

**An Archaeological Survey of the  
Woller Tract, Hausman Road,  
Bexar County, Texas**

**By**

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**Submitted to**

**Rehler, Vaughn, & Koone, Inc. of San Antonio.**

**Antiquities Permit #3962**

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## **Abstract**

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted an archaeological survey of 25 acres at the intersection of Hausman and Woller Roads in northern Bexar County. This tract to be developed as a library and park and the survey was done on behalf of the architects, Rehler, Vaughn & Koone, Inc. of San Antonio. The survey was carried out under the terms of a Texas Antiquities Permit # 3962 with Harry J. Shafer serving as Principal Investigator. The survey consisted of 100% surface inspection of the property. Specific attention was paid to the site of the Woller house and a single-room stone outbuilding, the only structure remaining. The house, a barn, and a chicken house had been razed. Construction details of the stone structure and artifacts at the house location suggested an early 20<sup>th</sup> century construction for both structures. Oral history interviews confirmed that the structures were built between 1920 and 1930.

## Introduction and Background

In December 2005, Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted an archaeological survey of the 25 acres to be developed as a public library and city park at Hausman Road (FM 1560) and Woller Road (Figs. 1-3). The investigations were done at the request of the project architects, Rehler, Vaughn & Koone, Inc. (RVK) of San Antonio. The survey was carried out under the terms of a Texas Antiquities Permit # 3962. Harry J. Shafer served as the Principal Investigator. The survey consisted of 100% surface inspection of the property. Specific attention was paid to the site of the old Woller house and a single-room stone outbuilding, the only structure remaining.

A local resident, Mr. K. A. (Bo) Harp, alerted City of San Antonio archaeologist Kay Hinds that a significant historic stone structure existed on the property. Mr. Harp was concerned that the structure might be torn down without being recorded. A visit to the property by Kay Hinds confirmed the observations that an interesting stone structure possibly dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was present. Hinds also observed possible traces of a prehistoric site on the property. The locale was once occupied by the Woller family and is herein referred to as the Woller farm.

With the above information available, Abasolo Archaeological Consultants devised a research designed to (1) assess the possible unrecorded prehistoric archaeological site and focus specific attention on the unrecorded historic property and (2) carry out an archaeological survey of the entire tract. In line with the first objective, we assessed the significance with regards to possible nomination as a State Archeological Landmark or potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Oral history interviews were planned to obtain information on the layout of the Woller house complex and, if possible, approximate construction dates. The historic property was to be recorded as an archaeological site. Should our assessment indicate potential eligibility, we would recommend that the City of San Antonio obtain the services of an Architectural Historian to do full documentation, deed searches, etc. Thus, our survey was designed to concentrate on the documentation of these sites (in accordance with the Texas Antiquities Code) and to locate other archaeological sites that might be within the project area.

The Woller property is in an upland divide between Huesta Creek to the north and French Creek to the south, both tributaries of Leon Creek. The northern part of the survey area consists of Tarrant series soils (TaB) that are very shallow and overlay hard limestone. We did not anticipate any significant depth to cultural deposits that may be encountered in this area. Soils in the southern part of the survey area consist of Crawford clays (Ca) that are slightly deeper in places, possibly reaching a depth of three feet (Taylor et al., 1991).

Surface visibility varied from excellent to poor, depending on the density of the grass cover, trees, and shrubs (Fig. 2). The northeastern part was densely covered in grass with scattered juniper. A live oak grove with mixed under story shrubs occurred in the northwest corner and near the Woller homestead (Fig. 4). Fallow fields and dense stands of juniper dominated the southern half of the tract, with excellent surface visibility in the

fields. The fields and moderate erosion gullies afforded moderate to good opportunities for surface inspection, while the juniper thicket at the southern end provided some difficulty. At the time of the survey, partial land clearing had begun. All wooden structures on the property had been razed leaving only disturbed surfaces and scattered construction materials at the Woller farm house and barn. Only a concrete slab remained of a later 20<sup>th</sup> century Woller residence near Woller Road.

## Archaeological Background

### Local chronology and site types

Useful overviews of the prehistory and early history of northern Bexar County can be found in McNatt et al. (2000) and Nickels, et al. (2001). More than 1600 archaeological sites have been recorded in Bexar County, including many in northern Bexar County. These span 13,000 years of human occupation of the region, from the late Ice Age into the Historic era. The archaeological record has been divided into four major time periods: Paleoindian, Archaic, Late Prehistoric and Historic.

