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2022 CTA Fall Meeting
October 21, 2022
University of Texas-Tyler
College of Business, Room 108
Tyler, Texas

The CTA will attempt to set up a virtual meeting option on Zoom - additional instructions and a link to the meeting will be distributed to current members via email.



President's Forum

I hope everyone is doing well and staying healthy. Archaeology in Texas has been busy since our spring meeting, and I know we are all looking forward to getting together to catch up. This year we return to our fall meeting coinciding with The CTA fall meeting will start promptly at 9:00 and will be held on the campus of the University of Texas-Tyler in the Soules College of Business (COB) building. Our Careers in Archeology Social returns after the public forum presentation by Bobby Gonzalez, Chairman of the Caddo Nation, in the COB 2nd Floor Atrium. We will have a great bunch of CRM firms, universities, and other groups with tables and a nice spread of food. We will be distributing a limited number of drink tickets for the social and will have more information on that as we get closer.

The spring meeting agenda is chock full of our usual agency and committee reports. One thing I know we all are looking forward to are updates on the status of various developments in the Standards and Guidelines committee. Jodi Jacobson and her dedicated committee members are working diligently to make sure revised and new guidelines are at the highest standards.

In April and July 2022, I represented the CTA on the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB). Based on reports from the Texas Historical Commission, CRM in Texas



continues to be at a brisk pace with no signs of a slow-down. This bodes well for our industry but also perpetuates issues in staffing (see below). The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to bring forward numerous sites on their properties for listing as State Antiquities Landmarks (SAL). As I have mentioned before, we all should follow suit and nominate some of the sites we recommend as SALs rather than let it drop. One of the big topics of discussion was the rehabilitation of the Battleship Texas. It recently was moved to drydock for rehab and if you have not seen any of the footage from the move, I highly recommend checking it out on social media or YouTube.

As alluded to above, one issue that seems to continually arise in discussions and was a topic in our spring meeting is continuing education and the issue of not enough people in the CRM work force. We discussed establishing an ad hoc committee for CTA continuing education opportunities and will discuss this further in Tyler. Workforce and employment issues were a topic at the ACRA meeting in San Antonio and seemed to bring out strong opinions from a wide range of folks. A recent article in the *Advances of Archaeological Practice* suggests there will be a need for 1000s of CRM practitioners in the near future and there is not a labor pool to meet those needs. I plan to revisit this discussion in the fall meeting and try to brainstorm some ideas for short and long-term remedies in the Texas market.

As I wrote in the spring newsletter, the past two years have been difficult for us all and the fact that the CTA continues to grow and expand shows the resiliency of our membership and the strength of our organization. We had a great turnout for the spring meeting with around 100 attendees for the morning session and over 60 for the afternoon session. The afternoon social was well attended and from what I could tell, everyone had a great time. Our organization has rebounded from COVID lows in membership, and we currently have over 240 members. We will continue to explore ways to increase accessibility to our organization and meetings and will try again to have a virtual option to the fall meeting.

As always, the CTA's strength lies in our members and the many volunteers who offer their time to our organization and Texas archaeology. I thank you all for your interest and service to Texas archaeology.

See you in Tyler,
Todd Ahlman

Fall 2022 Meeting Agenda

Registration - 8:30 am

Call to Order - 9:00 am

Spring 2022 Meeting Minutes Issue

Officers' Reports

President (Todd Ahlman)

Vice President (Polly Clark)

Past President (Jon Lohse)

Secretary (Scotty Moore)

Treasurer (Thomas Barrett)

Newsletter Editor (Tina Nielsen)

Agency Reports

Texas Historical Commission

Texas Parks and Wildlife

Texas Department of Transportation

Texas Archeological Research Laboratory

Center for Archaeological Studies

Center for Archaeological Research

Standing Committee Reports

Auditing (Marybeth Tomka)

Budget Committee (Thomas Barrett)

CTA Communications (Laura Clark)

Contractors (Laura Clark)

Curation (Marybeth Tomka)

Governmental Affairs (Nesta Anderson)

Membership (Katie Canavan)

Multicultural Relations (Mary Jo Galindo)

Nominating (TBD)

Public Education (Todd Ahlman)

Standards and Guidelines Committee (Jodi Jacobson)

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Texas Private Lands Heritage Preservation Partnership
(Eric Schroeder)

Lost Cemeteries Task Force (Andi Burden)

Old Business

CTA's Investment in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

New Business

Work force issues in Texas and beyond.

New business from the floor?

Meeting Adjourns - 12:00 pm

Note: Agenda is subject to change prior to the Meeting



ATHLETICS

- 6 Irwin Ballpark (Softball)
- 9 Irwin Ballpark (Baseball)
- 30 Jones Gym (PHE)
- 33 Herrington Patriot Center (HPC)
- 34 Summers Tennis Courts
- 36 Citizen's 1st Bank Perkins Soccer Complex
- 37 Intramural Field

RECREATION

- 10 Hiking & Bike Trails
- 24 Braithwaite Gardens
- 27 Ritter Bell Tower
- 31 Spence Plaza
- 32 Patriot Plaza

HOUSING

- 7 University Pines Apartments
- 8 Patriot Village Apartments
- 21 Ornelas Hall
- 39 Liberty Landing Apartments
- 40 Victory Village Apartments

PARKING LOTS

- All parking lots are shown in grey with the letter "P" before the lot number.
- Parking garage is located at "G".
- Parking permits must be displayed from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. weekdays.
- Parking is enforced by the UT Tyler Police Department.



