

Archeology Committee

July 25, 2022



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

AGENDA
ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE
Double Tree Suites by Hilton Hotel
2nd Floor
Houston Room
303 W 15th Street
Austin, TX 78701
July 25th
10 A.M.

(or upon the adjournment of the 9:30 a.m. AAB meeting, whichever occurs later)

This meeting of the Archeology Committee has been properly posted with the Secretary of State's Office according to the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code. The members may discuss and/or take action on any of the items listed in the agenda.

1. **Call to Order** – *Chairman Bruseth*
 - A. Committee Introductions
 - B. Establish a Quorum
 - C. Recognize and/or excuse absences
2. **Approval of Minutes** – *Bruseth*
Archeology Committee Meeting (April 28, 2022)
3. **Division Director's Report** - *Jones*
 - A. Update on Archeology Division Programs and staff
 - B. Upcoming activities/events
4. **Adjournment** – *Bruseth*

NOTICE OF ASSISTANCE AT PUBLIC MEETINGS: Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Esther Brickley at (512) 463-5768 at least four (4) business days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Archeology Committee
Members

4/28/2022

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CALL TO ORDER

Today's date is July 25th, 2022 and the time is
[10:00 A.M.]

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ITEM # 2

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

Alamo Complex
Alamo Hall
300 Alamo Plaza
San Antonio, TX 78205
April 28, 2022
10:00 a.m.

Note: For the full text of action items, please contact the Texas Historical Commission at P.O. Box 12276, Austin TX 78711 or call 512.463-1858

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jim Bruseth opened the Archeology Committee (AC) meeting on April 22, 2022, at 10:00 A.M. Bruseth announced that the members would discuss and act on any of the items listed on the agenda. He welcomed everyone to the Archeology Committee meeting and called the roll.

Members Present

James Bruseth
Earl Broussard
Pete Peterson
Donna Bahorich
Tom Perini

Members Absent

Bruseth announced that all members were present, and that the meeting was opened.

2. Approval of Minutes

Bruseth called for the approval of the AC minutes for February 1, 2022.

Pete Peterson moved.

Broussard seconded.

Bruseth heard no changes, called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Division Report

Bruseth called on Archeology Division (AD) director Brad Jones.

Jones presented the highlights of the last quarter. He started with the Marine Archeology update for Amy Borgens. He shared that Borgens was collaborating with the National Geographic for their

Drain the Oceans program. The episode on Texas focused on San Jacinto, the Alamo, and one of the shipwrecks that was discovered by the THC in 1995.

Jones shared that the Drain the Oceans episode focused on the wreck that Borgens wrote her master's thesis on while at Texas A&M. He explained that when the wreck was found in the 1990s it was originally believed it may be La Salle's vessel *L'Amble*, or later, that it served as a gun runner during the Texas Revolution. Jones mentioned that the excavations produced an interesting assemblage of weapons of which Borgens was the subject matter expert. Jones showcased photos of the gun assemblage.

Jones revealed that recent research suggested that the shipwreck might have been associated with the privateer Aury's 1817 encampments in Matagorda Bay. He pointed to the accounts of his ships being attacked by the Spanish and the Karankawa and several being lost. Either way, Jones shared that the ship fit into the early Texas revolution narrative.

Jones also thanked the THC's Curation Facility for Artifact Research (CFAR) for hosting the film crew. He gave a special acknowledgement to the CFAR's Jamie Ross.

Jones called on Rebecca Shelton the coordinator of the THC's Texas Archeological Stewardship Network (TASN), currently made up of 140 volunteer members across the state.

Shelton provided TASN updates. The AC was informed that the program was 38 years old, that 6 new members were inducted, and that the Stewards remained active throughout their regions. She shared the recent publication of the TASN Newsletter. Jones said that the TASN Newsletter would soon be accessible online.

Jones provided his Certified Curatorial Facilities Program (CCFP) update. Jones said that the Southern Methodist University (SMU) was on the cusp of applying for the THC's curatorial certification. He shared that SMU's facilities were recently updated and that their crew was working diligently to preserve their cultural resources.

