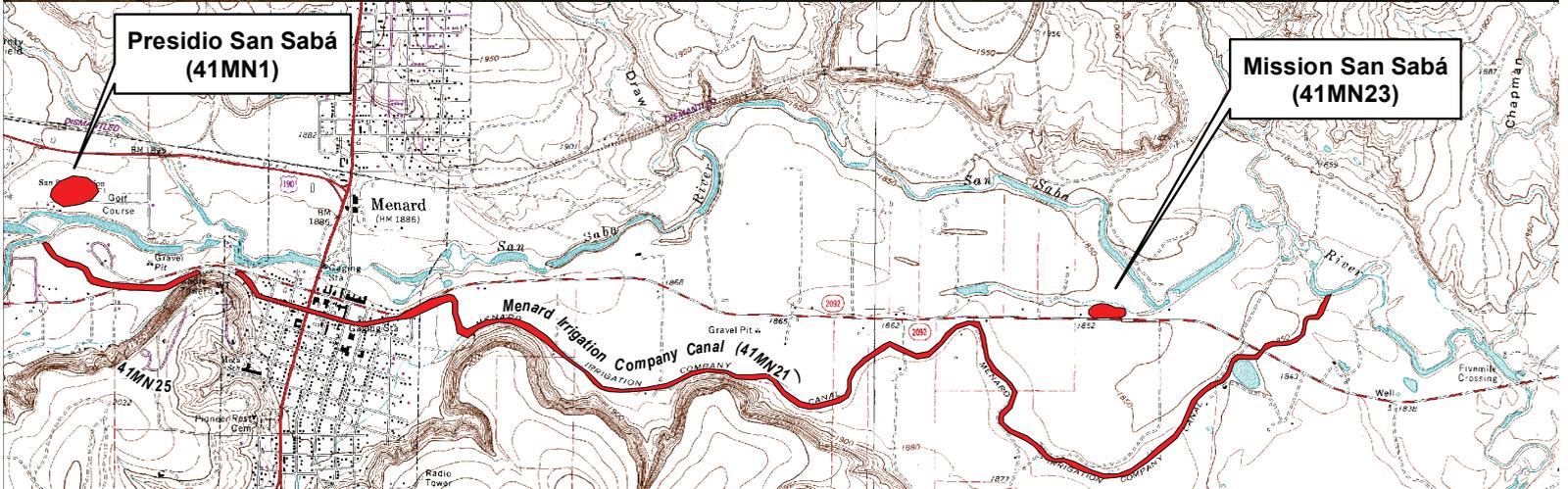


**TxDOT Roadside Chat** | Archeology Report 2018

Presented at the  
89th Annual Meeting  
of the Texas  
Archeological Society (TAS)



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Sec. 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The Federal Highway Administration delegated most of their responsibility for Section 106 compliance to TxDOT.

TxDOT’s Cultural Resources Management (CRM) Section conducts these reviews on behalf of 25 TxDOT Districts around the state. The CRM section is comprised of the Archeological Studies and Historical Studies branches.

TxDOT works under a programmatic agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Texas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the implementation of transportation undertakings. This agreement allows TxDOT to efficiently meet the Sec. 106 requirements for many simple projects that have a low risk for impacts to cultural resources.

# Visit TxDOT's Sessions at the 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the TAS

## FRIDAY

### **Prehistoric Flintknapping Tools of Texas: Examining Indirect Percussion Technique through Experimental Archeology**

Christopher Ringstaff  
3 p.m., Ballroom A

## SATURDAY

### **Landform Considerations for Caddo Villages in Northeast Texas**

Waldo Troell  
1:30 – 1:50 p.m., Renaissance

### **Archeobotany and Tribal Plant Use, Featuring Representatives from Caddo Nation and Mescalero Apache Tribe**

Kevin Hanselka, Ph.D.  
3:00 – 4:50 p.m., Renaissance

### **Searching for Ancient Long-Distance Trade Trails in Southeast Texas**

Jason Barrett, Ph.D.  
3:30 p.m., Ballroom B



## POSTER SESSION

Saturday 10 a.m. – Noon

### **Evaluation of a Possible Activity Area at 41MS99**

Scott Pletka, Ph.D.

