



**An Archaeological Survey of the  
Lonesome Dove Tract in San Antonio, Texas**

**SUBMITTED TO**

**Hudgins Companies  
Fort Worth, Texas.**

**By**

**ABASOLO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS  
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## **Abstract**

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a Phase I archaeological survey at the proposed Lonesome Dove Apartments tract in northwest San Antonio, Texas. The property previously had been prepared for development by the installation of sewage and water lines, excavation of streets, infill of landscape, and removal of some trees. At least 95% of the landscape has been altered. This development stage lay dormant for several years. A 100% inspection of the property subsequent to the earlier development stage found only a mere trace of prehistoric use, and no traces of any major archaeological site that might have been present. No further archaeological work is recommended.

## **Introduction and Background**

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a Phase I archaeological survey at the Lonesome Dove Apartment site in San Antonio, Texas for the Hudgins Companies of Fort Worth. A 100% pedestrian survey was conducted by the authors, Harry Shafer and Thomas Hester on November 12, 2009. This Phase I investigation was designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area. This report provides an assessment of the survey findings.

### **Setting**

The Lonesome Dove tract is located west of Loop 1604, south of Potranco Road and Culebra Road (Figs. 1 and 2). The property was once part of an active ranch until it became incorporated into urban sprawl. The original landscape was oak-juniper parkland situated on the Austin chalk formation. The property is drained by a lateral tributary of Medio Creek; the branch borders the property to the east.

The property previously had been prepared for development by the installation of sewage and water lines, excavation of streets, infill of landscape, and removal of some trees (Figs. 3, 4, 5 top). At least 95% of the landscape has been altered. The development at this stage lay dormant for several years. No previous archaeological survey had been conducted on the property prior to the previous development, and because none had been done, the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation requested that an archaeological survey be conducted on the property prior to any future development.

### Soils

The terrain at the Lonesome Dove is dominated by Tarrant Series soils (Fig. 2), specifically TaB. This is a common soil type in northern Bexar County, found on uplands, draws, and canyon slopes. Some areas have extensive exposures of Uvalde Gravels. . The property has never been cleared for cultivation because the shallow soils are not conducive to agriculture (Taylor et al. 1991).

## Geology

As noted above, the Lonesome Dove tract lies on thin soils atop the Austin chalk of Cretaceous age (Arnow 1959). Within the soils are eroded cobbles known as the Uvalde Gravels (Byrd 1971). In an undisturbed context, such gravels often yield evidence of the procurement of chert (flint) and other siliceous materials used by prehistoric peoples for tool-making (e.g. Shafer and Hester 2009).

## **Archaeological Background**

### **Regional Cultural Sequence**

Presently, there are well over 1,800 recorded sites in Bexar County. These reflect a cultural chronology spanning 11,000 years of prehistory, as well as a historic era that left many important structures. Archaeologists have divided this broad range of time into four general periods: Paleoindian, Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Historic (Hester 2004).

The Paleoindian period, 9,200-6,800 B.C., has distinctive chipped stone spear points used in hunting mammoth and other late Ice Age mammals early in the period. Other spear types appear with a shift to bison, deer and other game after the Ice Age ended around 8000 B.C. Known site types in Bexar County are *campsites* with diagnostic projectile points and flint-chipping debris from stone-tool making and repair.

Sites of the following Archaic period are common across Bexar County. These peoples were hunters and gatherers as in the earlier Paleoindian period, but lived in an environment very similar to those of modern times. Projectile points used to tip spears (often erroneously called “arrowheads”) change in shape through time, from 6,800 B.C. to 500 A.D. Archaeologists use these forms to recognize more specific time frames within the Archaic (e.g., Early, Middle and Late Archaic). In northern Bexar County, the most distinctive Archaic site is the *burned rock midden* (large accumulations of fire-cracked limestone result from the use of earth-oven cooking starting around 3,000 B.C.;

see Black et al.1997). Other Archaic site types include *lithic procurement areas* (often called “quarries) in northern Bexar County, where flint cobbles eroded out of the Edwards limestone and were processed, as well as exposures of Uvalde Gravels, *lithic scatters* (lightly-used areas probably representing short-term hunting and gathering activities), *cemeteries* and rarely, *sinkhole burials* (Archaic peoples often disposed of their dead by placing them in sinkholes and caverns).