The earliest sites are Paleoindian, beginning around 13,000 years ago. This begins in the late Pleistocene (Ice Age) with the Clovis and Folsom cultures hunting animals that are now largely extinct (mammoth, ground sloth, camel, native horse, large buffalo, etc.). They used distinctive fluted spear tips (Turner and Hester 1993) that can be used to date sites of this era. By 10,000 years ago, the Ice Age had ended, and the climates and landscapes approached those of modern times. During this “Late Paleoindian” time frame, regional cultures switched to a sequence of non-fluted, lanceolate spear points. Among the important Paleoindian sites in northern Bexar County are Pavo Real (Collins et al. 2000), 41BX47 on Leon Creek (Tennis 1996), and the Chandler site on Culebra Creek (McKenzie and Moses 2005).

By 8500 years ago, the Edwards Plateau area had seen a considerable expansion of population, with increasing dependence on plant-food gathering and processing. This Period is known as the Archaic and encompasses a broad range of hunter-gatherer cultural patterns that lasted until about 1500 years ago. In the regional chronologies (Hester 2004), the Archaic is divided into Early, Middle and Late sub-periods. Abundant evidence of Archaic peoples is found in northern Bexar County. At the Culebra Creek site (41BX126; Nickels et al. 2000), the excavations demonstrated that, during the Middle Archaic, regional Native American groups began the intensive processing of plants such as sotol, utilizing an earth oven technology that led to the accumulation of the so-called “burned rock middens.”

In addition to burned rock midden deposits found in campsites along what are modern streams, the Archaic is also characterized by numerous time-diagnostic dart point types (Turner and Hester 1993), hafted to spears that were thrown with the *atlatl* (spear thrower). Abundant evidence of flint-working is found, along with chipped stone tools of various sorts and ground-stone grinding slabs used in plant processing. The sheer volume of cultural remains found in many of these sites makes them highly susceptible to

“pot-holing” – uncontrolled digging by relic hunters. Some of these collectors are interested in building their own personal artifact collections, while others are involved in the commercial artifact market.

The Late Prehistoric begins around A.D. 700 with the introduction of the bow and arrow into central Texas. Tiny arrow points of flint were used to tip the arrows, and these are easily distinguished from the Archaic spear points of earlier times. By A.D. 1300, the area was occupied by peoples of the Toyah Horizon. These were probably local Native American groups who adopted the “tool kit” of buffalo hunting – Perdiz arrow points, beveled knives, end scrapers and bone-tempered pottery. These native peoples were first encountered by 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish expeditions, and many of them later went into the Spanish missions in San Antonio. This marks the early part of the Historic era, during Spanish Colonial times. Sites that represent the “Contact Period” are hard to find. At site 41BX631, on the west uplands of Leon Creek south of FM1604, a gunflint and a Guerrero point date to Historic Native American times, probably in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (data assembled by Hester; see the Texas Archeological Site Atlas). It was during the 18<sup>th</sup> century that Lipan Apaches and Comanche began to move into the area, adding to the disruption of indigenous cultures begun by the Spanish.

In northern Bexar County, there is a rich record of early Anglo-European occupation – ranches, farms, and substantial stone houses. One example of these Historic homes, built of cut limestone, was recorded as 41BX711. The house (built perhaps in the 1840s) and associated ranch-related materials are situated on a low ridge that parallels the west side of Culebra Creek (Hester and Shafer 2005b).

#### **Sites in the Vicinity of the Woller Tract**

Aside from sites 41BX52 (Pavo Real), 41BX631, and Culebra Creek (41BX126), the Texas Archeological Site Atlas shows several other sites that are in closer proximity to the Hausman Road Tract. To the west is 41BX70, recorded by William Fawcett, Jr. in 1971. It is in an area with extensive exposures of chert (flint) cobbles and the site represents exploitation of this resource. To the southwest, in the FM 1604 right-of-way is site 41BX69. Recorded in 1971 by Paul and Ellen McGuff, the site had already been badly disturbed by Texas Highway Department bulldozers. It is on the west side of French Creek and the McGuffs suggest it was a temporary or short-term campsite (Texas Archeological Site Atlas).

