

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE OLD PECOS CEMETERY (41RV127), REEVES COUNTY, TEXAS

by

Amy M. Goldstein and Rachel Feit



Antiquities Permit No. 8138

September 2017

AmaTerra[®]
ENVIRONMENTAL, INC.

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Prepared for
Colgate Energy

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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of archeological and historical investigations for the Old Pecos Cemetery in Pecos City, Reeves County, Texas. Colgate Energy plans to purchase the area around the cemetery and construct oil and gas facilities on that property. The Old Pecos Cemetery contains graves interred from 1881 to around 1910. It occupies an area of about 0.33 acres and is known to contain many unmarked burials. Colgate Energy hired AmaTerra in August 2017 to investigate outside the fenced limits of the cemetery, to determine whether any unmarked graves are located outside it, and if so, determine the extent of the graves so that they can be avoided.

The land is currently owned by Reeves County, a political subdivision of the State of Texas. Therefore, an Antiquities Permit was required under the Antiquities Code of Texas. Work was conducted under Permit No. 8138 and consisted of visual inspection, mechanical scraping using a road grader, and archival research. The survey documented 51 unmarked grave shafts and 10 surface features that likely represent graves within an area encompassing approximately 4.2 acres. AmaTerra documented the expanded cemetery as site 41RV127, and has recorded the new boundary at the Reeves County Clerk's Office, as required under Chapter 711.011 of the Texas Health and Safety Code. This report recommends that the cemetery 41RV127 is of undetermined eligibility as a State Antiquities Landmark; and further recommends fencing the new cemetery boundary to avoid impacts to marked and unmarked graves within it. No artifacts were collected during the survey, but all notes and records from field investigation will be curated the Center for Archaeological Studies at Texas State University in San Marcos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help of several people. AmaTerra would like to thank Reeves County Judge Dr. W. J. Bang and Reeves County for their cooperation. Jesse and Cruz of KO Construction provided the road grader used for scraping and the labor to operate it. A special thanks is owed to Dorinda Millan and Frank Carrasco of the West of the Pecos Museum for the information they provided about the Cemetery's history and for their continued interest and support of this project.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From August 23-25, 2017, AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. (AmaTerra) conducted an archeological survey to look for unmarked graves around the Old Pecos Cemetery in the City of Pecos, Reeves County, Texas (**Figure 1**). Reeves County currently owns the land that surrounds and includes the fenced Cemetery. Colgate Energy is planning to purchase the land around the cemetery for the purposes of constructing oil and gas well pads, drilling sites, access roads and pipelines. Colgate energy hired AmaTerra to conduct an archeological investigation around the marked limits of the cemetery in advance of the purchase to determine whether any unmarked graves are present outside the fenced limits, and if so, assess their extent. As the cemetery property is currently owned and controlled by Reeves County, archeological work was subject the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT). Additionally, unmarked burials discovered during the course of investigations were subject to Chapter 711.010 and 711.011 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

The purpose of AmaTerra’s investigation was to help Colgate Energy avoid impacts to unmarked graves as well as fulfill compliance obligations under the ACT and the Texas Health and Safety Code.



Figure 1. View of the Old Pecos Cemetery facing north.

The Old Pecos Cemetery (site 41RV127) is located in the City of Pecos, along E. A Street east of its intersection with N. Mesquite Street (**Figure 2**). The cemetery dates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and served as the burial place not only for local citizens, but also railroad workers who died during construction of the 1881 Texas & Pacific Railroad (now Missouri Pacific). It was probably abandoned around 1910, though no formal date for its abandonment has been documented. It is surrounded by a modern barbed wire fence which encloses an area of approximately 135 x 135 feet (0.33 acres, **Figure 3**). Although only six graves are still marked with headstones, it was common local knowledge among long-term Pecos residents that many more than six people were buried in the cemetery, and it was considered likely that graves extended outside of the currently fenced area.

AmaTerra conducted investigations under Permit No. 8138 with Rachel Feit as Principal Investigator. Amy Goldstein assisted as Project Archeologist. Investigations consisted of pedestrian inspection of the area around the cemetery, archival research, and mechanical scraping using a road grader outside the fenced limits of the cemetery. As proposed under Permit No. 8138 investigators were originally planning to scrape a 20-meter wide band around three sides of the cemetery. However, after initial scraping began, it soon became apparent that unmarked graves potentially extended well beyond a 20-meter band around the existing fence. Investigators expanded both visual reconnaissance and the scraping limits, and began archival research in local archives to locate the likely boundary of the original cemetery. Ultimately, investigations documented 51 grave shafts and 10 surface features that likely represent graves covering an area totaling about 4.2 acres. Moreover, there are probably additional unmarked graves within that 4.2-acre area not recorded during the current survey, as portions of that area were not scraped to the point at which grave shafts might be detected.

No actual human remains were disturbed or exposed over the course of the fieldwork, and it is the intention of Colgate Energy and Reeves County not to disturb or impact burials in any way. Following investigations, AmaTerra defined the limits of the cemetery and filed a Notice of Existence of an Unmarked Cemetery with the Reeve's County Clerk's office in compliance with the Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 711.010 and 711.011. The county intends to erect a fence around the cemetery as defined by the current survey. The report recommends that no further work is warranted prior to construction of the Colgate energy facilities as long as all construction occurs outside the new cemetery limits.

The remainder of this report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides environmental background and context. Chapter 3 offers historical context for the City of Pecos, Reeves County, and the Old Pecos Cemetery itself. Chapter 4 describes the methodology AmaTerra used during the course of field investigations and research. Chapter 5 documents the results of the investigations and makes interpretations from the findings. Chapter 6 summarizes the results of all work and offers recommendations with respect to the ACT and the Texas Health and Safety Code.