Jones also noted that Texas A&M (TAMU) was interested in becoming a certified facility. He mentioned that TAMU maintained Held-In-Trust (HIT) collections and that they wanted to bring their program into compliance. Jones hoped that he would have a solid status update by the AC's fall meeting.

Jones closed by mentioning the Galveston County Museum also recently showed interest in joining the program.

Jones reported on presentation of Awards of Merit by AD archeologist Bill Martin to the Fort Bend County Independent School District (ISD) staff, construction crews and archeological and historical contractors for their contributions to the successful identification, exhumation and reinterment of individuals from the Bullhead Convict Labor Camp Cemetery.

Jones called on Tiffany Osburn to present on the importance of collaboration with private landowners.

Osburn explained that collaboration with landowners was a major activity and benefit for Texas. She first highlighted an example from the Nueces River Valley (Real County) where a landowner utilized a grant offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to maintain his traditional agricultural property. Osburn shared that part of the grant award called for the conservation of cultural and natural resources and she worked with the landowner to identify and record three new archeological sites. Osburn noted that archeological sites in the Nueces River Valley tended to be heavily looted, but these were not, and this was an important step to preserving and protecting site types that are quickly being lost.

Osburn introduced another recent landowner collaboration in Hays County. After the landowner reached out to the THC, she assisted him in recording a burned rock midden. She said that the landowner was touched by the fact that his land maintained archeological resources and he took it upon himself to study the Early Texans and then was motivated to visit a few of the THC's Historic Sites. She explained that the THC's collaboration work often resulted in these successful partnerships.

Osburn finally spoke of her work with a Texas Game Warden to develop a damage assessment for a looted private archeological site in Gillespie County. Her hope was that her collaboration with authorities and the landowner would result with felony charges for the looters. Osburn mentioned that the Gillespie County case would be helpful for future archeological looting prosecutions.

Jones thanked Osburn.

4. Battle of Medina Project

Jones introduced Brandon Seale.

Seale provided a background on his investigation. He said that he focused on early Texas history and specifically the Battle of Medina. Seale shared that the battle was the bloodiest battle to take place in Texas. He noted that the battle was an event that led to Texas independence. Seale provided a broad overview of what occurred on the battlefield in 1813. He explained that the expectation was to locate the core of the battle – where hundreds of musket balls and cannonballs were exchanged – and would presumably be still archeologically present.

Seale informed the AC that there were multiple locations that laid claim to being home to the battlefield site, but none of the existing site locations had to date yielded convincing archeological data. Seale discussed numerous challenges, contradictions, and clues that made it difficult to locate the exact location of the battlefield. He shared that his group approached the research with an analytical method and combined all available research into one master resource.

To try and find the battle location, Seale partnered with the Center for Archeological Research (CAR) and the American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR). All three teams are working together to help locate the Battle of Medina site. He explained that AVAR volunteers were trained to study and work on conflict sites. Seale shared that their budget was privately raised and mainly came from the public. He provided photos and details from the field work that started on February 1st, 2022.

Though limited, Seale explained that the February investigations were successful and a small follow up survey was scheduled for May 6th, 2022. The May survey was planned to follow Pleasanton Road in San Antonio. AVAR planned to take their team back into the field in October and that money was being raised to fund their research. His hope was to involve the greater San Antonio community and to learn more about the battle through community engagement.

Seale concluded his presentation with a video from AVAR. The video provided drone footage from the recent field work. He shared that part of AVAR's mission was to strengthen the mental health of their members through studies and fieldwork engagement. Seale opened the floor for questions.

Earl Broussard wanted to know what part of the survey area yielded the highest number of artifacts.

Seale said that there were 3 different areas, and that one area had a high concentration of artifacts. He explained that they were not able to expand the research as they did not have access to the adjoining private property.

Broussard asked if a diverse set of combatants had fought on the site and if this changed how one found artifacts.