### **Dating Gary: Results from 41TR203 in the Trinity River Basin, North Central Texas**

Eric Oksanen



## What We Do

For 47 years, TxDOT has uncovered some of the most significant archeological sites as it plans for the construction of roads and bridges around the state. Guided by the National Historic Preservation Act, TxDOT looks at what might be impacted by projects. We work with partners in preservation and with local communities to balance the need for progress with the goal of preserving archeological sites.

The department continues do more permitted archeology than any other entity in Texas. In 2018, TxDOT will excavate three different sites in order to preserve information that would otherwise be lost due to road construction.

**TxDOT unearthed 41,956 cubic feet at 21 archeological sites over the past 15 years.**

### Field Notes from 2018

Background studies: 243  
Surveys: 62  
Acres surveyed: 4899  
Sites Identified: 52

### Excavation Projects in 2018

Mason County  
Ellis County  
Nueces County

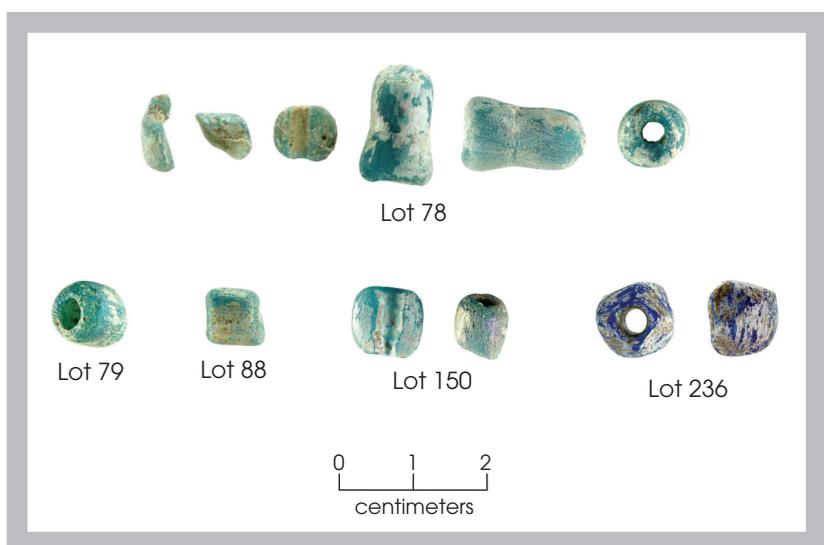


## Mission San Saba

### Taking to the Field

In 2007, TxDOT sent out a team of archeologists to survey a portion of Farm-to-Market road 2092. TxDOT planned to expand the roadway, which passed alongside the location where the ruins of Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba had been discovered. Archeologists took this opportunity to further investigate the site, ensuring that important information wasn't lost when the road was widened.

The Texas Department of Transportation's Environmental Affairs Division, Archeological Studies Program, in efforts with Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (PAI), conducted archeological and historical investigations on a portion of Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba in Menard County, Texas. This project satisfied the provisions of Section 106 under the National Historic Preservation Act as archeologists explored an area that would be negatively affected by a TxDOT road-improvement project. The following highlights major findings.



### San Saba at a Glance

Mission San Saba was built in the frontier of Central Texas as a plan by the Spanish empire to convert the Lipan Apache to Catholicism, thereby reducing their raids on San Antonio. By doing so, the Spanish would gain a labor force in the Americas, necessary for maintaining the strength of the Spanish Empire in the American colonies. San Saba was Spain's first privately funded mission. Rather than the crown or church, a wealthy miner, Don Pedro Terreros, paid for its construction.

