AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY
IN
ALICE, TEXAS

S. Alan Skinner, PhD

Prepared for:

KGVB PROPERTIES, LTD.
112 N. Hearne Street
Franklin, Texas 77856

AR CONSULTANTS, INC.
P.O. Box 820727
Dallas, TX 75382

Cultural Resources Report 2004-40

December 29, 2004

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ABSTRACT

A pedestrian archaeological survey was conducted of a 1.37 acre tract located east of downtown Alice in Jim Wells County, Texas. This is in an area of recognized low archaeological potential and no cultural resources were located during the investigation. AR Consultants recommends that further cultural resource investigations are unwarranted and that development can proceed as planned.

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INTRODUCTION

KGVB Properties, Ltd. and Carotex Construction, Inc. of Franklin, Texas is proposing to purchase a tract of land and to build a 7,000 square foot office building that will ultimately be used as a Social Security Administration office. The tract being purchased is located east of downtown Alice, Texas in Jim Wells County, Texas (Figure 1). The tract is roughly square being 225' north-south along the east side of Medical Center Boulevard and 268.6' east-west along the north side of Alice Regional Boulevard. This tract is 1.37 acres in area and is located at the northeast corner of the roads mentioned above.

The present investigation consists of a site evaluation and was conducted at the request of KGVB Properties, Ltd. and Carotex Construction Inc. in order to be able to determine if significant cultural resources are present. At this point in the land development process, state or federal legislation do not have a direct bearing on site purchase and development, although it would have a bearing upon the purchase of the land by a federal or state agency. However, the significance of unknown cultural resources would have a bearing on the present or future sale of the land, and it is the desire of the sponsors that the property potential be evaluated. This report has been submitted to the Archeology Division of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for their review. The THC is the independent Section 106 review agency for projects permitted or funded by federal agencies.

The surface of the property is mapped as being that part of the Beaumont Formation which is predominantly clayey sand and silt of low-moderate permeability with moderate drainage and level relief (Bureau of Economic Geology 1976). This Pleistocene formation is generally considered to predate human occupation in the area. The area is included in the Lattas-Opelika-Clareville Soil Association which is an upland soil association with deep, nearly level to gently sloping, clayey and loamy soils (Minzenmayer 1979:General Soil Map). More specifically the immediate site area is mapped as being covered with Runge fine sandy loam with 1-3 percent slopes. Runge generally has a dark brown (10YR3/3) fine sandy loam A-horizon that is 14" thick and rests on a thick B-horizon that is reddish brown (5YR5/3) in color and is a sandy clay loam. In a climax condition, the vegetation of the area is classified as upland prairie and woods (Diamond et al. 1987:Figure 1).

Archaeological site investigations in Jim Wells County have been limited and furthermore many of the surveys have turned up finding no sites. Only a total of 15 sites are listed on the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas (TASA 2004) for the county. Although the Clovis point compilation lists no points for the county (Meltzer and Bever 1995:Table 1), Black (1986:38) quoting Brune (1981:266) mentions a Clovis point in a private collection from the county. Surface collections are primarily dominated by Archaic period artifacts but subsequently Late Prehistoric artifacts are reported and historic sites in the 1800s and 1900s are also reported.

Figure 1. Study area location shown on a section of the Alice North, TX 7.5' USGS map.

Previous investigations [see References Cited] shown on the Alice, Texas 7.5' USGS map are marked but not indicated as to permit numbers or agency. These include an apparent loop of highway 281 to the east and west of Alice and just west of the survey area. They also include several pad sites and a connecting pipeline, as well as several other pipeline routes in the town of Alice. In every case, no sites were recorded even in settings significantly closer to San Fernando Creek. Several 1800s buildings and building sites are noted in Alice but none occur in the vicinity of the survey area.

METHODOLOGY

As indicated above no archaeological sites or historic properties were found to have been listed on the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas. The Alice North, TX 7.5' USGS map was reviewed and evaluated in the field. The same was also done with the aerial photographs contained in the 1979 Soil Survey of Jim Wells County, Texas.

In the field, the entire tract was walked in east-west and north-south directions at intervals of less than 30 m. Most of the area had been mowed and ground visibility ranged up to 25 percent in most places. Limited shovel testing was carried out as discussed in the following chapter.

RESULTS

No structures are shown in the study area on the Alice North, TX 7.5' USGS map that was printed in 1963. As shown on Figure 1, an unpaved road extends south from Highway 44 and turns east and two residential structures are to the north side before it turns to the south and then to the east again where it passes to the north of two additional residential properties. By the mid-1970s when the Jim Wells County soil survey was completed, a brick house had been constructed between the unpaved road and the first two structures mentioned as being present on the USGS map. The land to the north where the study area is located was apparently in pasture but a couple of trees are along the road at the western edge of the study area.

Since the date of the Soil Conservation Service photograph, the north-south road has been named and extended to the south. This road is now known as Medical Center Boulevard. A new road has been built north of the brick house and defining the south side of the study area and is known as Alice Regional Boulevard. A metal frame building is located on the lot just to the east of the study area and is labeled the South Texas Kidney Center. A hospital is located to the northeast of the Kidney Center and another hospital structure is to the west on the east side of FM 1931.