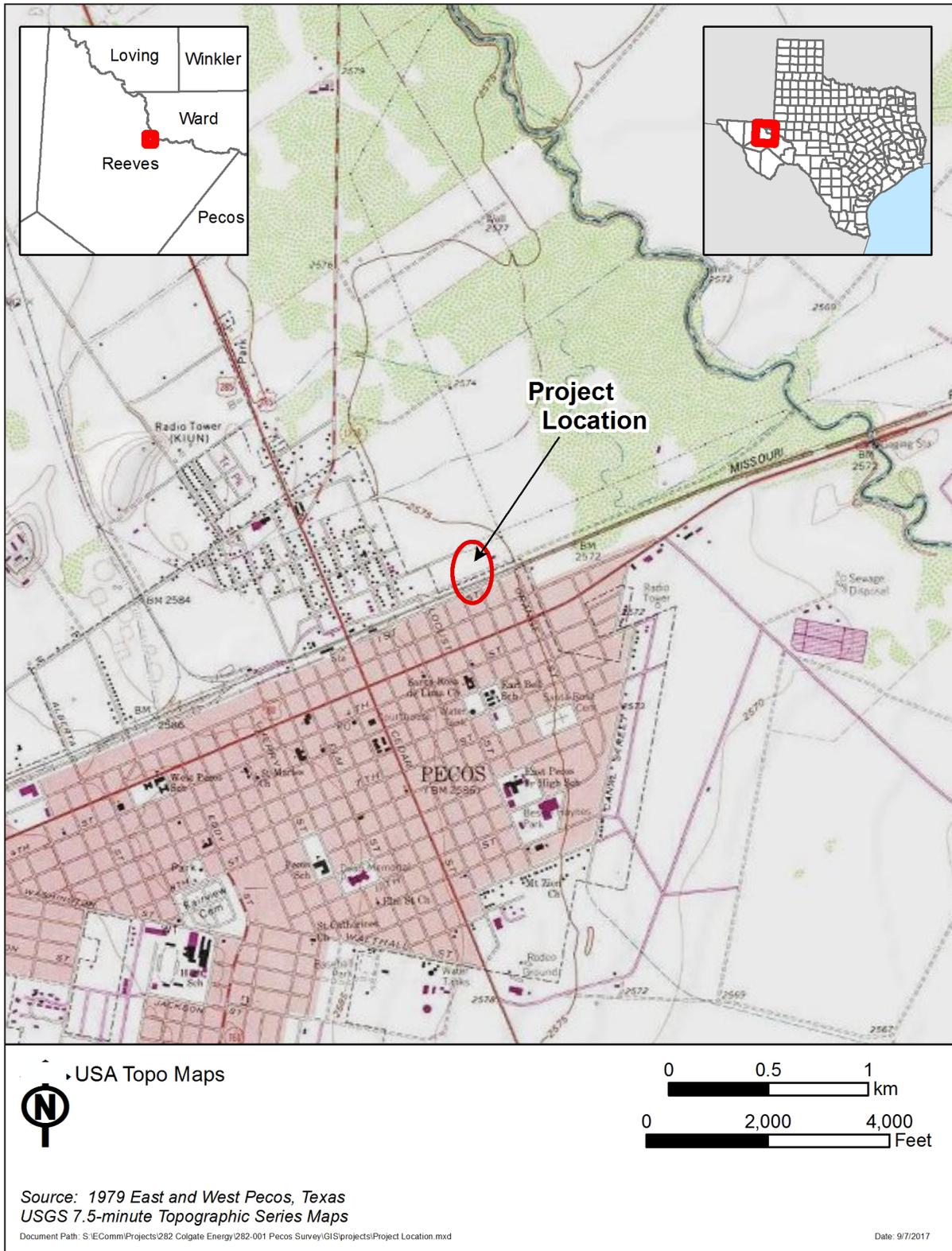


Figure 2. Project location depicted on a 7.5-minute topographic map.



Figure 3. Currently fenced portion of the Old Pecos Cemetery overlaid on a 2015 aerial photograph.

CHAPTER 2

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project is located within the High Plains physiographic region of Texas (BEG 1996). This region is characterized by high, flat plateaus with windblown sands and silts. This region also contains the highest concentration of playa lakes in the world. Specifically, the project area is situated within the Toyah Basin, along the southwestern edge of the High Plains. This basin is a broad, flat remnant of an ocean floor that covered the region as recently as the Quaternary (Texas Almanac 2017). Despite once being an ocean floor, the project area sits at an elevation of 2580 feet above mean sea level (amsl). The underlying geology of the project area consists of Holocene alkalai flats associated with the Pecos River drainage basin. Soils belong to the Orla Association derived from saline loamy lacustrine deposits typical of salty desert grasslands. These tend to be shallow with a gypsic soil horizon appearing only about five inches (15 cm) below the surface. Bedrock is typically encountered no more than 60 inches (1.5 m) below the surface (UC Davis Soil Conservation Resource Lab 2008).

Reeves County is part of the Chihuahuan Basins and Plays ecoregion (BEG 2010). This ecoregion is characteristic of the lowest elevation areas of west Texas that surround the Pecos and Rio Grande Rivers. These are the most arid regions in the state with only 8–14 inches of annual rainfall (Griffith et al. 2007). Vegetation is characterized by desert shrubland species such as creosote bush (*Larrea tridentate*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), pickleweed (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), Wright threeawn (*Aristida purpurea* var. *wrightii*), cane bluestem (*Bothriochloa barbinodis*), false Rhodes grass (*Chloris crinita*), iodinebush (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*) and perennial grasses (UC Davis Soil Conservation Resource Lab 2008). Fauna commonly found in the shrub desert include several types of lizards such as the side-blotched (*Uta stansburiana*), Texas horned (*Phrynosoma cornutum*), and little-striped whiptail (*Cnemidophorus inornatus*). The most common bird species is the black-throated swallow (*Amphispiza bilineat*). Common mammals include the kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys* spp.), kit fox (*Vulpes velox macrotis*), and jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*) (Griffith et al. 2007).

The environment in this region has changed significantly since the late nineteenth century due to cattle grazing and agriculture, especially in riparian zones. Grazing from cattle, sheep, and goats has changed rangeland from a predominance of grass to shrubs. The flow of both the Pecos and Rio Grande Rivers has been drastically reduced from historic levels due to the demand for irrigation and industrial water. Invasive plant species such as saltcedars (*Tamarix* spp.) and river cane (*Phragmites australis*) have also lowered water levels through evapotranspiration (Griffith et al. 2007).