The San Saba Presidio was built to lend aid to the mission, to further protect San Antonio against Apache raiding, and to serve as an outpost for mineral exploration. However, the Presidio was located 4 miles away from the mission, making it difficult for soldiers, in a time of emergency, to reach the mission quickly.

Mission San Saba, built in 1757, provides a rare glimpse into Texas history. It was destroyed less than a year after its creation, yet its destruction was one of the defining moments in Texas' rich history. The mission had nearly been lost to history as it was built over, forgotten, or confused with the famous San Saba Presidio just four miles away. Once only a symbol of a bygone Empire, today the mission's ruins are a tale of New World conflict between European powers and indigenous nations, galvanized to defend their homeland.

For many long years, the Spanish had developed a shaky relationship with the Lipan Apache. The Spanish found that when they made a treaty with the Apache, it only applied to the group making the treaty and not to the Apache Nation as a whole. This was common practice among native groups across North America, and a common problem that all European powers faced. For the Spanish, it complicated telling allies apart from enemies.

At the time San Saba was built, there was constant tension throughout the region between Comanche and Apache groups. When the mission's priests allowed a few Apache to seek shelter within its walls, the Comanche viewed the Spanish as aiding their Apache enemies. Armed with French weapons and military uniforms, the Comanche planned and executed a large-scale attack on the Spanish Mission, shocking the entire Spanish Colonial Empire.

Mission San Saba burned to the ground, and a quarter of its population perished. The fall of Mission San Saba was a result of Spain's failure to understand and respect indigenous culture and the complex political relationships that existed among the native peoples of Texas. This destruction effectively halted the Spanish push to settle in the northern frontier.

**The Destruction of Mission San Saba**

This 1760s painting depicts what happened on that frightful day when Mission San Saba fell. The painting was likely commissioned by Don Pedro Terreros to use as both a commemorative and propaganda tool.

Destruction shows Comanche and other groups attacking the mission with modern weapons. Similarly, the center of this image highlights the attackers looting the church and stealing religious objects.

In the lower right corner, the Comanche chief is portrayed wearing a red overcoat, symbolizing the French influence and involvement in this attack.

In analyzing the painting, archaeologists uncovered much about the Spanish view of "New Spain" at the time. They unraveled political propaganda and religious messages. The symbolically rich painting revealed some of the lost details of history through its representation of the battle in a way that few mediums can match.



Lipan Apache Warrior



## The First Shovelful – Searching for San Saba

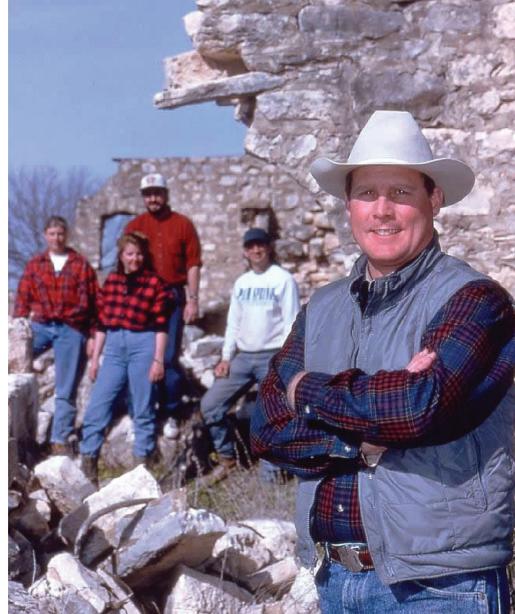
Just as the mission location was a mystery for almost 100 years, myths about the site remain even after its rediscovery. Every clue opened a new window to the forgotten past, until archaeologists Kay Hinde and Grant Hall from Texas Tech University arrived on Otis Lyckman's farm in 1993. Within minutes they had found some fragments of bone and Spanish pottery.

