



From Archives: El Cementerio del Barrio del los Lipanes at Presidio, Texas.

WaWo Cartoon 7-2015



Lipan Cemetery in Danger of Disappearing

by Maxie Elizabeth Ruan, August 19, 2015

El Cementerio Del Barrio de los Lipanes, a historic Lipan burial site that was designated a State Archeological Landmark in 2014, still stands unprotected and at risk of being overrun by encroaching urbanization.

According to Councilman Oscar Rodriguez, the cemetery is located in an area that had been occupied by civilizations for thousands of years. The Lipan Apache were said to have occupied the area starting from the 1500-1600's A.D., using it as a campground while visiting La Junta.

The cemetery lies on a public lot near the intersection of Boston and Market streets in Presidio, Texas. It is surrounded by private residences, and due to its close proximity to the city, the graves are being repeatedly disturbed by foot traffic and construction.

In an archeological survey conducted by David Keller from the Center of Big Bend Studies, it was determined that the cemetery contains at least 45 graves, with possibly 12 more. Only two of these graves were marked with the names Felipe Aguilar and Manuel Aguilar.

The survey also described how the cemetery is in a state of total neglect, with glass and broken tree debris littering the whole area. Councilman Pedro Salinas Flores recently visited the site and confirmed its state of disarray.

"It's not being maintained," Flores said. "The most disturbing part is seeing where people are travelling through a back alley where graves were found."

In his survey, Keller suggested a fence and sign be erected around the lot to further protect the graves.

In November of 2014, the Texas Historical Society designated El Cementerio Del Barrio de los Lipanes as a State Archeological Landmark, meaning the site would be protected from further construction and abuse.

Currently, no further action has been taken to protect the cemetery.

"I would hope it would be fenced and respected like any other cemetery," Rodriguez said.

El Cementerio Del Barrio de los Lipanes is the final resting place of tribal elders and is a testament to the Lipan presence in the Big Bend region of Texas, a key to the tribe's past.

Flores believes it would be beneficial to involve the Lipan community in creating a safe and peaceful environment for the cemetery. He hopes the tribe as a whole would be willing to work together to preserve this part of tribal history.

"We want to be a bridge, not a wall," Flores said. "We want to share this with our younger generation."