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pecos, Texas began in the 1870s as a cattle drive camp for the Goodnight-Loving trail on the east bank of the Pecos River. At that time the camp was part of Pecos County which encompassed an area now occupied by Pecos, Reeves and portions of Val Verde Counties. In 1881, however, the Texas & Pacific Railroad crossed the river and a town was founded along its east bank about a mile and a half east of its current location. Floods and tornadoes caused the town to move westward and 1885 a town plat was filed for the town of Pecos in its current location (Reeves County Deed Records [RCDR] 2/256). Reeves County was formed from the northern portion of Pecos County in 1883 and the current City of Pecos was named the county seat in 1884. Ranching and farming were the area's primary industries through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Smith 2010b).

Ever since its founding in 1881, Pecos had become a popular watering place for rail workers and cowboys (Hutcheson 1969). It had a reputation for violence and gunfights through the nineteenth century that is well-substantiated in historical records (Smith 2010a). For instance, in 1883 four cow hands and a section worker were killed in a drunken barroom brawl with Texas Rangers after first taking over a Pecos saloon, then riding to nearby Toyah in an attempt to take over the whole town (Hutcheson 1969). A few years later, the county's first sheriff, John Morris, was killed during an armed altercation with Texas Rangers (Sessom 2016). Another county sheriff, George A. "Bud" Frazer, was a well-known gunslinger even before he was elected in 1890. Five years earlier he had been involved in a much-publicized feud between the Frazers and the neighboring Sosa family. Crispin Sosa slashed the throat of Bud's brother, Jim; and in retaliation Bud not only personally killed Crispin, but also hired another gunman to murder Crispin's brother, Pablo in Presidio (Weiser 2017a).

Bud Frazer's own tenancy as Sheriff was marked by violence, corruption, and terror. Hiring James Miller as a deputy, Frazer became embroiled in another feud with Miller and his family. Frazer discovered that Miller not only had unjustly killed a Mexican prisoner, he was also running a cattle rustling ring on the side. When Frazer approached Miller about it, it touched off another feud that would last the next six years and ultimately result in the violent death of not only Frazer himself, Miller's henchmen John Denson and Bill Earhart, but many others besides. Ultimately, all of those involved in the Frazer-Miller feud came to violent ends, including Jim Miller himself who was hanged in Ada, Oklahoma in 1909 (Weiser 2017a)

Yet another notorious gunslinger who called Pecos home was legendary shootist Clay Allison who made his name riding the Goodnight-Loving cattle trail, and then later as a gunman for New Mexico's notorious Santa Fe Ring. During the 1870s he crossed paths with the likes of Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson in Dodge City, Kansas before giving up his gun and moving to a ranch in East Texas in 1881. Allison moved to Pecos in 1886 with his wife and daughter and appeared to have settled down on his own ranch. However, on July 1, 1887 he was killed by his own wagon while hauling supplies. He was buried in the Old Pecos Cemetery with

hundreds of attendees present at his funeral. In 1975, his remains were disinterred and removed to Pecos Park, near the West of the Pecos Museum (Weiser 2017b). Other individuals known to have been buried in the Old Pecos Cemetery include Jephtha “Jep” Clayton, who reportedly scalped a Mexican and shot a Chinese man. He himself died in 1887 when Granville Tinnin shot him in the back. Jep’s partner Jim Cooksey was shot by Manny Clements, one of Bud Frazer’s deputies (and brother-in-law to Jim Miller) in 1893 and is also buried in the Old Pecos Cemetery.

Judge Roy Bean came to Pecos regularly on his rounds as a travelling circuit judge. In one famous instance, he presided over the murder trial of an Irishman, Paddy O’Rourke, accused of killing a Chinese rail laborer near Pecos. Judge Bean ultimately found the man innocent of murder not because O’Rourke did not commit the crime, but because “homicide was the killing of a human being; however, he could find no law against killing a Chinaman (Weiser 2016c).” Pecos continued to attract outlaws and rowdy ranch hands into the twentieth century. One has only to look at the death records from the period between 1903-1909 to see that many individuals died of gunshot wounds and violence during that period (TxGenWeb 2014).

In addition to its gunslinger heritage, Pecos also has a rich rodeo tradition. According to local lore, a few cowboys held a roping and riding competition in Pecos in 1883 and today the town still lays claim to being the home of the “World’s First Rodeo,” though officially the title rests with Prescott, Arizona (Applebome 1989). Pecos celebrates its ranching and rodeo history each year with the “West of the Pecos Rodeo.” One of Pecos’ best known rodeo stars was Dorothy Hyatt Roberson, who moved to Pecos with her family during the early twentieth century. She married Louis Roberson in 1918 and began competing in roping and riding competitions. In 1930 she won the World Champions Cowgirls Calf Roping contest in Iowa (Texas Rodeo Hall of Fame 2017). Her husband, Louis was a Reeves County Sheriff, and the couple at one time owned the land encompassing the Old Pecos Cemetery.

Farming was another important aspect of the regional economy. The potential for agriculture in the Pecos River Valley was spotted in the early 1880s. In 1890, the Pioneer Canal company began building irrigation networks throughout Reeves and Ward counties to grow alfalfa, cotton, sugar beets and other fruits. Other canal networks also tapped the Pecos in New Mexico and farther south near Fort Stockton (Taylor 1902). By early 1891 J.J. Hagerman and Charles Eddy had built the Pecos River Railroad to connect Pecos City to the Pecos Valley Railway line in New Mexico, intended to open up the Pecos Valley to agriculture and development. The project, however, was beset by problems: first prolonged drought in the 1890s hampered irrigation; then the panic of 1893 caused a national economic slump; this was followed by a major flood at the end of 1893 that resulted in huge losses not only for local farmers, but also for Hagerman and Eddy. By 1896 the railway was in receivership, the irrigation company was in serious trouble, Hagerman was penniless, and Charles Eddy had already divested his interests and moved on to another project in El Paso (Feit and Silberberg 2015).