Excitement coursed in their blood. They had searched for so long. The archeologists had dived through ancient archive after archive, talked to numerous historians, and consulted every article. Still, the lost Mission San Saba continued to elude them. But their fortunes changed when they happened across an obscure pamphlet published in 1905. The pamphlet led them to the property of Otis Lyckman, who had just recently plowed his alfalfa fields. Glistening in the freshly churned dirt beneath the afternoon sun was the evidence...they had found it! Mission San Saba.

Between 1993 and 1994, with a summer excavation in 1997, the archaeologists from Texas Tech University did everything they could to revive the forgotten history of Mission San Saba. Unfortunately, the project was placed on a decade-long hiatus, preventing them from completing their work on the lost mission.

## Digging Deeper

Collaborative efforts between TxDOT, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Texas Tech University, with the support of the adjacent landowners, examined the southern portion of the mission site. Multidisciplinary scholars worked together to re-discover the lost mission from the first excavation in 1993.



Dr. Grant Hall with graduate students during the first excavation at San Saba.

## Texas' Most Unique Mission

As archeologists and historians continued to uncover the story of San Saba, it became clear that this mission was unique in three ways.

1. The mission was privately funded. In addition, it was also geographically and politically isolated.
2. San Saba is the only Spanish mission in Texas' history to be completely destroyed.
3. Scholars discovered two uncommon sources of information while researching the mission. The first was the painting, *Destruction of San Saba*, and the second a supply list that was carried from Mexico to the mission.



## Discoveries

A series of shovel tests and hand excavations yielded roughly 2,442 artifacts. Though many of those artifacts were not related to San Saba, more than 100 Spanish Colonial artifacts pointed directly to the history of Mission San Saba. Among the artifacts uncovered, some included olive jar shards, blue silver dish remnants, and a few butchered animal bones.

A nearly complete Perdiz arrow point was found near a cluster of animal bones, including rabbit-sized mammals and fish. The point was expertly crafted from gray/pink chert with fine pressure flaking along the edges.

As it was found amongst a cluster of animal bones, the weapon may have been used to hunt small game animals for food. However, archeologists also believe it's likely the arrow point was used by the Apache or another northern tribe during the mission attack.