By 700 A.D., there began to be some changes in the long hunter-gatherer lifeway. The Late Prehistoric is first seen with the introduction of the bow and arrow. The stone arrow points are very small (mistakenly called “bird points”), but could be used in hunting game of any size. By 1300 A.D., the economy emphasized buffalo-hunting. Most sites of this era include *campsites*, often in areas previously used by Archaic peoples, *lithic scatters* of this age; and the *lithic procurement areas* of earlier times continued to be used.

During the Historic period, Native Americans peoples from southern Texas and northeastern Mexico lived in and around the missions on the San Antonio River. Intrusive peoples such as Comanche and Lipan Apache are well documented historically, but they left few archaeological traces. The best known archaeological remains are *ranch and farm houses of cut stone*, dating from the 1840s through the 1880s. Such sites, including those without surviving structures, are recognized from 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments, artifacts of glass and metal, etc. Later Historic houses (often of board and batten construction) and farmsteads, through the early 1900s, are also found. . *Stacked-stone fences* also occur.

### **Nearby Archaeological Sites**

In 1987, archaeologists from Espy Huston and Associates (Austin) carried out an archaeological survey of the West Creek development, to the south along Caracol Creek. They recorded several sites, most classified as “lithic scatters” (41BX761, 767, 768) and

none of which could be dated. They also documented a ranch complex that began in the 1920s (41BX769) and a nearby dilapidated house (41BX 766).

More recently, avocational archaeologist David L. Calame, Sr. has documented two sites to the northwest of Lonesome Dove. One site is an Archaic burned rock midden disturbed during the development of the Del Webb property (41BX1688). A lithic procurement (quarry) site was found nearby by Calame (41BX1613). On nearby Culebra Creek, archaeologists from the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, recorded a domed burned rock midden site (41BX1422) and nearby burned rock scatter.

Just downstream from 41BX1422 is a major prehistoric site, 41BX126, located near the intersection of FM1604 and Culebra Creek. The Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, carried out significant excavations at BX126 in 1997. Analysis provided important new data on the Archaic use of earth ovens in terms of burned rock midden formation processes (Nickels et al. 2001).

West of the Lonesome Dove, Shafer and Hester (2006) carried out a survey of 2000 acres in western Bexar and eastern Medina counties. The survey area is rough terrain, similar to Metzger, and is drained by Potranco Creek. Relatively few archaeological sites were found, but some distinctive patterns of upland resource use were noted.

Very few archaeological sites have been documented in the area around the Lonesome Dove property. However, three sites are very near. All are to the north and east of the proposed development, but were likely impacted by earlier construction in the Dove Canyon Subdivision area. These include two sites (41BX466 and 41BX467) that were short-term campsites or lithic scatters. Both were recorded by A. J. McGraw in connection with his surveys along Medio Creek (see McGraw 1977). Site 41BX1421 lies on the eastern margin of the subdivision, on the second terrace of Medio Creek. Prewitt and Associates archaeologists found flakes, fire-cracked rocks and bits of animal bone,

indicating that this, too, was a campsite (Texas Archeological Site Atlas, Texas Historical Commission)..

## **Research Design**

In our proposal for the archaeological survey of Lonesome Dove tract, we listed several tasks that would be accomplished through our investigations:

*Task 1:* Review pertinent archaeological, geological, and soils literature to assess the overall cultural and geoarchaeological contexts of the property.

*Task 2:* Field Work. To fully inspect the area, a 100% pedestrian survey was conducted across the entire acreage. Shovel testing was to be carried out if deemed necessary in accordance to the Texas Council of Archaeologists survey standards. Any archaeological material encountered was to be located using hand-held GPS units and plotted on the project map. Diagnostic artifacts encountered during the course of the survey or testing were to be digitally photographed for recording. A no collection policy was to be followed unless unusual finds were encountered.

*Task 3:* Following the field work, the information recovered from the pedestrian survey is to be compiled and evaluated. A formal report is submitted here, following the Council of Texas Archeologists report guidelines, that includes the project description, summary of the geology and soils in the project area, archaeological background, archaeological sites in the vicinity, survey findings, and summary and recommendations.