A few years later, Pecos was at the center of a dry-farming initiative that spanned the Pecos Valley of Texas and New Mexico. The El Paso Herald called the dry farming experiment and its results “startling in their success;” and praised the scientific methods of planting certain

drought resistant crops in the Pecos Valley. In 1910, the Herald wrote, “cotton gins have been erected and are kept busy preparing for market the product of thousands of acres of heretofore barren and unproductive land, while the splendid results from Keffir corn, milo maize and other feed crops have laid the foundations for new stock feeding districts (El Paso Herald, January 10, 1910).” Around this time, farmers also began experimenting with growing the cantaloupes for which the region soon became famous. Eventually, dry farming too failed to turn the Pecos Valley into the promised Garden of Eden.

When the current Pecos City was established in 1885, it had 150 residents, the majority of whom were Mexican (Smith 2010b; US Census 1880). Those who were not included Buffalo soldiers and white officers. A few single women are also recorded in the 1880 census for Pecos; all of them were living alone regardless of marital status and reported their professions as “keeping house.” This was likely code for prostitution. By 1904 the population had reached 639 and included several African Americans, one Chinese-born restaurateur, and several foreign-born individuals. In 1914 the population of Pecos was 1,856 (Smith 2010b; US Census 1900).

Oil was discovered around Pecos in the late 19-teens and the city warbled in anticipation of the new economic possibilities. In 1920 the Pecos Chamber of Commerce took out a full page advertisement in the El Paso Herald, describing the city as a “new oil wonderland,” with derricks shooting up everywhere, and wells producing at a rate of 36 barrels per hour (El Paso Herald, April 10, 1920). However, the promised economic expansion was slow to happen. The boom finally came in 1930, causing the population to swell from roughly 4,400 in 1920 to 6,400 in 1930 (Smith 2010b). The Pecos Army Airfield was activated in 1942 as a training facility for army pilots. The area population increased significantly as a result of the new military presence (Colwell 2010). It continued to rise into the 1970s even though the airfield was deactivated in 1945. The population of Pecos reach a peak of 14,970 residents in 1970 and has declined ever since (Smith 2010b). Pecos City is currently experiencing yet another oil boom, centered in the Permian Basin of West Texas and New Mexico.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

AmaTerra archeologists began the survey by examining the fenced cemetery and the area around it on foot to look for signs of unmarked or poorly marked graves. Two probable grave markers were immediately noticed outside of the fence on the west and north sides (these markers are discussed in detail in the results chapter). To complete the archeological survey, AmaTerra used mechanical scraping with a 14-foot, smooth blade road grader to expose soil stains or anomalies that represented grave shafts. Initially, AmaTerra archeologists planned to do north-south oriented scrapes in a 20-meter wide band around the fenced cemetery's east, west, and north boundaries. If graves appeared to continue beyond this 20-meter perimeter, the full limits of the cemetery would be investigated with targeted scrapes.

Scraping began on the west side of the fenced portion of the cemetery, working from south to north, approximately 15 meters from the fence. Scraping did not begin immediately west of the fence because a grave marked with a wooden cross was observed approximately 10 meters west of the fenced area, and the marker would have been destroyed by the road grader. The road grader removed 10–20 cm of soil at a time while an archeologist walked behind it, marking any soil stains that appeared to be grave shafts with pin flags. After removing 30–40 cm from the first section west of the fence, two rectangular soil stains that clearly represented grave shafts became visible. After these first grave shafts were exposed, the scraping methodology could be fine-tuned since the approximate depth at which the stains would appear, and what they would look like was known. After a grave shaft was exposed, one archeologist would map two of its corners (generally the north corners) with a handheld Trimble GPS unit while the other archeologist continued to follow along with the grader to direct it and flag newly exposed grave shafts.

The road grader continued to work its way west in south to north scrapes, revealing many additional graves much further than the expected 20 meters from the fence. The area north of the fenced cemetery was also uncovered with east-west oriented scrapes. Several more grave shafts were uncovered in this area, also further than the projected 20 meters from the fence line. After approximately 25 grave shafts had been uncovered, archeologists stopped the scraping to conduct further pedestrian survey in areas west and north of the fenced cemetery that had not initially been examined. This revealed a number of additional possible grave markers in the form of sandstone boulders, concrete blocks, wooden posts, and deflated gravel piles. After part of this area was scraped with the road grader, all the possible markers tested turned out to in fact be the location of graves. At this point other possible graves identified through surface features were assumed to be graves and left intact.

Given this information, the scraping methodology was altered. Rather than continuing to scrape contiguous areas to the north and west, the grader moved approximately 40 meters to the west of its furthest scrape to avoid the remaining possible grave markers that had not been disturbed. While one archeologist stayed with the road grader to direct it and continue looking for grave

shafts, the other went to the West of the Pecos Museum and Reeves County courthouse to look for documentary or map evidence of the historical size of the cemetery.

Mechanical scraping continued to the west making south-north sweeps until approximately 50 meters in width had been scraped and showed no evidence of graves. Next, the road grader moved to the east of the fenced cemetery. The first pass was made from south to north, approximately 20 meters east of the fence because a large tree and a telephone line blocked the path immediately east of the fence. Scrapes continued in a south-north orientation working east until approximately 20 meters had been scraped and showed no evidence of graves. Finally, additional east-west scrapes were conducted north of the fenced cemetery until about 20 meters had been cleared that showed no evidence of graves.

Once investigators felt confident that the limits of the cemetery had been found, mechanical scraping ceased, and the road grader left the site. Archeologists then finished mapping all remaining grave shaft and grave marker locations with the Trimble GPS unit and took additional photographs of individual grave shafts and of the overall cemetery. Additional notes were made about each of the grave shafts, such as its dimensions, general shape, and whether any evidence of a marker remained.

Any artifacts (including those related to burials) found either on the surface or in scrapes were not collected, but were field catalogued and photographed then returned to their original locations. AmaTerra recorded the site as 41RV127 with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. All records generated from this project will be permanently curated at the Center for Archaeological Studies at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY RESULTS

Archeological survey of the Old Pecos Cemetery revealed that the true cemetery boundaries extend far beyond the currently fenced portion. A total of 51 grave shafts were exposed by mechanically removing soil with a smooth, 14-foot blade on a road grader. An additional 10 probable graves have been identified through surface expressions such as wooden crosses and posts, sandstone boulders, large pieces of concrete, and deflated gravel piles. Not all of the ground surface within the actual cemetery limits was scraped since the goal of this project was to find the outermost boundaries of the cemetery (**Figure 4**). Therefore, it is very likely that there are additional graves within the newly defined boundaries that were not identified during this survey. Archival research and informal interviews with West of the Pecos Museum staff further confirmed that the historical limits of the cemetery were much larger than the .32 acres that is currently fenced.