Lot 152  
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centimeters



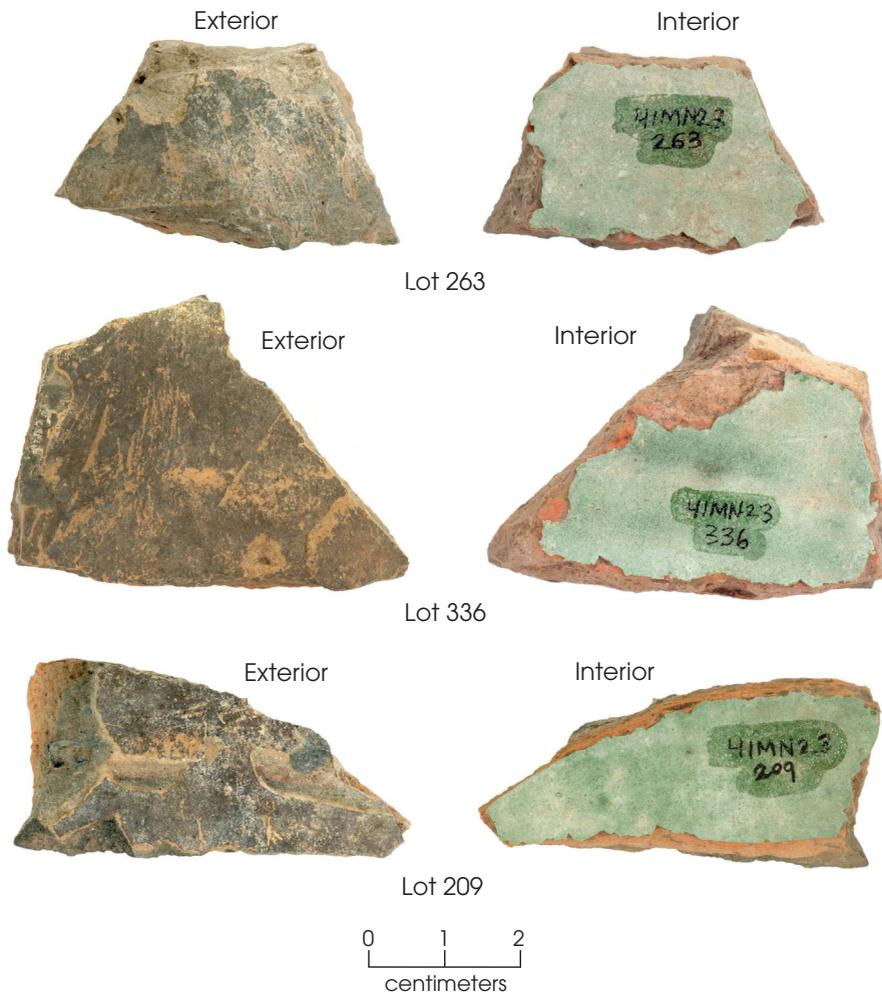




### Soil Samples

Archeologists discovered a thin, intermittent ash layer that represents evidence of the 1758 burning of Mission San Saba. Clearly, soils had mixed over time due to insect burrowing and tree root growth, but the ash points directly to the conflict that destroyed the mission.

Near the layer of ash, archeologists found two wrought-iron nails, one wrought-iron spike, three olive jar sherds, and a Native-made ceramic sherd, as pictured below.





