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AN INITIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF
JOHN JAMES PARK, CITY OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

by

Elizabeth Cantu Frkuska, Augustine J. Frkuska,
Fred Valdez, Jr., and Thomas R. Hester

Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Archaeological Survey Report No. 25

1977

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ERRATUM

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In the Hester 1975 reference, line 2, please note the following correction:

for "South Center Texas" read "South Central Texas"

INTRODUCTION

In January, 1977, the City of San Antonio Department of Parks and Recreation (Ronald L. Darner, Director) and the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio (Thomas R. Hester, Director), entered into a contract for the archaeological assessment of John James Park. The park property (Fig. 1), is located just north of Fort Sam Houston, and the eastern boundary fronts on Salado Creek, a major tributary of the San Antonio River.

The field survey was carried out under the general supervision of Dr. Thomas R. Hester and Mr. Jack D. Eaton, with the field crew consisting of Elizabeth Cantu Frkuska, Augustine J. Frkuska and Fred Valdez, Jr. The goal of this initial survey was to provide an assessment of archaeological or historical resources that might be present within the confines of the park, and, if such resources were found, to record and evaluate them.

SOILS AND VEGETATION

The soils in the survey area consist of the Venus-Frio-Trinity association. The areas closest to the Salado Creek are typically Trinity and Frio soils, which are frequently flooded. The soils on the upland terraces are of the Venus clay loam series (Taylor *et al.* 1962:45-46). The vegetation is approximately 25 percent grassy fields and 75 percent mixed, with deciduous trees, various types of brush and ground cover. The vegetation list is as follows: prickly pear, yucca (3 species), Christmas cactus, mesquite, oak, hackberry, elm, persimmon and grasses.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

There has been considerable archaeological activity by both professionals and amateurs along the Salado Creek drainage in recent years. Approximately 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) downstream, just south of John James Park, a major prehistoric site (41 BX 194) has been documented on Fort Sam Houston. The site is located on the east bank of the Salado Creek and occupation at that site ranged from early Archaic to Late Prehistoric (T. R. Hester, personal communication). Upstream, .8 kilometers north of the park, 41 BX 294, a prehistoric and historic site complex (the site of the battle of Salado Creek), has been documented and nominated for placement on the National Register of Historic Places, according to J. W. Clark, Jr. (personal communication).

Continuing 4.8 to 5.6 kilometers upstream (from the park) along the Salado drainage, a series of sites on high terraces have been located. The Granburg II site (41 BX 271) is located on the west terrace of the Salado and contained a wealth of prehistoric archaeological remains to a depth of more than 3.3 meters (Hester and Kohnitz 1975). On the east terrace about .8 kilometers further upstream is located the Robinson site (Cantu, Lauderdale and Stoner 1976), a portion of the 41 BX 229 complex. This locality has produced evidence of human occupation spanning the past 11,000 years (Hester 1975).

THE SURVEY

The survey of the city's proposed John James Park concentrated along the drain-

Figure 1. *The John James Park Area*. Zone 1: dump and fill area; Zone 2: location of 41 BX 305 (site extends SE-NW along the 660'-670' contour intervals, east of the indicated road); Zone 3: natural chert resources.

This page has been redacted because it contains restricted information.

age of the Salado Creek and the adjacent area to the west. The survey was confined to an area of 61,143 square meters bounded by Rittiman Road on the north, Winans Road on the south, Salado Creek on the east and Fort Sam Houston housing/Cole Junior and Senior Schools on the west. The park area is located on 556,650 mE, 3,261 mN on the USGS San Antonio East Quadrangle (7.5' series).