The study area had just been surveyed for Carotex Construction, Inc. in the previous week and the surveyors had used orange spray-painted stakes to mark the corners of the property. The entire area had been recently mowed and this resulted in making the ground surface of the bermuda grass covered area more visible (Figure 2). The tract was systematically walked over and then was further inspected in the more heavily eroded areas, particularly where red ants had created rings of exposure. It soon became apparent that an elevated pad site had been created in the central part of the tract and that the pad was composed of chunks or concrete and asphalt mixed with soil. In addition, chunks of concrete and asphalt are exposed on the ground surface surrounding the pad it self. No diagnostic prehistoric or historic artifacts were found during the pedestrian survey and no evidence of occupation except for some pieces of sheet metal was encountered on the present ground surface. An unmowed strip of grass is situated east of the pad site and is roughly ten meters wide (Figure 3). The ground surface is covered with the metal strips along with chunks of asphalt and concrete. Based on the map and aerial photograph, it was concluded that the pad had been constructed sometime in the 1980s. Since that time, a concrete sidewalk had been constructed parallel to Alice Regional Boulevard and extended from the east side of the property west to thirteen meters from the corner of the property. The sidewalk must have been constructed after the three-phase distribution line was installed along both roads (Figure 4). In addition, a sewer line and water line have also been installed along both roads at the property edges. An old road composed of concrete and asphalt chunks (Figure 5) is parallel to the sidewalk midway between the pad and the sidewalk.

Figure 2. Plan map of the study area showing surface features and shovel test locations.

Figure 3. View to the north of the study area with the unmowed rubble pile at the right edge of the picture.

Figure 4. Sidewalk located along the edge of Alice Regional Blvd looking to the northwest. The lighter line shown parallel to the sidewalk is the remnants of a crude roadway.

No evidence was found that a building had ever been installed on the elevated pad. The pad is roughly 55 m long north-south by 52 m east west and at its maximum it is a meter above the surrounding natural ground surface. Three piles of gravel are on top of the pad in the approximate center and contain three separate grades of gravel (Figure 6). Two 30-40 year old hackberry trees are along the southwest side of the pad. Two mesquite trees are along the street and may be the trees shown on the mid-1970s aerial photograph. Note that the pad is up to a meter higher than the present ground surface.

Four shovel tests were excavated in order to explore for buried cultural materials and to describe the soils. STs 1-3 were placed at roughly 30 meter intervals in the proposed pad site area along the northern side of the elevated pad. The upper zone in each of the test units is a black (10YR2/1) fine sandy loam that is very wet due to recent snow storms. The upper zone grades to a dark grayish brown (10YR4/2) fine sandy loam below 10-15 cm and extends to 40 cm. No cultural materials were found in the sandy fill. A similar black fine sandy loam in ST 4 was found to a depth of 28 cm where it encountered fill material that is a light brownish gray sandy clay loam. No cultural materials were encountered and the subsoil was not found in any of the upland soils.

In summary, survey and testing found no evidence of significant historic or prehistoric cultural resources. This location is certainly outside of the limits of Alice when the USGS map was prepared and the building pad, road, sidewalk, and other features present were discovered. While this could have been the site where a historic residence could have been located but since this is outside Alice and not close to any water resources the likelihood of finding an historic building or structure is unlikely. Furthermore, this setting at some distance from water is unlikely to have been occupied prehistorically.

Figure 5. Looking east across the southern edge of the elevated pad with the remnant of the road arching toward the South Texas Kidney Center.

Figure 6. View to the northeast from the southwest corner of the elevated pad marked by the hackberry tree in the lower left hand corner. Gravel piles are shown on the pad.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AR Consultants has concluded that no significant cultural resources are present on the property and that KGVB Properties, Ltd. and Carotex Construction, Inc. should be authorized to proceed with the construction of a new building and associated parking space.

REFERENCES CITED

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1991 Archeological Review; US 281:From 1.65 Miles North of FM3376 to the Live Oak County Line.

Texas Archeological Sites Atlas
2004 Internet search of Jim Wells County and Alice North 7.5' USGS maps.

December 29, 2004

James E. Bruseth, PhD
Archeology Division
Texas Historical Commission
PO Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Dr. Bruseth:

Enclosed are two copies of our draft report entitled "An Archaeological Survey in Alice, Texas" which was conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of the Social Security Administration. As you will see, more than half of this small tract is either covered with an elevated pad of asphalt and concrete or has been disturbed by the installation of a sidewalk, a sewer line, a water line, poles of an electric distribution line, and an asphalt and concrete "field" road. This is an area of low archaeological potential based on the results of previous investigations in the immediate area and confirmed by this investigation. It is our recommendation that further investigations are unwarranted.

If you have any questions, please call me at the office or on my cell phone at (214) 906-8021.

Thank you for your attention to this report.

Sincerely,

S. Alan Skinner, PhD
President

encl. Alice survey report (2)

cc. Gene White, KGVB Properties, Ltd.

December 30, 2004

Gene White
KGVB Properties, Ltd.
112 North Hearne Street
Franklin, TX 77856

INVOICE 20041207
ALICE ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY

This invoice covers the cost of records review and a field investigation of the proposed development site located at the intersection of Medical Center Blvd. and Alice Regional Blvd. in Alice, Texas. Fieldwork was conducted on December 27-28 and the report was submitted to you and to the Texas Historical Commission via Federal Express on December 29, 2004. Additional copies of the report can be provided if necessary. This is the only invoice for this investigation.

Invoice Total $ 1350.00

Submitted by _____
S. Alan Skinner, PhD
President