RESULTS OF SCRAPING

Grave Markers

Before mechanical scraping began, archeologists inspected the fenced cemetery and surrounding area on foot to look for and examine extant grave markers. Most of the graves within the fenced portion of the cemetery are marked with simple wooden crosses (**Figure 5**). The good condition of the wood and the type of bolt used to fasten the two pieces together indicates that these are not the original markers and were instead placed much more recently. Small piles of gravel and rock are associated with some of the wood markers; in other places, no wood marker stands, but a pile of rocks and gravel are present (**Figure 6**). A small section within the cemetery is cordoned off by a wrought iron fence and contains the graves of several members of the Cooksey and Clayton families (**Figure 7**). The graves in this section are marked with granite headstones. According to Dorinda Millan, a Pecos native and 40-year employee of the West of the Pecos Museum, Mr. Bill Cooksey erected the iron fence and maintained the graves within until his death in 2015.

Evidence of grave markers was visible outside of the fenced portion of the cemetery as well. Approximately ten meters west of the northwestern fence corner was a grave that was marked with both a wooden cross like the others inside the fence and a partially buried rough-cut sandstone block (**Figure 8**). A few meters north of the northwestern corner of the fence was another sandstone block that was recorded as another probable grave location. Several probable grave markers were identified near the western edge of the new cemetery boundary (see Figure 3). Four of these are concrete blocks with large aggregate (**Figure 9**). Two others consisted of partially buried sandstone. Two deflated and somewhat scattered piles of gravel and rocks were also recorded as probable graves (**Figure 10**). The gravel piles likely represent deflated, mounded graves in which the gravels spread out over time. These mounded graves

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cultural materials

Figure 4

14



Figure 5. Wooden crosses mark some graves within the fenced portion of the cemetery (facing northwest).



Figure 6. Grave inside the fence marked with rocks and gravel but no wooden cross (facing northwest).



Figure 7. Clayton/Cooksey plot within the barbed wire fence (facing northwest).



Figure 8. Probable grave 1 marked with wooden cross and sandstone block (facing northwest).



Figure 9. Probable grave 6 is marked by a rectangular concrete block with large aggregate.



Figure 10. Gravel piles on the surface outside the fenced cemetery limits likely represent graves.

covered in gravel are commonly seen in southern African American burial practices (Jordan 1982). Investigators observed medicine bottles, pieces of crockery, marbles, and other household debris from the early to mid twentieth century scattered across the surface of the cemetery area outside the fenced limits.

In addition to the above probable grave locations, four grave shafts had associated markers. A marble headstone and footstone were uncovered with GS-24 (**Figure 11**), and a marble headstone was found with GS-42. None of these marble markers had writing that was still visible. Grave shafts 20 and 31 had two notched wooden posts near the western corners of the grave shaft (**Figure 12**). The notching on the exterior faces of these posts suggests that they were designed to hold some sort of superstructure-- likely a gravehouse. According to Terry Jordan, gravehouses were common at one time in Southern Folk



Figure 11. GS-24 with marble headstone and *in situ* marble footstone (facing west).

shafts had dark brown staining in the centers, which may be from coffin decomposition (**Figure 14**). As can be seen in Figure 3, the graves were patterned in rows with graves oriented roughly east to west. None of the observed grave shafts were overlapping or intruding upon each other. These findings are consistent with local historical tradition that says this was a planned cemetery that was only used for a short amount of time (1880-1910).

The size of the uncovered grave shafts can be used to infer the relative age of the individual interred. For the purposes of this study, graves less than one meter in length are assumed to belong to

Cemeteries. Although they appear among white, black and Native American burials, Jordan believes that they originate with Native Americans and were typically built to shelter the more prominent members of certain communities (Jordan 1982:34).

Three other graves shafts had decomposed wooden posts either at their head or around the shaft, indicating a former wooden cross or gravehouse supports. A large clamshell was found at the foot GS-10. Use of shell to decorate graves is another common element of African American burials (Jordan 1982).

Grave Shafts

Grave shafts were identified as a mottled gypsite soil, often with a higher clay content, surrounded by uniform sandy or silty loam (**Figure 13**). The grave shafts were generally rectangular in shape, though a few notable exceptions are discussed below. Many grave



Figure 12. GS-31 wooden posts still visible on the surface before scraping (facing north).



Figure 13. Mottled soil of grave shafts surrounded by uniform brown soil.



Figure 14. GS-49 with dark brown staining in the center.

infants (less than one year old); graves that measured 1.6 meters or less are assumed to belong to children (under 18 years old). By these definitions, six of the 51 uncovered grave shafts were infants and 11 were children. Two additional grave shafts measured between 1.6 and 1.8 meters and could potentially be the graves of children also. The remaining 32 grave shafts almost certainly belong to adults (**Table 1**). Grave shaft 10 was wider than any of the other grave shafts, measuring 2.1 meters long by 2.25 meters wide. This appears to be two adult burials placed side by side, probably a husband and wife.

A total of 44 of the grave shafts were clearly rectangular; however, two were circular, and five were irregular in shape. The two circular grave shafts, GS-17 and GS-18, were situated close to one another and probably contain the remains of infants. GS-17 measured 85 cm in diameter, and GS-18 measured 60 cm in diameter. Both grave shafts exhibited the same type of mottled soil typical of other grave shafts and contained metal staining (**Figure 15**). A possible explanation for their circular shape is that these are the graves of infants or stillborn fetuses who were buried in small graves without a casket. Two other probable infant burials, GS-13 and GS-15, were irregularly shaped, with edges that bow out, making them appear somewhat round. GS-13 is only 45 cm at its widest point while GS-15 is 70 cm wide. Both graves had metal fragments and stains throughout.

Table 1. Descriptions of Grave Shafts and Probable Graves.