As noted above, the purpose of this survey was to locate, record and identify any archaeological or historical resources within the proposed park boundaries. Information about the vegetation and soils in the area was also recorded. The survey area was divided into three zones (Fig. 1) on the basis of presence/absence of archaeological material, the topography and the nature of the zone (i.e., disturbance). Zone 1 is a dump and fill area. It has been highly disturbed by recent human activity; any archaeological material in this area is mixed and of questionable provenience. Zone 2 is situated along the 660' and 670' contours paralleling Salado Creek. The area closest to the creek is highly eroded and the terrace walls expose lithic materials from soil and gravel horizons. Zone 3 is a relatively flat area. The vegetation cover in this zone made it very difficult to evaluate the area and it is possible that additional archaeological resources may exist in this zone.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The archaeological survey of John James Park revealed the presence of an extensive prehistoric archaeological site designated as 41 BX 305. The site area is situated within Zone 2 (Fig. 1) and covers approximately 28,000 square meters, although the exact horizontal extent is not known because of heavy ground cover. Vertically the site appears to be quite deep since lithic materials were found eroding out of both a surface soil horizon and much deeper gravels (Fig. 2,b). The southern section of the site area showed evidence of two previous "excavations," probably by relic-collectors. The site surface exhibited quantities of lithic materials including cores, bifaces, unifaces and flakes (Fig. 3-5). Eroded areas reveal lithic remains such as those illustrated in Fig. 3, a-b. These artifacts were associated with a gravel matrix unlike the artifacts found at the top of the terrace in a black soil horizon.

Surface lithic materials and scattered burned rock were noted within the site boundaries along the west bank of the Salado Creek from Rittiman Road to Winans Road. Two major lithic concentration areas were documented. Within these concentrations one can note nearly all stages of lithic reduction. Photographs were taken of the artifacts observed (but not collected) in the field and are on file at the Center for Archaeological Research. Representative examples of these chipped stone artifacts are illustrated in Figures 3-5.

In Figure 3 we have illustrated a series of bifaces collected at the site. One is a lanceolate-shaped preform (Fig. 3,a-a') found eroding from soil matrix approximately two meters down a slope. A possible point fragment (Fig. 3,d), associated with burned rock debris, was found on the terrace surface. Several

Figure 2. *Photographs of the John James Park Site Area.*
a, terrace above the Salado Creek, looking toward proposed
park recreation area; b, west bank of the Salado Creek along
the east boundary of John James Park.



a



b

Figure 3. *Bifaces from 41 BX 305.* a, a', lanceolate biface, heavy patina; b, ovate biface; c, miscellaneous biface (cross section of bit end is shown); d, e, bifacial fragments.

