

Archeology Committee

October 26, 2023



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

AGENDA **ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE** The National Museum of the Pacific War Admiral Nimitz Historic Ballroom 340 E. Main Street Fredericksburg, TX 78624 October 26, 2023 11:30 A.M.

(or upon the adjournment of the 11:00 a.m. History Programs committee 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. Consider approval of committee minutes – Bruseth**
 - a. Archeology Committee Meeting (July 20, 2023)

- 3. Division Director's Report - Jones**
 - A. Update on Archeology Division Programs and staff - Jones**
 1. Division Staffing
 2. Director Updates
 3. Texas Archeology Month Update
 4. Texas Archeological Stewardship Network Update
 5. Marine Archeology Program
 6. Curatorial Facilities Certification Program
 - B. Upcoming activities/events - Jones**

- 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 Paige Neumann at (512) 463-5768 at least four (4) business days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MINUTES ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE

Saint George Hall
113 E. El Paso
Marfa, TX 79843
July 21, 2023
8:30 a.m.

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

The meeting of the Archeology Committee was called to order by Chair Commissioner James Bruseth at 8:30 am on July 21, 2023. He announced that the meeting had been posted with the Secretary of State's Office according to the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code.

A. Committee Introductions

Committee members present included:

Commissioner James Bruseth (Chair)
Commissioner Donna Bahorich
Commissioner Tom Perini
Commissioner Pete Peterson

Committee members absent:

Commissioner Earl Broussard

B. Establish a Quorum

Chairman Bruseth reported a quorum was present and the meeting was opened.

C. Recognize and/or excuse absences

Commissioner Tom Perini moved, and Commissioner Pete Peterson seconded, and the Archeology Committee voted unanimously to excuse the absence of Commissioner Broussard.

2. Consider approval of committee minutes

Commissioner Bruseth moved to approve the Archeology Committee Meeting Minutes from April 27, 2023, Commissioner Pete Peterson seconded, and the Archeology Committee voted unanimously to approve.

3. Division Director's Report

A. Update on Archeology Division Programs and staff

AD Director Jones presented a general overview of activities in the division. He first announced that AD Regional Archeologist Dr. Emily Dylla had been chosen to assume the duties of the role of the Program Coordinator for Review and Compliance.

He then provided a summary of the Texas Archeological Society (TAS) Annual Field School event in Nacogdoches, Texas, which AD staff attended the event as both organizers, instructors, and participants. The site was originally recorded by Texas Archeological Stewardship Network members

Tom Middlebrook and Morris Jackson, who worked with private landowner, AD staff, and the TAS to organize the project. Over 300 people participated in the week-long excavation identifying both 18th and 19th century historic Caddo and later European occupations, and plans are in place for a second season in 2024.

Jones announced the recent publication in the *Journal of Texas Archeology and History* of the article “Finding Truth in Legend: The Story of the Texas Ranger James Coryell”, detailing excavations that were undertaken in 2010-2011 by the THC in partnership with the Smithsonian Institute and the Summerlee Foundation. Commissioners Bruseth and Crane are both authors of the article, alongside current and retired THC staff Bradford Jones, Amy Borgens, and Pat Mercado-Allinger.

October is Texas Archeology Month and AD staff have worked closely with other agency staff to ensure that this year’s celebration is a success. Jones highlighted the pinch pot project that has built 10,000 kits for distribution to schools and other local community groups to raise awareness about Native American pottery traditions in the state. In addition to an online calendar to promote activities across the state, AD is working with the French Legation to host a Texas Archeology Month fair on October 15th with other local partners.

In May, AD hosted their annual workshop for TASN members at Fort Concho in San Angelo. The event was well attended with special presentations on the Camino Real by Steven Gonzales and a methodological discussion on the identification of historic roadways by staff archeologist Tiffany Osburn. Staff are already planning for the fortieth anniversary of the program in 2024.

