

Accounts of Human Remains Encountered within Alamo Complex

Year	Source	Description
1846	Everett (1906)	"parts of skeletons"
1848	Corner 1890	Cleaning rubble out of church found several skeletons, some in buckskin. Referred to Quartermaster Report, Babbit
1866/1908	References are problematic, although there is a 1906 article (detailing construction of Gibbs Building, but not well), a 1908 El Paso Herald article (references remains), and Bruce Moses used to reference find as from 1866	Excavation for artesian well resulted in encountering human remains.
1878	Corner 1890	During clearing of Church "In a later year, March 29,1878, other skeletons buried at an earlier and apparently more peaceful period, were unearthed in the Church, and a beautifully carved baptismal font was brought to light November, 15, 1878."
1887	Dallas Morning News, December 10, pg. 3	"While excavating the site for the Federal building to be located here today the workman unearthed quantities of human bones. The site is in the heart of the old Alamo battle ground, just across the street from the existing building, and it is supposed the remains being unearthed are those of Mexican soldiers who were killed in the renowned contest, and the remains of the Texans were burned."

1920	San Antonio Evening News Feb. 14	"Half-cremated bodies" found below garage floor, "200 feet south of the south wall of the Alamo.
1934	San Antonio Express, July 17	20 fragments of human bones that looked to have been burned
1935	Various Newspaper	A number of skeletons found during tree planing, then subsequent Post Office/Federal Building construction
1935	San Antonio Express, Sept 1.	Charles A. Herff
1936	DRT 46th Annual Meeting 1937	Four burials found within the Church when preparing for flagstone floor
1979	Fox 1980	A lone skull encountered within the fill of a defensive trench
1979	Anderson et al. 2017	Anderson report indicates that remains were found during Ivey excavation
1989	Photo Negatives	Steve Beck uncovers skull in Monks Burial Room wall
1995	Meissner 1995	South Transept, excavations associated with methods to prevent rising damp resulted in the exposure of a human mandible and leg bone

2016	Anderson et al. 2017	Deciduous (baby) tooth found during west wall excavations
2015*	Nichols 2015	Worn Human Molar found at San Francesco di Paolo

context	Burial vs isolated find	Affiliation
Clearing out rubble from Church	Burials (abandoned remains)	Suggests battle participants, but not determined
Found within rubble (possible rampart?) Everett refers to this twice in his notes. Corner attributes Major Babbit	Burials (abandoned remains)	Suggests battle participants, but not determined
In vicinity of Gibbs Building	Burials (assumption, but article offers few details)	Suggests battle participants, but not determined
Attributes to mission period?	Burials	Not determined
	Burials	Not determined

Shallow excavations for a cement floor, a grave containing human bones was found. Four graves, three were filled up, some bones were laid aside, more of them were thrown out with the earth and hauled away	Burials	Not determined
encountered during planting shrubs in front of chapel, south side of wall of the convent. Dug three or four feet down. Some appeared to have charred exterior. Bones scattered through the earth that had been excavated.	Does not appear to be a single grave	Not determined
First case encountered human bones when removing root ball of tree in front of Post Office. Four to five feet down. Agreement made with the church. Many speculations as to who they belonged to and how they became there.	Burials	Glassman identified some as Native American
Recollection of remains encountered during excavation of Post Office Basement "over 50 years ago"	"headless bodies" Burials	Not determined
Located when workers probed the ground with a wooden peg. Encountered approximately 3 feet from surface	Burials	European
Fox claimed the skull may have been from a participant of 1836 Battle	isolated element	Not determined
no information	no information	no information
During repointing and rehabilitation of the MBR, loose stones were removed revealing a skull.	isolated element	Not determined
Soft soils collapsed to reveal human remains. Left in place.	Burial	Not determined

Found with faunal bones, construction materials, glass, ceramics in Level 3 (35-45 cmbd)	isolated element	Not determined
Found in unit that contained late 19th and early 20th century material. Not on site of 41BX6	isolated element	Not determined

in situ/removed

Rubble removed, no mention of what happened to skeletons

Rubble removed, no mention of what happened to skeletons

Unconfirmed, likely removed due to construction of artesian well.