Seale answered that the battle included infantry and cavalry forces and that this altered the artifact assemblage.

Broussard asked which of the three recorded sites yielded the greatest number of artifacts.

Seale answered that the location identified by Bruce Moses's investigations into the Battle of Medina yielded the best location for artifact remains. He provided a background on the deceased Moses and applauded his work.

Donna Bahorich asked how teams went about contacting private landowners for cultural resource investigations and if the THC provided guidance.

Seale answered they had to reach out individually that the THC published a Landowner Resource Guide explaining the laws, but people often changed their mind at the last minute when someone tells them incorrectly that they might lose their land.

Bahorich asked how the guide could be improved and stated that the guide should be very clear.

Seale stated that the guide was good but that it could be clearer.

Bahorich suggested connecting experienced landowners with those landowners who had questions about cultural resources surveys.

Jones and Bruseth thanked Seale.

6. Adjournment

Bruseth adjourned the meeting.

ITEM # 3

Quarterly Report

Archeology Division
January–March 2022

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

During the past quarter, Archeology Division (AD) staff participated in several conferences around the state and the U.S. In early January, State Marine Archeologist Amy Borgens and AD Reviewer Emily Dylla attended the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) Conference in Philadelphia. Borgens attended as a new board member on the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology and as a presenter, while Dylla organized and chaired a symposium of papers examining the historical archeology of San Antonio. During the Real Places Conference, AD reviewer and Tribal Liaison Marie Archambeault organized a workshop centered on opening dialogues with federally recognized tribes with guests Holly Houghton of the Mescalero Apache Tribe and Martina Minthorn of the Comanche Nation. Though Minthorn was unable to attend in person due to weather, she sent a recorded message, and the workshop was deemed a success by all the participants. As part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with our tribal partners in the federal review process, in mid-February several staff virtually attended both the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and the U.S. Forest Service's Bridging the Gap tribal consultation meeting. In late March, AD staff participated in the first in-person Council of Texas Archeologists meeting in Austin since the 2020 meeting went virtual. Finally, Brad Jones, Borgens, and Dylla all attended the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) Annual Conference in Chicago. Jones participated in the annual meeting of the National Association of State Archaeologists, Borgens presented on recent research in the Gulf of Mexico that was originally scheduled for the canceled 2020 meeting in Austin, and Dylla attended in preparation for her role as the arrangements chair for the 2023 meeting in Oregon. Getting back out on the conference circuit has been a wonderful change after too many virtual meetings and reminds us all of the importance of personal interactions in achieving our

preservation goals. The following highlights other activities staff were involved in.

February 15–17—AD and Division of Architecture staff visited with City of Brownsville, National Park Service, and SpaceX staff to review ongoing projects. A short field visit was also taken to an eroding precontact burial identified in the Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge (Dylla, Jones, Ashley Sahlie)

February 17—AD staff collected a sample from a dugout canoe found in the Rio Grande that was donated to the Museum of South Texas. This is the sixth sample for a larger study of canoes undertaken by Jones and Borgens meant to describe, radiocarbon date, and speciate the wood of canoes held in public and private collections.

February 17—During the opening of a new community exhibit, Bill Martin presented awards of merit to the researchers, school district, and contractors who identified and ultimately excavated the Sugarland 95 from an endangered cemetery for convict laborers in Fort Bend County.

March 14–19—Drew Sitters visited with groups in the El Paso region to assess projects at Fort Bliss and by the International Boundary and Work Commission. In addition, Sitters met with adjoining landowner to the THC's Old Mission Socorro State Historic Site to discuss possible future collaboration on archeological deposits associated with the mission and Piro Pueblo.