Feature Number	Shape	Probable Age	Associated Marker	Associated Artifacts
GS-1	rectangular	adult	none	2 metal stains at west end
GS-2	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-3	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-4	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-5	rectangular	adult	none	metal concentration west end
GS-6	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-7	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-8	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-9	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-10	rectangular	adult	none	shell in northeast corner
GS-11	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-12	rectangular	infant	none	unidentifiable metal in center
GS-13	irregular	infant	none	metal stains throughout
GS-14	rectangular	infant	none	metal concentration in south half
GS-15	irregular	infant	none	metal fragments throughout
GS-16	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-17	circular	infant	none	metal stains around edges
GS-18	circular	infant	none	none
GS-19	irregular	adult	none	none
GS-20	rectangular	adult	2 wooden notched posts on either side of west corners	none

Archeological Investigations at the Old Pecos Cemetery, Reeves County, Texas

Feature Number	Shape	Probable Age	Associated Marker	Associated Artifacts
GS-21	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-22	irregular	adult	none	none
GS-23	irregular	adult	none	none
GS-24	rectangular	adult	Marble head and footstones (no markings)	none
GS-25	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-26	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-27	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-28	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-29	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-30	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-31	rectangular	adult	2 wooden notched posts on either side of west corners	none
GS-32	rectangular	adult	Sandstone at east end; possible remains of wood post at west end	none
GS-33	rectangular	adult	Possible wooden post at southeast corner	none
GS-34	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-35	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-36	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-37	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-38	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-39	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-40	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-41	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-42	rectangular	adult	Marble headstone (crushed by road grader)	none
GS-43	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-44	rectangular	child	possible remains of wooden marker at west end	none
GS-45	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-46	rectangular	child	possible remains of wooden marker at west end	none
GS-47	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-48	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-49	rectangular	adult	none	none
GS-50	rectangular	child	none	none
GS-51	rectangular	child	none	none
PG-1	N/A	N/A	wooden cross and partially buried sandstone	none
PG-2	N/A	N/A	rectangular sandstone block	none
PG-3	N/A	N/A	broken concrete block with large aggregate	none
PG-4	N/A	N/A	partially buried sandstone rock	none
PG-5	N/A	N/A	broken concrete blocks; appear to represent a pediment	none
PG-6	N/A	N/A	concrete rectangular marker base (large aggregate)	none
PG-7	N/A	N/A	broken concrete, partially buried	none
PG-8	N/A	N/A	decomposed sandstone block, partially buried	none
PG-9	N/A	N/A	deflated gravel pile	none
PG-10	N/A	N/A	deflated gravel pile	none



Figure 15. GS-17 (facing north).



Figure 16. GS-19 (facing west).

Grave shafts 19, 22, and 23 were also irregular in shape. GS-19 consisted of a roughly rectangular patch of mottled soil surrounded by uniform soil with several root casts running through it (**Figure 16**). The stain was approximately the same size as other adult burials in the cemetery (two meters in length) but lacked the clearly defined edges typical of most of the other grave shafts. One possible reason for the unusual appearance of this grave shaft is that significant bioturbation from root growth and animal burrows has muddled the edges. Another explanation could be that the individual buried here was exhumed at some point, and the process of re-digging the grave left it with unclear edges once it was filled in.

GS-22 was first identified when one of the road grader tires sunk into the ground, leaving a depression. Some of the soil around the depression was moved with a shovel, which revealed a hole approximately 1.2 meters long and 40 cm wide, oriented roughly east to west. Once enough soil had been cleared to reveal the hole, archeologists stopped digging and flagged the immediate area so it would not be scraped or driven over again (**Figure 17**). Though no human remains were observed in or around the hole,



Figure 17. GS-22 after being partially cleared and flagged (facing east).

archeologists did not want to cause further disturbance to the grave shaft or any potentially associated burial. Like GS-22, GS-23 was discovered when the road grader tire sunk into the soil. When the spot was partially cleared with a shovel, it turned out to be a hollow spot in the ground. The cleared portion measured about 50 cm long and 30 cm wide; however, not all of the surrounding soil was cleared, and it is likely that the hole is actually larger. Similarly to the situation with GS-22, archeologists did not want to continue digging around the hole and risk disturbing human remains, even though none were observed.

GS-22 and GS-23 may be examples of graves shafts where the buried individuals were exhumed. The size, shape, and orientation of the holes, especially GS-22, is consistent with the majority of the other grave shafts observed at the site. If the soil collapse and resulting hole were due to decomposition of a casket

or human remains, a depression should have been visible on the surface, which was not the case with either GS-22 or GS-23. Furthermore, if decomposition were the cause of the hole, more of the grave shafts should have exhibited these features. Exhumation is also a probable explanation because the cemetery likely contains the graves of Chinese railroad workers who helped build the Texas & Pacific Railroad.

Most of the Chinese who came to the American west after the Civil War to build railroads came from Guangdong Province in Southern China. Specifically, most came from the four counties of Sze Yap that suffered from extreme poverty and civil unrest at the end of the nineteenth century (Brown 2005). Religious beliefs common to that region during the late nineteenth century held that a person's remains had to be buried near their home or their spirit would never be at rest. Because of this belief, it was common practice for Chinese railroad workers who died in North America to have their remains sent back to their home village in China (Nelson 1993). While not all Chinese who died in the West were able to have their remains sent home, several fraternal societies were organized in North America to help overseas Chinese accomplish this expensive and logistically challenging goal.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH RESULTS

The Old Pecos Cemetery was first used in 1881 as a burial place for workers and camp followers who died working on the railroad (Finad-a-grave.com 2017). There are currently six marked

graves within the cemetery commemorating burials that occurred between 1885 and 1899. One of the marked graves is that of Jep Clayton, a remorseless gunslinger who was killed when a local landowner shot him in the back of the head. John Morris, the first sheriff of Reeves county is also interred in the cemetery. He was killed during a skirmish with Texas Rangers in 1885. The cemetery is marked with an Official State Historical Marker, placed there in 1966.