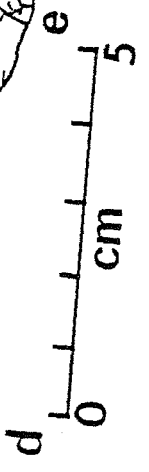
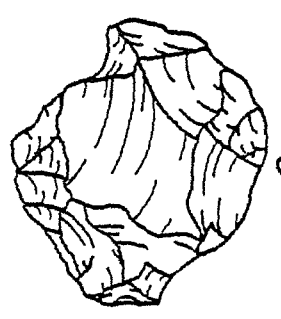
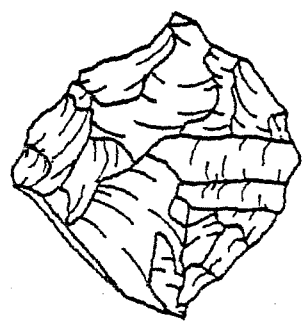
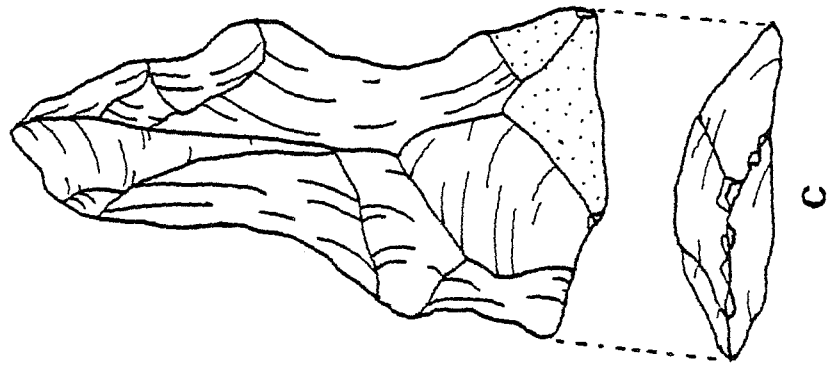
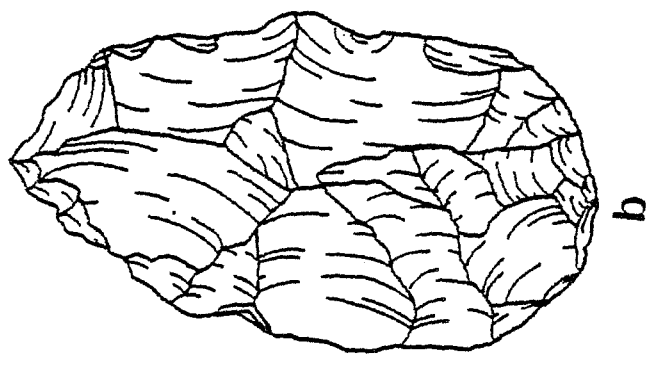
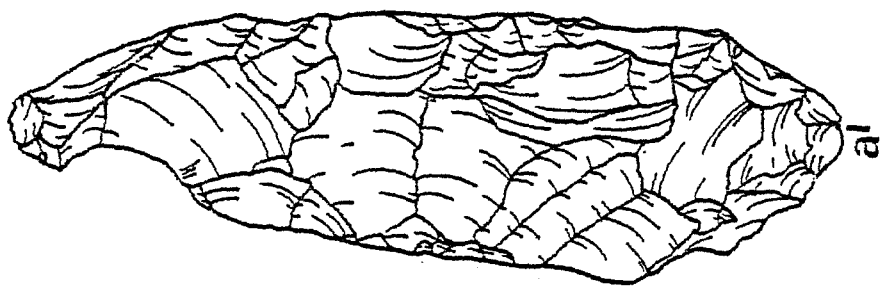
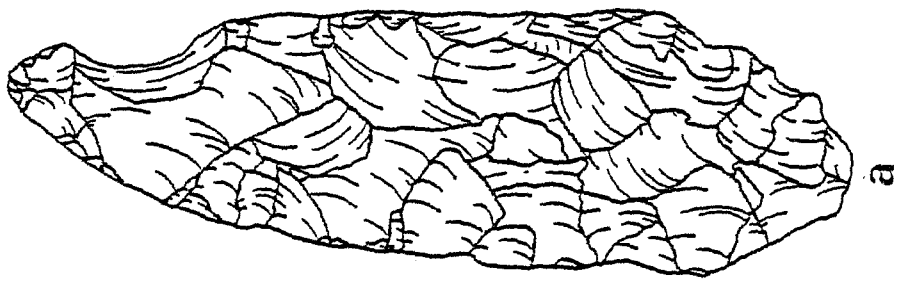
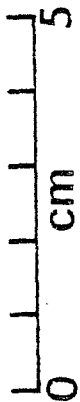
