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Daniel R. Potter

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE CHILDREN'S PARK AT THE
VICTORIA MUNICIPAL PARK, VICTORIA, TEXAS**

Daniel R. Potter

Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 788

Jack D. Eaton, Principal Investigator

**Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio®
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ABSTRACT

During May 1989, personnel from the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, conducted a pedestrian survey and shovel testing of the area proposed for development of a children's park, a project of the City of Victoria Parks and Recreation Department. The survey was intended to locate any archaeological remains which might be impacted by construction of the children's park. No archaeological sites were identified during the project, and it is recommended that no further archaeological investigations are needed.

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Jack D. Eaton, acting director of the Center for Archaeological Research, supervised this project, and the CAR-UTSA staff were instrumental in the preparation of this report.

INTRODUCTION

In May 1989, the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio (henceforth CAR-UTSA) was requested by Mr. Paul Locher, director of the Victoria Parks and Recreation Department, to evaluate and report on any archaeological resources which might be affected by the construction of a children's playground planned for the Victoria Municipal Park. The proposed location for the playground was near 41 VT 10, an important historic site which is recorded on the National Register of Historic Places. A survey was conducted May 25, 1989, including both a surface walkover and subsurface shovel tests. The field work was directed by Daniel Potter, and project supervision was provided by Jack D. Eaton, principal investigator and acting director of the CAR-UTSA.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The children's playground area is located on a high terrace or bluff of the Guadalupe River known locally as "Tonkawa Bluff." The soil encountered in all of our shovel tests was a dense, very dark gray to black clay (2.5 Y 3/0-2/0, dry; *Munsell Soil Color Charts* 1975). Closer to the river, alluvial deposits can be encountered, including sands, gravels, and clays (Taylor 1985:3). Soil conditions in the area of the children's park have probably been impacted by human activities going back at least as early as 1920, at which time the landowner, Doctor Hiller, was selling topsoil off the bluff for local Victoria gardens. Apparently soil was not the only commodity being exported by "Doc" Hiller, as reported by J. L. Jarratt (n.d.a):

I pulled the bone out and remarked that it was an arm bone out of a human being. 'Sure, it is a human bone,' said a Mr. Floyd Moore. 'Doc [Doc Hiller] has scattered these Indians all over town [Victoria]. Wherever Doc unloads this dirt the people are always finding human bones, flint chippings, and sometimes arrowheads. Mr. Ed Dunlap found part of a skull in his mother's flower bed. She had him go and rebury it.'

While the extent and location of Hiller's soil-borrowing activities are unclear, it is likely they focused on topsoils occurring closer to the Guadalupe River, northwest of the study area. Even so, the soils of the children's park area could well have been affected by borrowing, and more likely, agricultural practices during this time. More recently, gravel

(associated with a parking lot) and sand have been introduced as construction fill, probably associated with the Jaycees Hall located within the study area. Nearby, a golf course and a YMCA building have significantly impacted known prehistoric cultural materials (Fox 1979:1; S. Schmiedlin, personal communication). Perhaps of greatest impact in the general area was extensive bulldozing associated with the construction of baseball fields located north of the study area. The bulldozing occurred in 1958, and removed "2 1/2 to 3 feet" of topsoil, according to local historian John Jarratt (n.d.a).

The current ground cover within the study area consists mainly of grass. The extreme northwestern margin of the study area is in longstem wild grasses, and the remainder of the area is covered by short grass, a large concrete slab which until recently supported the Victoria Jaycees Hall, and a gravel parking lot associated with that structure.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Although the area within the children's park has not specifically been the subject of archaeological research, the general area of the park is rich in historic and prehistoric remains and has received substantial attention from archaeologists.

The first investigations which specifically explored the archaeology of the area (rather than to borrow topsoil) were those of John Jarratt, a Victoria citizen with an active interest in the region's history and prehistory. Jarratt collected both Spanish colonial and pre-Columbian artifacts from the bluff top, and tested the "Tonkawa Bluff" site (also known locally as "Hiller's Mott") in 1929 and 1930. Jarratt reported finding midden materials, including pottery, chipped stone tools, and other "refuse" to a depth in excess of three feet (ca. one meter). Jarratt (n.d.a:4) also recovered human burials in poor condition from the top of the bluff.

Arthur Woolsey (n.d.) conducted excavations at the Tonkawa Bluff site in 1932, recovering a small number of prehistoric chipped stone tools and "numerous" bones (these are not specified as being human or animal remains). Because Woolsey (n.d.:32) failed to recover any intact burials he left the site after a total of two days of work, noting that the site "was a very great disappointment."

In 1978, Anne Fox of the CAR-UTSA completed a testing program at the site under contract with the City of Victoria. After assessing her own excavated materials and those of earlier investigations at the Tonkawa Bluff site, Fox determined that the locality had a complex culture history, reaching back to the

This page has been redacted because it contains restricted information.

structure is still visible within the proposed playground area, and will be incorporated into the playground facility.

These factors have combined to completely remove any cultural evidence which may have been present in the playground area. Although the playground is located adjacent to a surviving portion of 41 VT 10, as currently designed its construction and usage will have no adverse impact on this important site.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of a complete lack of cultural materials or other evidence of archaeological remains within the study area, it is recommended that no further archaeological investigations are necessary in association with the children's park playground area in the Victoria Municipal Park.

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