MARINE ARCHEOLOGY PROGRAM (MAP)

Two significant agency semicentennial anniversaries occur this year: the creation of the MAP on Feb. 1, 1972, and the excavation of *San Esteban* and additional data recovery of *Espíritu Santo*, both of the 1554 Spanish Plate Fleet, from 1972 to 1975. The MAP was formed to lead the field investigations on these important shipwrecks, the oldest shipwreck archeological sites in the U.S. The investigations are believed to be the first such scientific study of their type conducted in U.S. waters and the first state-funded

underwater archeological project. It was the salvage of *Espritu Santo* in 1967 that led to enactment of the Antiquities Code of Texas and created the Texas Antiquities Committee, now the THC. The MAP has social media and other content planned to recognize these anniversaries, including an article for *The Medallion* and *Sea History* magazines. THC blog posts and Facebook posts were published in February and March on the MAP anniversary and about Vida Lee Connor, who discovered the 1554 shipwrecks in 1964.

In January, Borgens presented at the SHA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia on an overview of the 50-year history of the MAP and its evolution; it was submitted as a paper for the conference's underwater archeological proceedings published by the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology (ACUA). Borgens also co-chaired the annual Government Maritime Managers Forum and attended the ACUA Board Meeting. In late March, she presented a paper on a Texas coastal canoe at the SAA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

Also in March, the MAP, with assistance from Texas State University student intern Hunter Johnson, completed preparation of the artifact collection from the Pass Cavallo Shipwreck (41CL92) for curation at Tuscan Way. This early 19th-century shipwreck at the historic entrance to Matagorda Bay may represent the remains of a vessel from Louis-Michel Aury's privateer fleet, though other shipwreck candidates are also under consideration. The Pass Cavallo Shipwreck is being featured for a segment of National Geographic's *Drain the Ocean* series, which will also include the Alamo and San Jacinto Battlefield. Borgens and former THC MAP staff Layne Hedrick were interviewed for the Pass Cavallo Shipwreck segment. The MAP is in the planning stages for AD surveys of Aury's Matagorda Bay camp and lost abandoned fleet, with the inaugural research meeting held in January. This project had been delayed by the pandemic, but should be field ready by late 2022 or early next year.

REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Under the auspices of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Antiquities Code of Texas, the state and federal review section staff of the AD reviewed approximately 2,634 proposed development projects from Jan. 1–March 31. Of those, about 84 archeological surveys were required to determine whether any significant cultural resources would be adversely affected, and approximately

5,074 acres were surveyed. About 85 historic and prehistoric sites were recorded, and of those, six were determined eligible for listing in the National Register and 64 were determined not eligible, with 15 of undetermined eligibility.

CURATORIAL FACILITIES CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (CFCP)

The THC's CFCP ensures that state-associated archeological collections are properly curated. In the past quarter, staff from the Anthropology Department at Texas A&M University and the Galveston County Museum have indicated intent to undertake the CFCP certification process. AD staff Maximilian Hall and Bradford Jones will be working closely with both institutions to assess their potential for becoming certified. In addition, AD staff delivered the first shipment of artifacts from the Lake Gilmer archeological collection to the Stephen F. Austin University Archeology Laboratory for curation.

TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK (TASN)

The current membership of terrestrial and marine stewards is at 132, with 18 stewards up for renewal in 2022. We sent renewal request letters in February and received confirmation from 15 stewards. We received six outstanding nominations, which AD staff reviewed and provided recommendations to State Archeologist Jones. TASN Coordinator Becky Shelton and Jones met with the Advisory Committee on Feb. 24 to review the nominations. Invitation letters have been sent, and we will finalize these nominations next month. Our annual meeting and workshop will be held Saturday, May 14 at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. The updated, reimagined steward newsletter is undergoing the final production edits and should be available very soon.

Last year, five stewards passed away, and we would like to recognize their contributions. They are: Bryan Boyd (Gregg County, 21 years); Sheldon Kindall (Harris County, 37 years); Russell Potocki (Harris County, Marine Steward, 20 years); J. Travis Roberts, Jr. (Brewster County, seven years); and Rolla Shaller (Randall County, 28 years). We were honored to have known them and to have worked with them so closely for many years. Their hard work and dedication to preservation of cultural resources and outreach to the residents of Texas will not be forgotten.