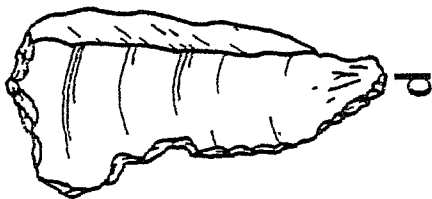
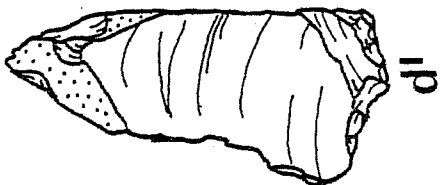
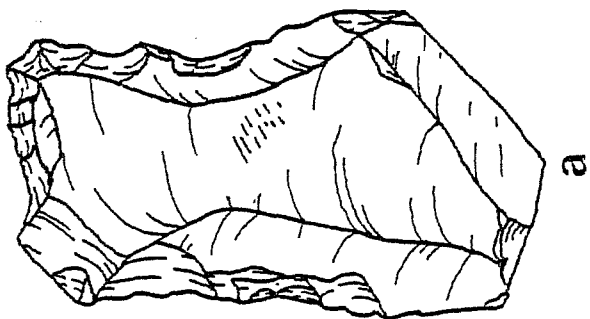
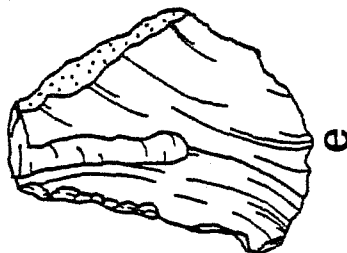
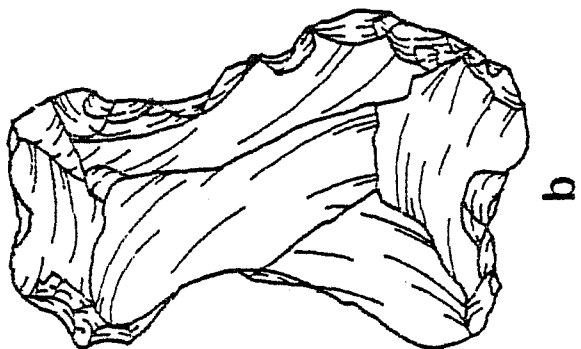
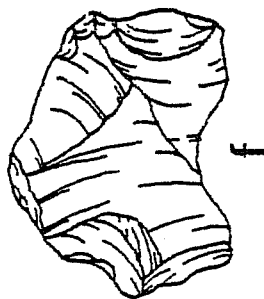
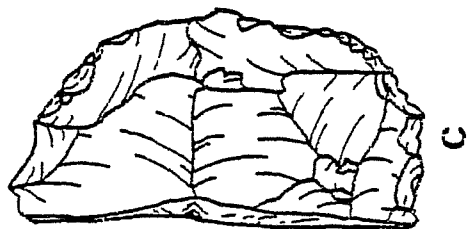