AmaTerra archeologists consulted the West of the Pecos Museum and Reeves County deed and plat records to find additional information about the Old Pecos Cemetery. Archival research began with a visit to the West of the Pecos Museum, where museum director Dorinda Millan and another museum employee Frank Carrasco shared their knowledge of the cemetery with AmaTerra archeologist Amy Goldstein through an informal interview. Both Mrs. Millan and Mr. Carrasco expressed that it was relatively common knowledge among long-time Pecos residents that the Old Pecos Cemetery contained many more graves than those within the fenced area. Mrs. Millan revealed that the museum owned 0.77 acres of land that included the southern part of the fenced cemetery and land to the west (**Figure 18**). Louis Roberson, who was one of the museum founders, donated the land to the museum upon his death in 1970 (RCDR 294/238).

After seeing the map depicted in Figure 18, AmaTerra archeologists were convinced that the legal boundaries of the cemetery were much larger than the currently fenced area, perhaps encompassing all of Blocks 23 and 24 of the North Pecos Addition. Archeologists then went to the Reeves County Clerk's office to consult deed records and plat maps that might include the cemetery. On file at the County Clerk's office was a 1910 plat map of the North Pecos Addition showing an area marked "Old Cemetery" than encompassed most of Block 24 (**Figure 19**).

This land, including the cemetery was platted by G.C. Mountcastle of Tarrant County, Texas as the North Pecos Addition on February 12, 1910. Although the plat deed was not found in Reeves County records, investigators did locate the 1910 deed in which Mountcastle purchased the land from brothers, B. R. and G. S. Peterkin in January of 1910 (RCDR 3/283). Their father, R. W Peterkin patented the land as Block 6 of the Houston & Great Northern Railroad Survey in July 1885 (GLO File No. 4039, Abstract 2168. **Figure 20**). It appears as though he never built anything on that land as the two Peterkin brothers were residents of West Virginia and Ohio respectively. That the 1910 plat map refers to the cemetery as the "Old" Cemetery suggests that even as early as 1910 it had largely fallen out of use and most Pecos residents were being buried elsewhere. Given that scraping revealed graves outside of the 1910 boundary (**Figure 21**), it is likely that even by this early date, the location of some of the cemetery's graves had been forgotten.

Reeves County began keeping death records in 1903. A list of deaths from 1903 to 1909 offers some clues about who might have been buried in the Pecos Cemetery. E. Meyersburg, age 38, died on September 9, 1903 of a gunshot wound. An unnamed white male infant, approximately 1 year old died of strychnine poisoning on July 8, 1908 (TxGenWeb 2014). Most of the individuals whose deaths were recorded were white, and it is likely that the deaths of non-whites were never recorded at all. In Pecos, a second cemetery, the Fairview Cemetery, contains graves from as early as the 1890s and it appears as though many of the town's leading

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cultural materials

Figure 18

24

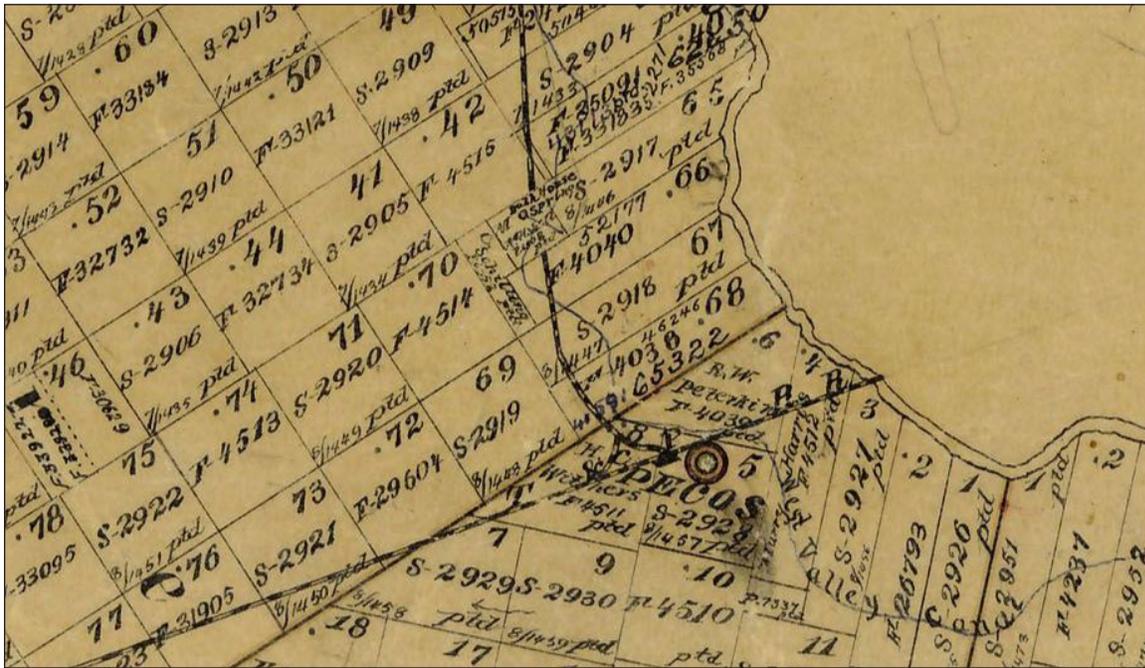


Figure 20. Detail from an 1892 Map of Reeves County land patents showing the Peterkin land.

Figure 21. Redacted due to specific grave locations.

citizens were buried in that location. Starting around 1910 Reeves County death records began recording places of burial. A driver named Lewis Lindsey died in September of 1910 of Typhoid Fever and was buried in Pecos (TxGenWeb 2014). His name does not appear in the list of individuals buried in the Fairview Cemetery, so he could have been buried in the Old Pecos Cemetery. It is possible that the old Pecos Cemetery was used as a potter's field by that time. Or it could have served mainly Mexicans, blacks and other ethnicities, while the Fairview Cemetery served primarily the white community in the early days.