On behalf of State Marine Archeologist Amy Borgens, Jones presented an overview of notable Marine Archeology Program activities in the last quarter. These included site assessments of exposed shipwrecks and other coastal resources near Boca Chica in far south Texas. Working with interns and volunteers, the team continued to record the Boca Chica Shipwreck No. 1 that had been exposed by recent storms as well as visited other local sites including Brazos Santiago Depot, Fort Brown, Rabb Plantation, and the Port Isabel Historical Museum. Finally, Jones highlighted MAP public outreach including Borgens’ recent interview in the July 2023 issue of *Texas Highways* magazine and a training for oil spill responders with the Texas General Land Office and NOAA.

Jones used the CFCP program update to highlight the important work that Preservation Scholars Gilbert Martinez and Christine Sanchez are doing as a part of their role with AD to assist in the processing and documenting of archeological collections maintained by the agency to make them more available to qualified researchers.

B. Upcoming activities/events

Jones closed his update, noting that September 25-26 THC would be partnering with TxDOT for their annual Tribal Consultation Meeting taking place in Austin, Texas. As part of the meeting, AD staff will be holding special workshops with the Tribes to overview THC programs, as well as organizing an after-hours tour of the French Legation State Historic Site.

4. Adjournment

Commissioner Bruseth adjourned the Archeology Committee meeting at 8:50 am.

Quarterly Report

Archeology Division
July–September 2023

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

During the past quarter, the Archeology Division (AD) was fortunate to host Preservation Scholars Christine Ramirez and Gilbert Sanchez, who worked with Brad Jones, Amy Borgens, and other AD staff on a number of collections-based projects that provided them a broad perspective on AD's programs and a career in preservation. It is always a pleasure to have the opportunity to work with the Preservation Scholars, and both Ramirez and Sanchez provided invaluable assistance.

This quarter also saw the departure of two AD staff members on August 31. Donna McCarver, longtime office manager, retired after over 30 years of service. Her warm personality and no-nonsense attitude to her duties will be greatly missed not only by the staff, but also the regional Texas Archeology Stewardship Network (TASN) members and the public and professional sector who she interacted with regularly. Regional Archeologist Maggie Moore has also left the division after five years.

AD has been actively interviewing applicants for the five vacant positions, and we hope to be fully staffed again by the end of October. In the interim, all AD staff have stepped up and taken on additional responsibility to ensure the division continues to operate smoothly. For all their hard work, they deserve a tremendous deal of thanks!

In addition, AD staff continue to be involved in a broad array of public and agency events, including:

- July 6—Rebecca Shelton conducted site and cemetery visits to identify avoidance strategies in Erath County for two separate pipeline projects.
- July 24-28—Drew Sitters visited archeological sites in Mitchell, Nolan, and Sterling counties. He was accompanied by archeological consultants from SWCA and Perennial Environmental Services, as well as project managers from Targa Resources Corporation and Warrior Pipeline, LLC. The sites were recorded in advance of two

proposed pipelines, both of which required a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit.

- August 10—Shelton visited four sites that were under excavation for NRHP eligibility testing at the Lake Ralph Hall project in Fannin County and the Merrill Family Cemetery that will be relocated due to anticipated impacts from the lake construction.
- September 4—Shelton visited the Wildlife Parkway Extension project, where three sites were identified in the course of archeological monitoring. Scopes for additional investigations through testing and data recovery are being prepared in coordination with the consultant and the USACE.
- September 6—In Hudspeth County, Sitters met with representatives from ONEOK, Inc., the International Boundary and Water Commission, and Environmental Resource Management, Inc. to visit four archeological sites located within the footprint of the proposed Saguario Connector Pipeline, a FERC-regulated project. Two sites, 41HZ446 and 41HZ447, were recorded during the THC's 1988 Indian Hot Springs Reconnaissance Survey.
- September 17—Sitters promoted THC programs alongside TASN member Callan Clark at the Concho Valley Archeology Fair at the Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.