Two other sites downstream on French Creek are two historic sites. 41BX1600 lies on the Naeglin Tract, east of the creek. <sup>W-17</sup> It is a farmstead consisting of several buildings that were attributed to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by researchers from the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio (Texas Archeological Site Atlas). Another cluster of buildings is represented at 41BX1591, the Woller Ranch. However, the area studied by SWCA of Austin, Texas (Texas Archeological Site Atlas) is on the east terrace of French Creek. This specific locale is a historic trash dump, with most of the debris being fairly modern. There is no direct relationship between this site and the tract at Hausman and Woller Roads.

About 1.5 km to the east of the project area is site 41BX41, a lithic scatter recorded by Paul McGuff during the 1971 Leon Creek Survey (Texas Archeological Site Atlas). There are also a cluster of sites around the campus of The University of Texas at San Antonio, the closest about 1.5 km to the northeast (e.g., 41BX1419, recorded during a survey in 2000 by Texas A&M archaeologists; Texas Archeological Site Atlas).

## **Survey Results**

Field work was conducted by the authors on December 14 and 15, 2005. A full 100% pedestrian inspection was made of the property. As noted earlier, surface visibility varied from open plowed field (100% visibility), to grassy cover (75% visibility), to dense juniper thicket (60% visibility due to heavy leaf litter). Sufficient surface exposures were available, however, to adequately recognize and identify any possible traces of archaeological evidence.

### **Oral Interviews**

Oral interviews were conducted by Shafer on December 15. The informants were Mr. Harp and Mr. Ken Woller, a direct descendant of the Wollers who occupied the property. Information provided by these two informants was very important and both supported and amplified the archaeological observations.

Mr. Harp provided his recollections regarding the Woller home. All wooden structures were built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably about 1930. He was unable to say when the stone structure was constructed. Mr. Harp also took Shafer on a tour of the property, pointing out two natural features that were probably sink holes. He had no recollection of finding "arrowheads." Mr. Harp was acquainted with Mr. Ken Woller, a direct descendant of the Woller farm occupants, and also provided phone numbers where he could be reached.

A phone conversation with Mr. Woller later in the day confirmed Mr. Harp's observations but also added some details. For example, he identified the single-room stone structure as a "wash house or smoke house." He also said the home was constructed between 1920 and 1930.

### **Field Survey**

The archaeological survey identified the following features on the property: the Woller house and outdoor features at 7938 Hausman Road West, a later Woller residence (mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century) off Woller Road that had been wholly removed, and two possible sinkholes. We were unable to confirm the presence of a prehistoric site suspected by Kay Hindes when she first inspected the property. While no prehistoric archaeological sites exist on the property, there were numerous shattered chert cobbles in one of the fields (fractured by a tractor-drawn shredder). More complete descriptions of the historic features are provided below.

## **Woller Home**

The Woller home consisted of a pier and beam frame house that was constructed sometime between 1920 and 1930 according to Mr. Ken Woller. The residents were Mr. and Mrs. Frank N. Woller (Mr. Woller died in 1982). No plans of the house are available. The house had fallen into disrepair and the dilapidated structure was recently raised as part of the current landscaping. The surface at and around where the house existed has been scraped with a toothed blade down to bedrock in places (Fig. 4). We observed fragments of the frame home, round nails, asbestos siding, linoleum fragments, windowpane shards, and a few sherds of white stoneware. Nothing in the debris indicated construction prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Two shovel tests were dug at the location of the Woller residence. Both confirmed visual indication of a very shallow soil mantle and no evidence of earlier construction. The results of the two tests were sufficient to confirm the surface observation that the soil mantle was shallow and buried indications of an earlier structure were unlikely to occur. The results of the two tests are as follows:

Shovel Test #1. Location: E534599/N271037 (26.7 m accuracy). This test was approximate 30 by 30 cm located at the site of the original homestead. It was terminated at a depth of 35 cm where exfoliated limestone bedrock was encountered. Dark brown clay occurred in the upper 20 cm fading to brown clay below that level. No artifacts or buried deposits were encountered.

Shovel Test #2. Location: E534601/N271041 (26 m accuracy). This test was very similar to #1 in all respects, and was dug southwest of #1 in the proximity of the homestead. Exfoliated bedrock nodules mixed with clay was encountered at approximately 30 cm.

While the GPS determinations indicate the pits were close, they were actually about 20 meters apart.

## **Stone Wash House (Figs. 5-8)**

The only standing structure left on the property is the one room stone wash house or smoke house. The structure walls are securely constructed and remain standing (Figs. 5 and 6). The shingled roof had collapsed and is in ruins on the floor. GPS coordinates for the house are: E0534698/N3271104.