Reeves County is the current owner of the land on which the Old Pecos cemetery is located, though the West of the Pecos Museum owns a small strip of land adjacent to E. A. Street. The County acquired the land from Louis Roberson in 1965, and the deed specifically notes that the land "has never been a part of my business or residential homestead" (RCDR 242/182). Roberson was the County Sheriff during the 1930s and 40s. It is unclear who Roberson purchased the land from, or when he purchased it, as Roberson bought and sold dozens of properties in Reeves County from the 1930s–1960s. However, Roberson was a founding member of the West of the Pecos Museum, his wife, Dorothy, was a well-known rodeo star, and clearly the Roberson family was entrenched in the Pecos community. During the period in which Roberson owned the land, it is likely that graves and surface features marking graves were still intact and visible. Likely, historical memory of the location of burials in the Old Pecos Cemetery was still alive at that time. This is supported by a 1960 aerial photograph that shows the area around the cemetery had been developed for what appears to be stockyards. The structures completely cover adjacent blocks (Blocks 23 and 25) and curiously occupy only the southwest corner of Block 24, which is outside the cemetery limits as defined on the 1910 plat map. The structure in that southwest corner has an odd triangular shape, as if it were built to avoid surface features (**Figure 22**).



Figure 22. 1960 aerial photograph showing the Old Pecos Cemetery and surrounding areas.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From August 23–25, 2017, AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. conducted an archeological survey of the Old Pecos Cemetery (41RV127). Visual inspection and mechanical scraping outside of the currently fenced area revealed that the cemetery extends far outside of these boundaries. A total of 51 grave shafts and ten probable grave markers were recorded outside of the fenced area. Several types of grave markers were observed throughout the cemetery. Formal granite headstones and simple wooden crosses (that were placed in modern times) mark several graves within the fence while hand-cut native sandstone, large aggregate concrete blocks, notched wooden posts, deflated gravel piles, and marble headstones were observed outside the fence. Old medicine bottles, pieces of crockery, and other small household debris was scattered across the surface outside the cemetery fence. Buried among the 51 exposed grave shafts, investigators found two cut marble head or footstones (no inscriptions), an uncut native sandstone rock, the remains of wooden posts, and a large clamshell that signalled grave locations. Disintegrated metal was apparent in seven of the graves, most of them of smaller irregular shape.

In general, the cemetery conforms to the Southern folk style defined by Jordan (1982), which contains a pastiche of cultural influences and traditions that include European, African and Native American customs. Interments were marked using locally available and inexpensive materials to decorate, identify, and define burials. Evidence of mounding with gravels, use of shell, and wooden gravehouses suggests that some of the graves may be those of African Americans or Native Americans, though these sorts of material expressions were also embraced by southern whites as well (Jordan 1982).

The size of grave shafts was used to infer whether the individual buried was an infant, child, possible child, or adult. Based on these measurements, six grave shafts are probable infant graves and 11 are probable child graves. Two grave shafts are possible child graves but could also be the graves of short adults. Most of the grave shafts were rectangular with clearly defined edges; however, there were a few notable exceptions. Two of the grave shafts (GS-17 and GS-18) were circular and two others (GS-13 and GS-15) had two edges that bowed out and made them appear somewhat round. Given their small size and unusual shape, these are probably the graves of infants who were buried without a casket.

Three additional irregularly shaped grave shafts (GS-19, GS-22, and GS-23) may represent burials that were later exhumed. Several thousand Chinese workers were hired to help build the Texas & Pacific railroad (Brown 2005). Since this cemetery was established for railroad workers who died while building the T&P through Reeves County, it is reasonable to expect that some of the workers who died were Chinese. Burial customs in the Sze Yap region of southern China, where most of the railroad workers were from, involved collecting the bones of those who died overseas and sending them back to China for final burial in the person's home village. Given these unique circumstances, exhumation of some burials would be expected from this cemetery.

Archival research further confirmed that the historic boundaries of the Old Pecos Cemetery were much larger than the 0.32 acres currently fenced. A plat map from 1910 depicts the “Old Cemetery” as taking up most of Block 24 in the North Pecos addition (see Figures 19 and 20). Since the cemetery was already considered old by 1910, it is unlikely that the cemetery was used much after this date. Furthermore, scraping uncovered grave shafts outside of the 1910 boundary, which suggests that by that time some of the locations of graves had already been forgotten.

Overall, the Old Pecos Cemetery contains the remains of early Pecos settlers and rail workers who died between 1881 and 1910. Six marked graves and at least 61 unmarked graves are present. Although a number of notable white Pecos residents (mainly gunslingers) were buried in the cemetery, it is probable that the cemetery’s other occupants were Mexican, African American, and even Chinese. Records suggest that in later years, this cemetery may have been used as a potter’s field for poorer, transient, or indigent folks, while the newer Fairview Cemetery became the burial place for the more enfranchised Pecos citizenry. This might explain why historical memory of the location of graves was lost even as early as 1910, when plat maps incorrectly document its boundary.

Based on the results of the work, AmaTerra defined a new cemetery boundary whose legal description is Block 24 and the west 35 feet of Block 25 of the Pecos North Addition, encompassing an area of about 4.2 acres. This new boundary was recorded at the Reeves County Clerk’s office, following the provisions in the Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 711.011. Investigators believe that there are additional unmarked, and as yet unidentified graves within the new cemetery boundary, as time did not permit scraping 100 percent of the area within these limits.

Further testing and research, beyond the scope of this investigation, may well reveal important aspects related to frontier settlement, railroad construction, and development of the Pecos River Valley in west Texas. For this reason, Site 41RV127 should be considered of unknown eligibility for listing as a State Antiquities Landmark. To comply with the Texas Health and Safety Code, as well as the ACT, AmaTerra recommends that ground disturbing activities should be avoided within the newly defined cemetery boundaries and to a distance of 50 feet east of the western boundary of Block 25. The proposed Colgate Energy facilities should be constructed outside the limits shown on Figure 21. Reeves County has indicated that it plans to fence the new cemetery boundary. AmaTerra believes the full areal extent of graves have been delineated through this survey and any ground disturbing work that occurs outside the new Old Pecos Cemetery boundary does not warrant archeological monitoring. However, should any grave shafts be inadvertently discovered during construction outside that limit, all work should cease until the Texas Historical Commission and a qualified archeologist can be notified to assess the find.

This report has been prepared in partial fulfilment of Permit No. 8138. No artifacts were collected. However, all records, notes and photographs generated from fieldwork will be permanently curated at the Center for Archaeological Research in San Marcos.

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