- September 26-28—AD partnered with TxDOT to host the annual Tribal Consultation Meeting in Austin. Executive Director Mark Wolfe, as well as AD staff members Bradford Jones, Marie Archambeault, Tiffany Osburn, and TASN Member Bob Ward, presented on THC programs to tribal partners in an afternoon session and hosted an after-hours tour of the French Legation State Historic Site for Tribal representatives.

MARINE ARCHEOLOGY PROGRAM (MAP)

A late summer shipwreck rediscovery focused national attention on a World War I shipbuilding program with

Gulf of Mexico shipyards in Orange, Beaumont, Rockport, Houston, and also Morgan City, Louisiana. When Bill Milner reported an encounter with a shipwreck in the Neches River to the Ice House Museum of Silsbee on August 18, Curator Susan Kilcrease reached out to State Marine Archeologist Amy Borgens and announced the report on the museum's Facebook page the following day in a viral post that captured local and national attention. Borgens was able to confirm the wreck was one of a collection of U.S. Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation (EFC) ships abandoned in the Beaumont vicinity following the end of World War I. Many of these were unfinished at the time of the government contract cancelations and were sold to the private sector for materials salvage. Nearly 40 of these vessels were abandoned along the banks of both the Neches and Sabine rivers and some were burned to the waterline. The THC has known of these wrecks for more than two decades and has investigated the wreck remains in both rivers. An acoustic survey of the Beaumont EFC wrecks was conducted by the MAP as recently as 2019. Cultural Resources Management investigations have also detected and discovered these wrecks, including surveys in 1980 and 2006. This World War I shipbuilding effort was important for replenishing commercial vessels lost to submarine warfare and heavily contributed to local Texas economies in both shipbuilding and timber processing. The THC issued a broadly viewed press release regarding the rediscovery and identification.

The Preservation Scholars Program concluded in late August. Scholar Christine Sanchez worked on the State Waterway Archeology Mapping Project (SWAMP) led by the MAP. This project seeks to map the states' river crossings, tribal crossings, ferry launches, and forgotten river ports as the basis of a geospatial mapping project so the collated data can help archeologists identify areas that have a high potential to yield such archeological sites, and any associated shipwrecks, so they are better protected in advance of construction and development projects. Over the course of the summer, Sanchez researched and geospatially mapped more than 200 ferry launches and crosses—just a small portion of the thousands that historically dotted the Texas landscape during the 18th and 19th centuries.

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 AD reviewed approximately 2,322 proposed development projects during the period of July 1 through September 30. Of those, about 98 archeological surveys were required to determine whether any significant cultural resources would be adversely affected, and approximately 17,393 acres were surveyed. About 136 historic and prehistoric sites were recorded, and of those, 13 were determined eligible for listing in the National Register and 85 were determined not eligible, with 38 of undetermined eligibility.

CURATORIAL FACILITIES CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (CFCP)

The THC's CFCP ensures that state-associated archeological collections are properly curated, and AD maintains over 300 archeological site collections and is currently managing several research projects. In the past quarter, volunteers Ryann Ramirez, and TASN members Steve Davis and Janet Dye have assisted in re-inventorying and repackaging collections from *La Belle*, Fort St. Louis/Presidio La Bahía, and Old Socorro Mission State Historic Site.

TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK (TASN)

On September 22, Stewards Coordinator Becky Shelton, will participate virtually in the Public Archeology Conference's Site Stewardship Panel. The panel discussion will highlight the collaboration of steward program managers and coordinators as we address challenges and share creative solutions for maintaining volunteer programs. <http://www.fpan.us/projects/conference-on-public-archaeology/>

A TASN meeting was held Friday afternoon during the TAS Annual Meeting in San Marcos, October 6-8.

TEXAS ARCHEOLOGY MONTH

Each October, the THC and our partners promote archeology-related public engagement activities for Texas Archeology Month. In the last quarter, AD worked with staff from across the divisions and dozens of volunteers to make 10,000 pinch-pot kits and are in the process of distributing them to our historic sites and other partners across the state.