay	negative

## APPENDIX II

### Brief History of Site 41FY557

My Mother and Dad (Willie E. Homesley) moved into the old Janice Section House in 1943. I was four years old. The house was located two miles west of Flatonia on the south side of the track (across the track from United States Highway 90). It was about a mile east of what is now the Whistleville Road. The Janice siding was several miles further west about where the railroad crosses Peach Creek. We lived in the Janice Section house until 1948 (I finished the 4th grade in Flatonia). Before us there was another Section Foreman living there, and his name was Paul Zappe. After us, there was a foreman by the name of Gilbert Huth that lived there. I'm not sure, but there might have been one more foreman there before the Janice Section was abolished. The house was moved into Flatonia by Woodrow Johnson who had purchased it from the railroad. He located it at it's present site. This was about 1953 or 1954. This occurred when the railroad was doing away with all the sections. I don't know exactly when it was built, but it was built at the Janice site. It had four main rooms and a small hallway that ran parallel to the kitchen. There was a big sleeping porch on the back of the house that we used in the summers because it was so much cooler. There was a small square room just off the back entrance that was originally used as a company store to supply necessities to the Section Hands, and it was run by the Section Foreman's wife. It wasn't functioning when we moved into the house, and we eventually made that room into a bathroom (tub and washroom only). The land the Janice Section house set on was approximately five acres. It remained as railroad property at least until the demise of the Southern Pacific. I don't know if the Union Pacific still retains title to that property. The Janice Section property consisted of those five acres, The Section house, three track laborers houses (two were two-room houses, and one was a three-room house) there were two pit privys for all the families to use. And there was a barn of sorts, mostly for the Section Foreman. The laborers were allowed to build pigpens, raise pigs and chickens, and keep a garden. There was one well on the property that had a hand pump. And the section house had gutters and two big metal cisterns for water. Then there was a railroad tool house where the Section Gang kept all the needed equipment as well as a motor car and push car. In 1946, my dad had the section House wired for electricity, and that was the only added utility that we got. There was a big front porch that ran the whole length of the house across the front and the steps were located about 20-25 feet from the railroad tracks.

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