Rubble removed, no mention of what happened to skeletons

unknown

some capped by garage floor, others hauled away
unknown
removed and reburied at San Fernando
unknown
placed in vault in church
Curated at UTSA-CAR
no information
in situ
in situ, reburied with AIT-SCM ceremony

reburied with Tap Pilam
ceremony.

removed

Additional Information

"The church seemed to have been the last stronghold, and amidst the debris of its stone roof, when subsequently cleared away, were found parts of skeletons, copper balls, and other articles, mementos of the seige; as were the numerous shot holes in the front." pp. 204-205 "We has the debris cleared away from the interior, in which process several skeletons and other relics of the seige were found." (pg 215). Edward Everett was part of the US Military occupation. He kept a diary while performing his duties, and included information about the Alamo.

Corner appears to have reference a little off when compared to Everett. No mention of the final disposition of the remains. At time of Quartermaster occupation, no burials were occuring on site. Corner authored a guide and history book about important sites to see around San Antonio. Included the missions, the Alamo, railroads, acequias, etc.

Basement for the hotel has likely removed any additional remains in footprint. Upon further research, having problems locating the references for artesian well. Newspaper from 1906 talks about Gibbs Building construction, but no human remains. A newspaper article in 1908 references human remains, and attributes them to those involved in the Battle of the Alamo. Offers no information about associated materials, what exactly was found, or how many possible burials. Bruce Moses of UTSA-CAR had often referenced this find as from 1866. Maverick would have owned propoerty in 1866, and no record of well at that point. Moses' account has been often referenced (I am guilty of this, too). The article from 1908 is found in the El Paso Herald

In January 1878, Grenet began leasing the Alamo for store warehouse, and put tin roof on. If clearing, it would have been done by Grenet. No other reference found. Corner did not reference source. Cannot confirm this find, although other researchers often reference Corner.

Additional remains encountered in 1935.

Half-cremated and shallow according to article. Unusual. Article stated there were four burials, but Previous adobe structures in the area used as a saloon. Cremation was not an acceptable practice for burial by Catholic Church during colonial time. Pope Boniface the VIII (1294-1303 AD) excommunicated those who participated in cremation. After garage is demolished, there is no mention of the burials again. City Archaeologist had often placed in Alamo Hall/DRT Library in vicinity, although article states "200 feet south of south wall" which places in current Crockett Street.

"There has been no question that they are bones of human being by any who have seen them, although no authority has examined them." A few were thought to be finger bones. Cremation is not an acceptable burial practice for Catholic Church at that time. Hard (1994) makes claim that these belong to mission cemetery, but bones were never expertly examined and doesn't take into account the charring.

Men, women, and children. Number varied from 26 to 30 depending on article. Not sure MNI used at this time. Glassman inspection in 1994 confirmed that both sexes and various ages were present. Made determination some (at least 7) were Native American. Hard (1994:49) raises questions of a mass burial due to disease, and referenced De Croix account of Lipan Apache coming to site with infectious diseases in 1780 ("Confidential from De Croix, Nov. 20, 1780). Hard makes no final determination. Dr. Hard was director UTSA-CAR in 1994 and produced a report for the master plan that was being developed then.

Article interviewing Herff in 1935 speaks of the remains found 50 years prior. Early articles do not mention "headless"

DRT reported that dentists and physicians examined the remains and determined them to be "Caucasian". Three adults and one child.

No document published has reported human remains from this excavation. Report is in production by Jake Ivey. Construction of Paseo has reduced any chance of encountering additional remains in this area.

Some DRT notes and an newspaper article speak of find. Was brought back to light during scanning of old photo negatives. Skull was placed back in void and stone set back in place.

Burial records of Valero place a Canary Islander buried in the south transept area. No work was taken to confirm affiliation of the remains. At least one burial, but did not expose more to determine if addition were present.

"Given the mixed deposits in Level 3, excavators began Level 4 (45-55 cmbd) for the entirety of the unit." (Anderson et al 2017: 82), which means the soils had materials that were mixed in time period, and this did not stop the excavations. This is location of Losoya House. Why was determination made to allow Tap Pilam to have ceremony and not Losoya descendants. Were Losoya descendants notified?

The site is said to be the "probable" location of the the first site of Mission Valero. The severity of previous impacts to site (late 19th century Italian Community, Church construction, park construction, highway construction) make this assumption problematic. KMN personal opinion: COSA-OHP insisted that the report state it was probable location. My original draft argued that there was not enough information to come to that conclusion.