The structure measures approximately 12 feet long and 10 feet wide. The peak of the roof is 10.5 feet high. A door is on the north end and each side and back has a window. The door measures 6 feet 7 inches high and 3 feet wide. The windows are consistently ca. 27 inches wide and 30 inches tall. Door and windows have metal bars as lintels (Fig. 8). Stones used in the construction are locally available and were set in a concrete

mortar. No cut stones were observed in the construction that might otherwise suggest a 19<sup>th</sup> century construction.

### **Barn**

Traces of a wooden structure recognized in construction debris left from razing were identified by informants as those of a barn. The barn was some 50 meters west of where the main house stood. GPS coordinates for the barn are: E0534566/N3271055

### **Chicken House**

Informants identified another site of a razed wooden structure as that of a chicken house. This structure was about 75 meters south of the main house. No location information is available.

### **Water Tower and Well**

Four cedar posts are all that remain of a stand for a water tower near the well (Fig. 9). The tank had been removed some time in the past. GPS coordinates for the water stand are: E0534570/N3271042.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Archaeological survey, shovel tests, and oral interviews were conducted to determine if significant historic and prehistoric sites occur on the Woller tract at the intersection of Hausman and Woller Roads. The results of our investigations indicated that the Woller home and other buildings on the property date no earlier than the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sometime between 1920 and 1930. The small single-room stone structure also dates to the same time as the Woller home (1920-1930) and may have served as either a wash house or smoke house according to a direct descendant of the Woller family. The foundation and associated debris at the locale off Woller Road is clearly later in age. A thorough surface inspection of the property failed to reveal any prehistoric archaeological evidence.

None of the extant or razed structures on the Woller property date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century based on our investigations and information derived from oral interviews. Because of the historic relevance of the single room structure, however, our recommendations are to preserve the structure in place if feasible. At this time, it does not appear to be eligible for nomination as a State Archeological Landmark or for the National Register of Historic Places.

## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Bo Harp and Mr. Ken Woller for providing critical oral history information pertaining to the approximate construction date of the Woller homestead and other observations on the property. Mr. Heath Wenrich of RVK and Ms. Kay Hindes, City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office, provided much help, for which we are grateful.

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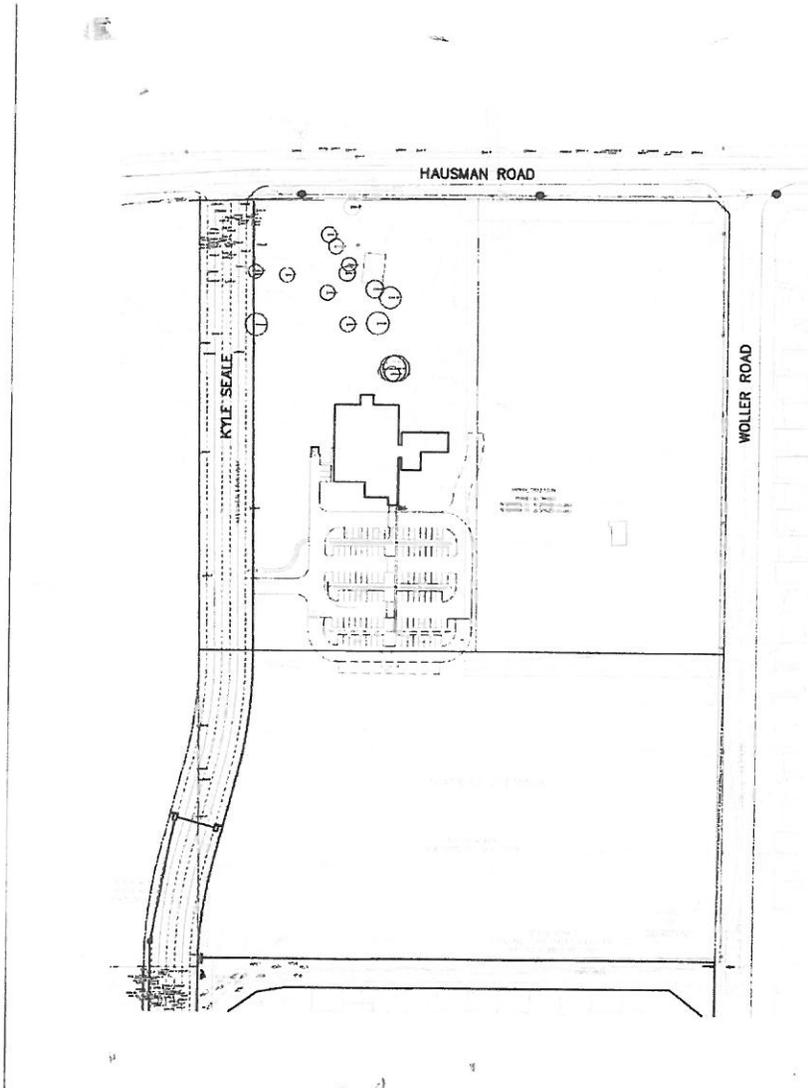
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# FIGURES