*Task 4.* Provide 3 copies of the final written report to the client and one to the COSA archaeologist at the Office of Historic Preservation.

## **Summary of Results**

The Lonesome Dove property had previously been prepared for residential development by the installation of sewage and water lines and street excavations. The latter included the grading of proposed streets; no paving was installed. When the street excavations occurred, the spoil was deposited on the surfaces on which the residential construction was to occur. As a result of these developments, the entire landscape, save small areas around and beneath selected oak trees that were left, had been disturbed. While archaeological sites have been recorded nearby, the only evidence of prehistoric archaeological sites on the property were two man-made chert flakes, telltale indicators of prehistoric stone tool making. These examples, however, were recovered in disturbed context and do not merit further consideration (Fig 5, Bottom). **No further archaeological work is recommended for the Lonesome Dove tract.**

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## FIGURES



**Figure 1. Aerial perspective of the Lonesome Dove apartment tract.**

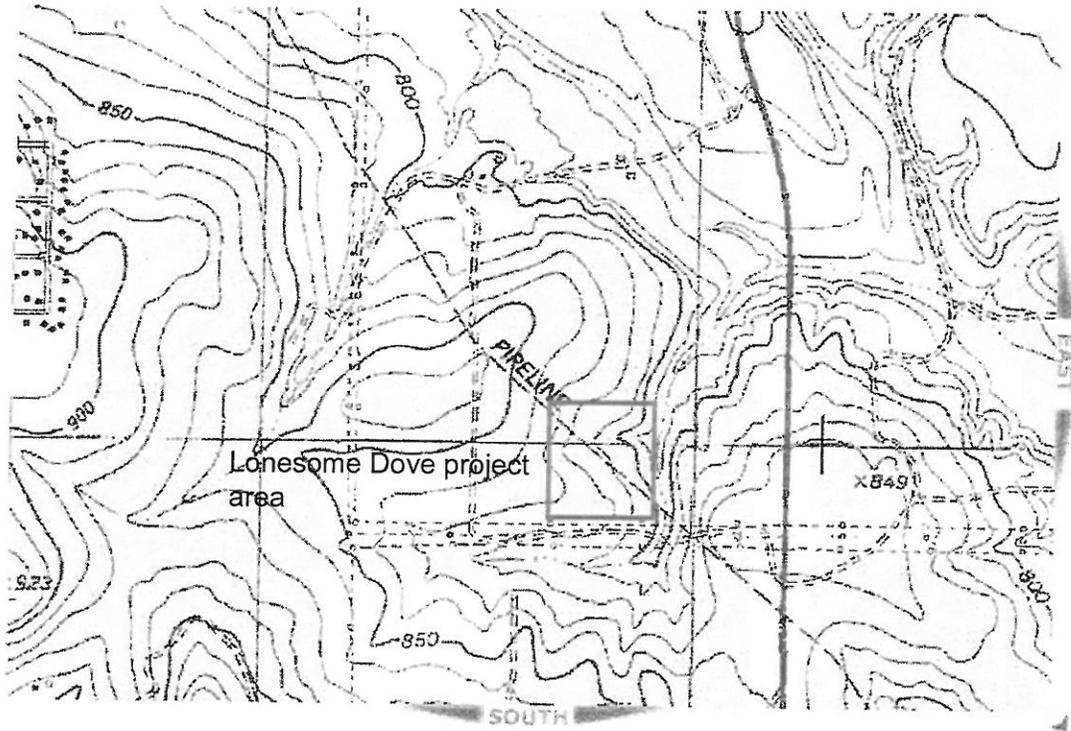
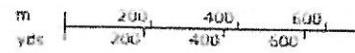


Image courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey



**Figure 2. Topographic map showing the location of the Lonesome Dove project.**



**Figure 2. Views of the property showing street cutting and water installations.**



**Figure 3. Views of the property showing previous land surface modifications.**



**Figure 4. Top: view of the property showing the introduction of top fill over areas to be developed. Bottom: Two chipped stone prehistoric artifacts observed in disturbed area near the eastern portion of the property.**