Cultural Affinity Assessment of Human Remains Dating after 1775,
Joint Courts Complex Archaeological Data Recovery Project, Tucson, Arizona

Statistical Research, Inc., October 20, 2008

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Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI), recently completed excavations and a preliminary analysis of grave features associated with the Joint Courts Complex Archaeological Data Recovery Project. The focus of this project was the former cemetery located at the northeast corner of Stone Avenue and Alameda Street in downtown Tucson, Arizona (Figure 1).

SRI identified two distinct areas within the cemetery—a military section and a civilian section. The military section was identified in the southwest corner of the project area (see Figure 1). This section of the cemetery was used by the U.S. Army from 1862 until 1881, when a new military cemetery was established outside of Tucson at Fort Lowell. In 1884, the U.S. Army had the remains of 74 individuals from the military section exhumed and reinterred at the post cemetery at Fort Lowell. A separate summary for the military section of the cemetery will be available by November 30, 2008.

This report documents only the civilian section of the cemetery. It is unclear when the first burials took place in this section; although both cemeteries were in use by the early 1860s, the earliest use of the civilian cemetery may have been somewhat earlier. The City of Tucson closed the civilian section of the cemetery on June 1, 1875. In 1882, the city published notices requesting that civilians remove their deceased family members and friends from the cemetery in anticipation of subdividing and selling the cemetery land. Most of the burials in the civilian section of the cemetery were not removed after the cemetery closed. Postcemetery development resulted in various levels of disturbance. Most of the burials excavated by SRI remained completely articulated and intact, but many others had been disturbed to varying degrees as a result of more than 130 years of urban development. The result of such disturbance ranged from partially articulated but intact to fragmentary and scattered skeletal remains.

Under contract with Pima County, SRI began excavations in November 2006 to completely remove the remaining inhumations. Final excavations were completed in August 2008. In compliance with the Agreement on Treatment and Disposition of Burial Discoveries Dating After 1775 (ARS §41-844, Case 06-14), SRI made every effort to assess the cultural affinity of those individuals recovered during cemetery excavations. For each individual, the assessment of cultural affinity relied on three lines of evidence: context (i.e., where a set of remains was discovered and the items found in association with that individual), osteological indicators (i.e., the physical characteristics of the skeleton), and historical evidence (i.e., research into how the cemetery was used, the identities of the people buried there, and the cultural traditions of the communities). It is important to emphasize that the three kinds of evidence—contextual, osteological, and historical—were of equal importance in assessing cultural affinity, and that an accurate assessment was not possible until all three kinds of evidence were fully evaluated. After these lines of evidence were evaluated, a likelihood statement of cultural affinity based on the strength of the assessment (highly likely, multiple affinities, or culturally indeterminate) was prepared.

The spatial distribution of assigned affinities is presented in Figure 1. SRI examined 1,201 individuals for cultural affinity. This number includes the 47 individuals removed during construction of the Tucson Newspapers building in 1953, 1 individual recovered in 2001 by Tierra Right of Way Services during line trenching, and 64 individuals recovered by SRI within the military section. Despite all efforts, SRI could not assess the cultural affinity for every individual. Of the 1,137 individuals removed from the civilian section, 1 is highly likely to be African American, 1 is highly likely to be Apache, 99 are highly likely to be Euroamerican, 230 are highly likely to be Hispanic, 3 are highly likely to be Yaqui, 181 have multiple cultural affinities, and 575 are culturally indeterminate. Very little is known about the original provenience of the individuals recovered in 1953, so these individuals are not represented in Figure 1; however, cultural affinity was assessed. Of the 47 individuals recovered in 1953, 2 are highly likely to be Apache, 8 are highly likely to be Euroamerican, 16 are highly likely to be Hispanic, 1 has multiple cultural affinities, and 20 are cultural indeterminate. The many fragmentary and scattered human remains recovered are all culturally unidentifiable. These results correspond to what is known about nineteenth-century Tucson: that it was a mostly Hispanic community that also included African Americans, Euroamericans
and Native Americans among its members. Certainly, the large number of individuals with multiple affinities reflects the diverse history of Tucson, where many people from many backgrounds exchanged cultural traditions.

Disposition of the burials will be in accordance with state burial statute ARS §41-844(B) and state burial agreement Case 06-40. Consultation with identified claimants will be scheduled. Anyone wishing further information on the disposition of burials may contact John Madsen, the state repatriation coordinator, at the Arizona State Museum at (520) 621-4795 or jmadsen@email.arizona.edu.
Figure 1. Spatial distribution of individuals recovered by SRI in the Joint Courts Complex project area, showing assigned cultural affinity. (Note: The 47 individuals recovered during the 1953 excavation of the TNI basement are not included on this map.)