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Figure 1. Site plan (provided by Rehler Vaughn & Koone, Inc., San Antonio, Texas).



**Figure 2. Aerial view of the survey area location at Hausman Road at Woller Road, San Antonio, Texas (image from Google Earth).**



**Figure 3. Topographic map showing location of the Woller Tract project survey area (map coordinates: Longitude -98.64073, Latitude 2957007).**



**Figure 4. Location of Woller farm house; Woller wash house is in the grove of live oak trees in the background.**



**Figure 5. Front (north) side of the Woller wash house**



**Figure 6. West side of Woller wash house.**

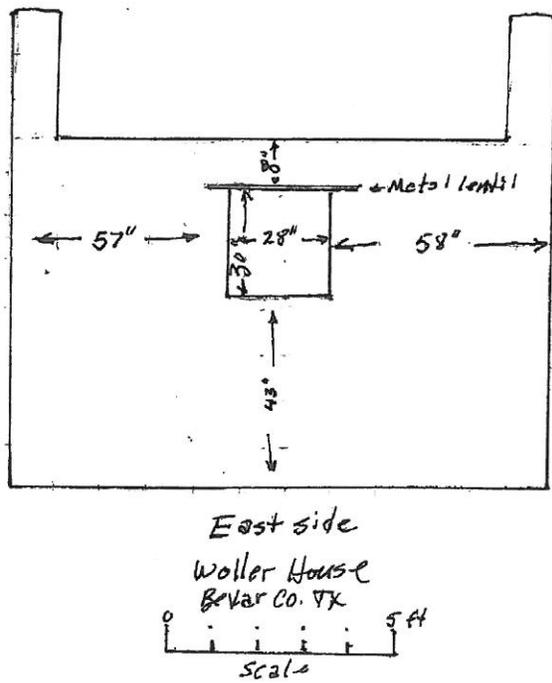
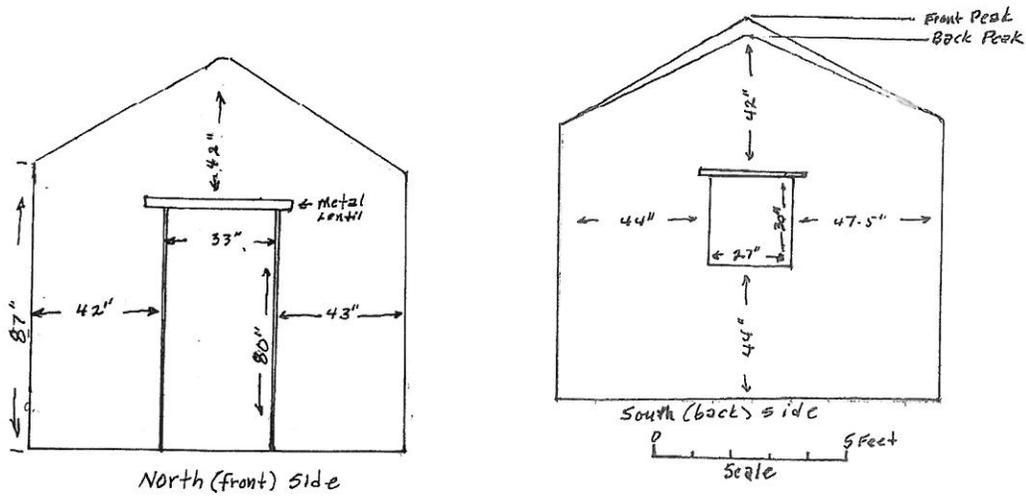


Figure 7. Enhanced field drawings of Woller wash house showing details and dimensions. Top left: front of house (north); top right: back of house (south); bottom: east side of house.



**Figure 8. Metal bar lintel above door.**



**Figure 9. Remnants of water tower stand.**