Figure 4. *Unifaces from 41 BX 305.* a, b, miscellaneous scrapers; c, broken end scraper; d-f retouched flakes.



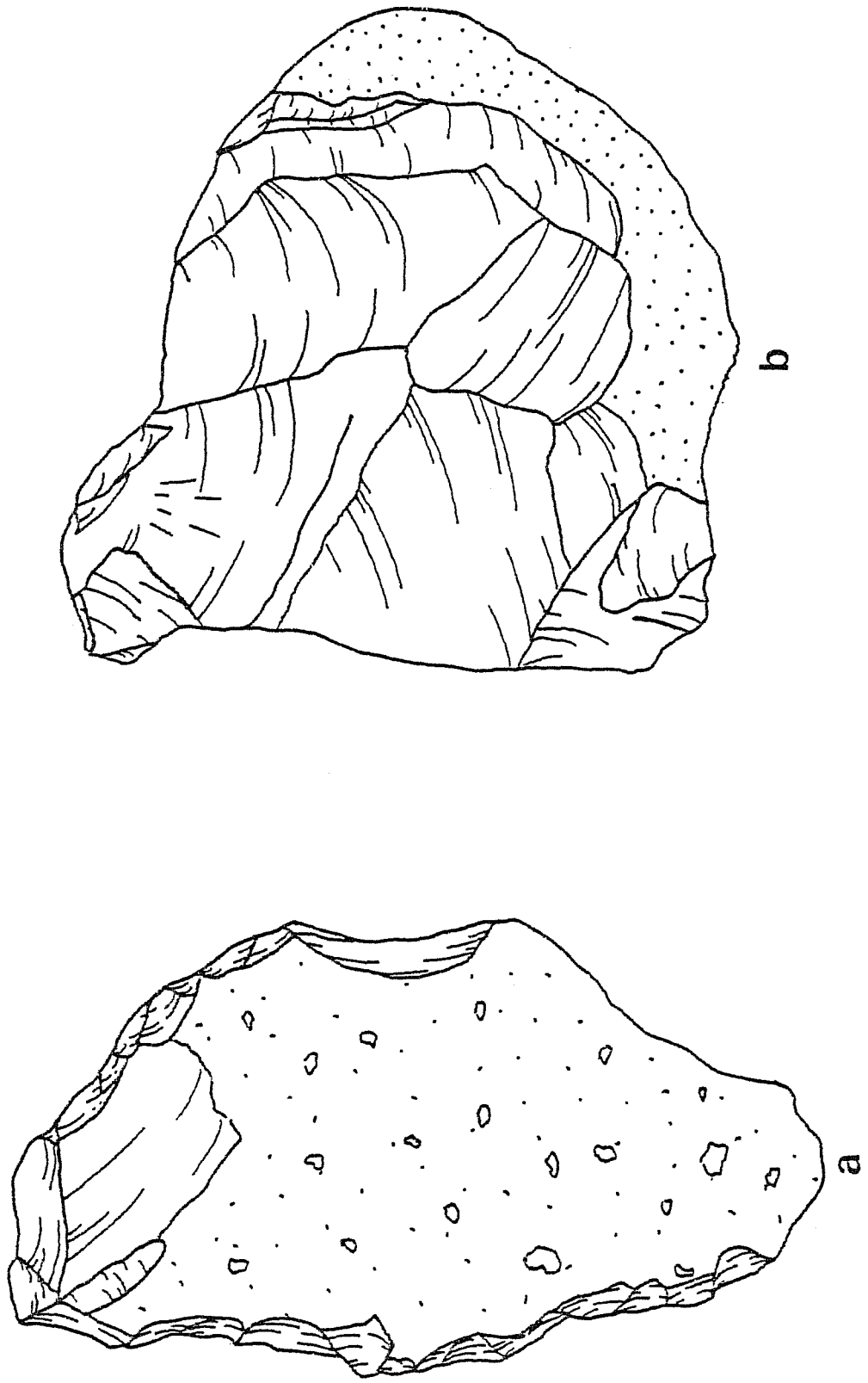


Figure 5. *Cortex* from 41 BX 305.

unifacial tools are shown in Figure 4. The smaller retouched flakes (Fig. 4, e-f) showed signs of thermal alteration as did a number of smaller flakes not illustrated. Two cores from 41 BX 305 are illustrated in Figure 5. Figure 5 is a core which is pot-lidded (from extreme heat) on the cortex; small flakes were detached from the edges, possibly for platform preparation. Larger cores were located and noted throughout the site area.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An archaeological survey of the proposed John James Park revealed the presence of an extensive prehistoric site along the eastern edge of the park area. The site cannot be precisely dated with available evidence, but we suspect that it represents repeated occupations over a period of several thousand years. Salado Creek was apparently the focus of intensive aboriginal activity during most of the prehistoric period, as evidenced by the large and significant sites recorded along the stream to the north and south of the park area. We believe that site 41 BX 305 is of National Register potential; however, further evaluation is necessary before such a recommendation can be made.

Through the courtesy of the Department of Parks and Recreation, we were provided with a detailed map indicating the nature of planned development within the new park. During the first phase of park development, a paved bike and hike trail will be routed along the eastern periphery of the archaeological site in the southeastern part of the park. Phase I also calls for clearing, the installation of security lighting, and a picnic area in the northeast corner of the park, also within the boundaries of the site 41 BX 305. Additional picnic units will be scattered along the eastern periphery of the park, again within the site area. Most major surface modifications during Phase I and future park development will, however, be confined to areas to the west (and outside) of the site boundaries (in Zones 1 and 3).

It does appear that the modifications mentioned above will cause impact in certain portions of site 41 BX 305. We are unable at this time to evaluate the actual effect that these modifications will have on the site deposits. We are concerned that surface evidence and the upper portions of the deposits in some parts of the site may be adversely affected. The heavy public utilization of this section of the park, involving bike and hike trails, horse trails, and picnic areas, will lead to surface collecting of artifacts, and possibly uncontrolled digging, thereby further damaging the resources at 41 BX 305.

We suggest that a second phase of archaeological investigation be carried out at 41 BX 305 prior to park development. This second phase would involve intensive survey and mapping, designed to more precisely delineate the boundaries of the site. Once these are established, park planners may wish to redesign certain areas to shift heavy public use away from the site boundaries. In addition, the excavation of several test pits in the site area would be carried out in this recommended second phase. These excavations would permit a much better evaluation of the archaeological significance and potential of the site. The excavated data would help in determining the eligibility of the site for nomination to the National Register.

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