Lot 3



Lot 154



Lot 2



Lot 202



Lot 29



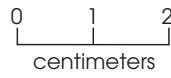
Lot 4



Lot 216

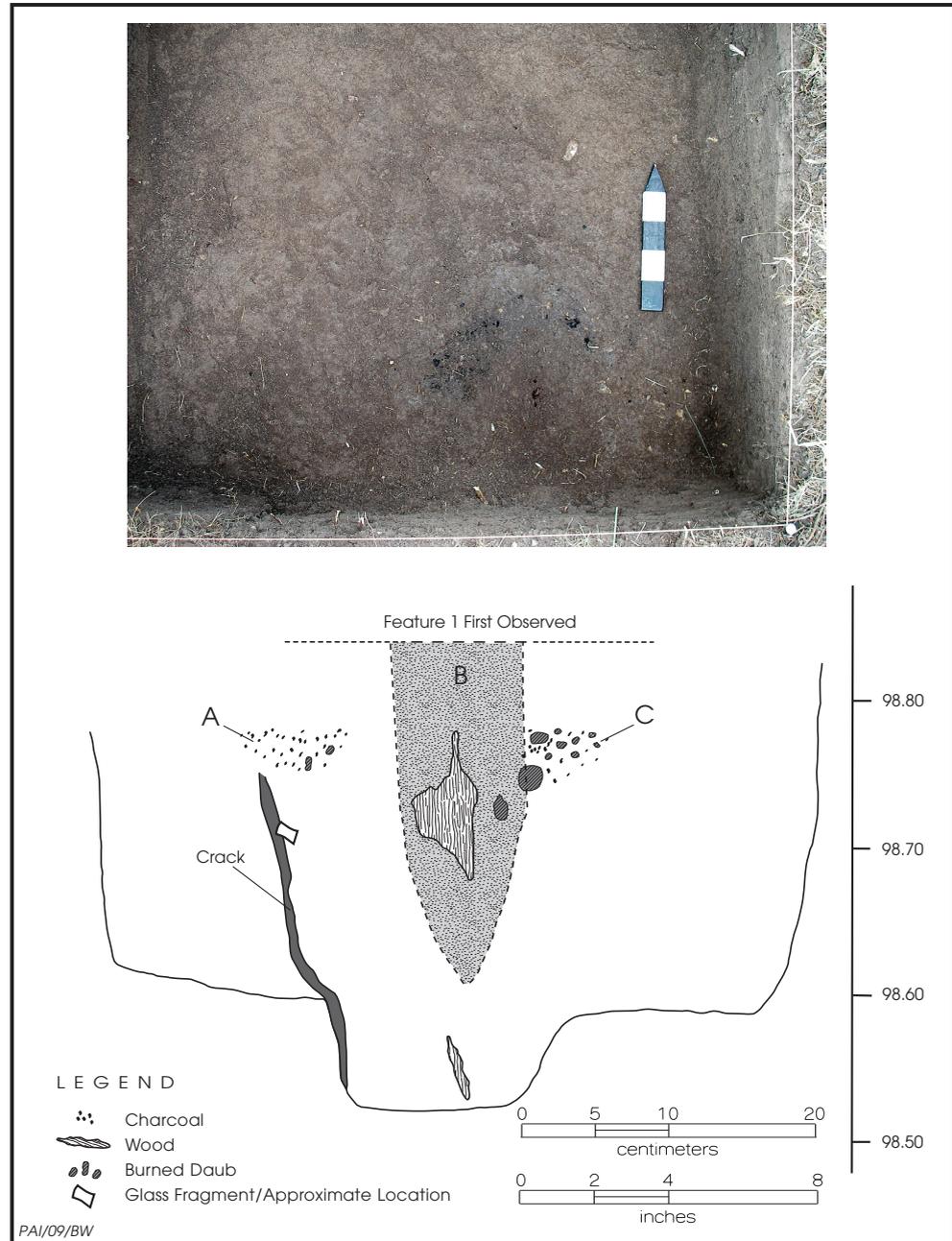


Lot 61



## Post Holes

This image represents evidence of the remains of one of many wall posts discovered during the excavation. It is likely that the upper portion of the post burned, leaving a dusting of charcoal just below the surface. The remaining post below the surface decomposed, leaving a dark stain on the ground and post mold.



