

The logo features a red decorative archway above the text "The ALAMO" in a serif font, with "Archaeology FAQs" in a sans-serif font below it.

The ALAMO Archaeology FAQs

What is archaeology?

Archaeology is the scientific study of the human past using material remains.

What is the goal of archaeology?

Different projects have different goals, but the ultimate objective is to learn about the past. Archaeology helps us understand human behavior, past and present.

What is the current archaeology project at the Alamo?

Exploratory excavations will occur with the goal of identifying any remnants of the foundation of the Mission San Antonio de Valero south wall and gate. At the Mission Gate, a defensive feature called a lunette trench was constructed in 1835, however this will not be the focus of the current archaeology project.

The archaeology investigations are preceding the construction of an interpretative exhibit of the Mission Gate and Lunette. This exhibit will be completed in May of 2023.

What happens if we find the foundation of the south wall and/or gate?

We are only trying to identify the foundations. Any structural remains will be preserved in place. Preservation of any foundations will be in coordination with ATI archaeology, City archaeologists and the Texas Historical Commission.

What happened to the Mission Gate and Lunette?

In 1871 the City of San Antonio removed the structure that remained at the location of the Mission Gate and south wall. The structure that had remained was in disrepair and the City wanted to remove it and improve the conditions of the plaza.

How do archaeologists choose where to dig?

Archaeologists conduct extensive research before deciding where to place excavations. Based on their research, archaeologists carefully select an area that will most likely be able to provide answers to their research questions. In most investigations, an archaeologist will only select a sample size of the area for excavations. A sampling strategy allows for future researchers, who may have new and advanced methodologies, to return to the site and conduct new investigations. Archaeologists don't excavate without having a solid research design that has been approved by local and/or state oversight groups.

What happens to excavation units after the archaeologists are done?

At the completion of excavations, the units will be filled with soils. Typically, the same soils that were removed are put back in the unit, however sometimes other "fill" soils are included. Archaeologists don't leave the units open because this could cause harmful affects on any



exposed features. Any features that are exposed to the environment will rapidly deteriorate- this is why archaeologists preserve features by covering them.

How deep do the archaeologists dig?

This will vary depending on each project, but for the Mission Gate project archaeologists will not go any deeper than 150 cm (59 inches).

What happens to all the artifacts?

Artifacts will be cleaned, catalogued, and stored at the Alamo archaeology laboratory until the end of the project. After the completion of any archaeological project artifacts are permanently curated at a certified curatorial repository. Archaeologists do not keep artifacts.

What are the steps of an archaeology project?

Research of the environment, history, and previous investigations. Formulation of a research design/hypothesis. Fieldwork and lab work. Data Analysis. Interpretation of Data. Report Writing. Dissemination of work.

When can the public learn of the results of the project?

Throughout the project ATI will share archaeology updates on official Alamo social media and <https://www.thealamo.org/support/preservation/updates>.

A formal report will be published at the completion of the project. Analysis and report writing are the most time-consuming aspect of any archaeological project. It is difficult to place an actual time on when results will be published, a good estimate is that it will take 3 times as long to complete the report.

Is there formal oversight for archaeology projects?

Yes! In Texas we have the Texas Historical Commission (THC) who provides oversight for all archaeology happening in the state. In San Antonio, the Office of Historic Preservation oversees projects with the city. Archaeology investigations require a permit which is approved by various committees.

Archaeologists also follow set standards and guidelines, as well as formal Principles of Archaeological Ethics.

For more information about archaeology:

Society for American Archaeology: <https://www.saa.org/>

Council for Texas Archaeologists: <https://counciloftexasarcheologists.org/>

Register of Professional Archaeologists: <https://rpanet.org/>

Texas Historical Commission: <https://www.thc.texas.gov/>



For more information about archaeology and conservation at the Alamo:

<https://www.thealamo.org/support/preservation/updates>