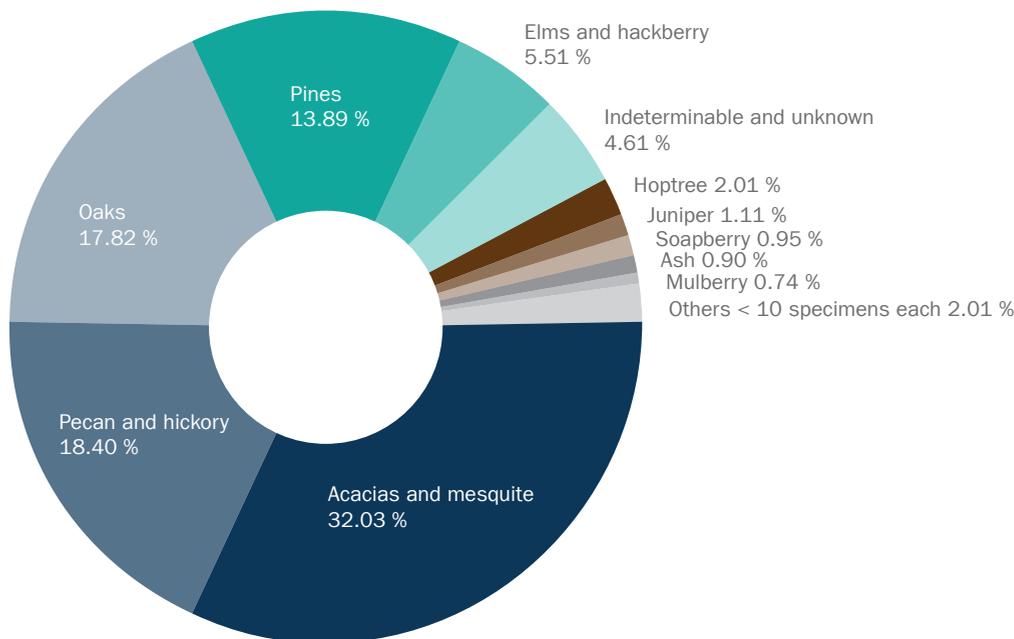
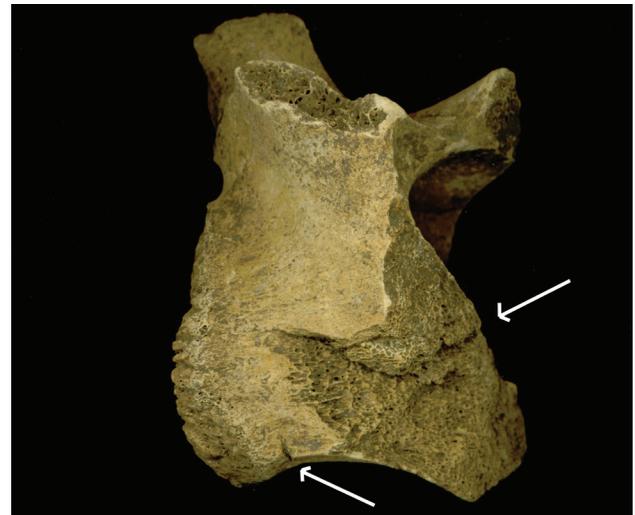
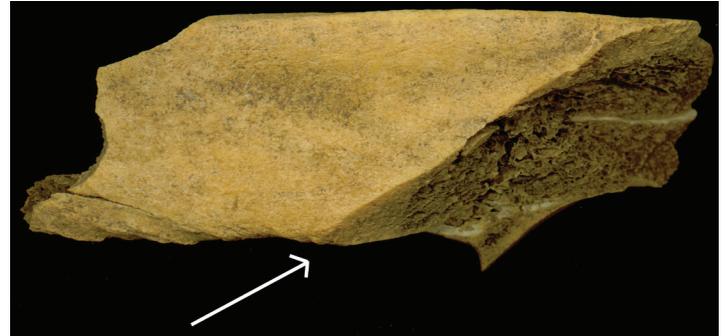
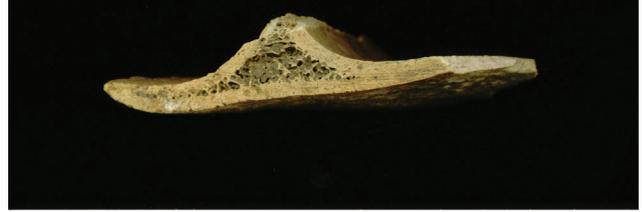
### Botanical and Faunal Remains

Over 774 specimens of recovered vertebrate were analyzed by TxDOT and PAI during the excavation process. Samples were comparatively examined at the Zooarcheological Research Collection at the University of North Texas.

Many animal bones recovered from Spanish Colonial deposits exhibited butchering marks left by metal handsaws, knives, and cleavers. The bones of cattle, a European animal species introduced to the area by the Spanish, were among the butchered remains. Also present were many recent animal remains, likely from road kill. Archeologists noted, however, that the recent bones were easy to distinguish from the older bones associated with the mission.

Large samples of wood were found near the excavated area at San Saba. Acacia and mesquite, pecan, hickory, and oak were likely native to the area and used for construction. The pine specimens were probably imported from Mexico. Archeologists also found evidence of barley seeds, beans, and hazelnut, though only corn and beans were listed on the inventory of supplies.

Interestingly, Texas Tech University identified a plant material that appeared to be ojos de benado, or deer eyes. Used as ornamental charms, these “deer eyes” were large brown and black seeds that mimicked actual deer eyes.



## San Saba's Lasting Legacy

Thanks to the archeological work of PAI, TxDOT, Texas Tech University, and other consulting parties, the story of the Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba continues to unfold. Many mysteries surrounding the mission still remain. Where was the mission cemetery located? Will evidence of the northern and eastern walls of the stockade be found?

Today, visitors can get a sense of what the area looked like through the use of native plants and interpretive materials. The Presidio San Saba was reconstructed by the Works Progress Administration in 1936, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The site of Mission San Saba is identified by the Texas Centennial Marker along the highway.