ACADEMIC & ADMINISTRATIVE

- 1 Physical Plant, Mail Services (PHY)
- 2 BAGE Houses (AX4)
- 3 Modular Buildings (MB1) (MB3)
- 4 University Health Clinic (UHC)
- 5 Fine Arts Complex (ARC)
- 11 College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)
- 12 Robert R. Muntz Library (LIB)
- 13 W.T. Brookshire Hall (WTB)
- Fisch College of Pharmacy
- 14 University Service Center (USC) Campus Police
- 15 Utility Plant, Campus Utilities (PPN)
- 16 Ratliff Building North (RBN) College of Engineering
- 17 Ratliff Building South (RBS) College of Engineering
- 18 Biology, Education & Psychology Building (BEP) College of Education and Psychology, Biology
- 19 Hudnall-Pirtle-Roosth Building (HPR) Stewart Hall (STE)
- 22 Soules College of Business (COB)
- 23 Auxiliary Buildings (AX1) (AX2)
- 25 R. Don Cowan Fine and Performing Arts Center (FAC) Center for the Musical Arts (CMA)
- 26 David G. and Jacqueline M. Braithwaite Building (BRB) College of Nursing
- 28 University Center (UC)
- 29 Utility Plant, Campus Utilities (PPS)
- 35 Alumni House (ALH)
- 38 Ornelas Activity Center (OAC)
- 39 University Academy (UA)



Campus Map

3900 University Blvd., Tyler, TX 75799 | Campus Police: Dial 911
REVISED 10/04/22

Past President's Report

Dear CTA,
Happy Fall, 2022, to all y'all!

Greetings CTAers. I'm looking forward to seeing at least some if not most of you in Tyler. I realize our fall meetings are slightly less well-attended than spring, but it'll be good nevertheless to spend time with folks catching up and talking about Council business.

I don't have a whole lot to report this season. Like most of you I'm sure, work is very busy, and we have a hard time finding well-trained, qualified people to help fill out our staff. We've adopted a simultaneous approach to relying on part-time technicians to help grow our program: investing in enthusiastic young professionals and committing to supporting their early career growth as they gain increasing experience and perspective. Terracon offers a tuition reimbursement program for full-time employees, which allows at least some of our full-time entry-level technicians to pursue their MA with some substantial support, if that's how they want to grow their career. For us, it's a win-win situation that allows us to keep some top-end technician talent while those individuals continue their career journey. I'm especially looking forward to continued discus-



sions at this meeting about restarting our professional development program. We had been pretty successful with those for a while and they attracted a lot of interest and positive response from members. To me, in addition to education and outreach, this is one of the most potentially important and impactful things our Council can do on behalf of its members.

See you all real soon.
Jon

Vice President's Report

I'm thrilled to be a part of CTA and am looking forward to our CTA Social on Friday, October 21st. The social will be 8:30-10:30 pm at the University of Texas-Tyler College of Business (COB) Atrium on the 2nd Floor. We have several firms and Texas Beyond History signed up for a table, as well as delicious food and beverages arranged. Can't wait!

Polly



Secretary's Report

Happy Fall to everyone!

Hopefully by the time you are reading this the weather will have turned at least a little cooler after a record-setting summer. The great news this fall is that our membership numbers have bounced back from their COVID-19 nadir, with half of our membership category counts exceeding their Fall 2019 numbers. Increases in the Principal Investigator and Professional Archeologist categories are the most notable, with 22 and 24 percent jumps year-over-year, respectively. We are now back to the growth levels that we saw in the late 2010s, and with all of the work we are all doing our best to juggle right now in the state, my guess is that the numbers will just continue to grow.

A quick reminder: if you have changed firms/institutions this year, please take a moment to update your information on your Member's page. Similarly, if the point of contact for your Contractor Listing has changed, please either update the page or let us know.



As always, if you have issues or suggestions for how we can make the CTA website, the membership application/renewal process, or any of the communication that you have with CTA better, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Membership Category	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Contractor	48	48	50	51	50
Institutional	5	6	9	7	5
Principal Investigator	132	48	48	54	66
Professional Archeologist		92	78	78	97
Retiree	17	9	7	7	7
Student		24	13	12	17
Total	180	227	205	209	242

Treasurer's Report

I hope this report finds the membership well, and I am looking forward to seeing everyone in person at the upcoming Fall Meeting. I can also report that the finances of the Council of Texas Archeologists are sound, although we have now begun using operations funds in these newly 'post pandemic' times.

As of October 11, 2022, our current account balances are as follows:

- \$24,412.89 – Operations fund
- \$30,934.73 – Investment fund
- \$9,133.44 – Student grant fund
- \$64,481.06 – Total CTA funds

Finally, I am still awaiting direction regarding the potential transfer of CTA Investment funds from the Bank of America money market account to Clear Rock Advisors, LLC, as was approved over a year ago (but delayed awaiting other officer's signatures on the legal documents) or the alternative of setting up an online Schwab account (an account we could set up independently) to save the management fee (ca. \$400-600/



year). Either way, CTA would gain more return than currently with BoA (i.e., \$3.50 last year). In this, I will defer to the direction of the membership and the Executive Committee.

In closing, I look forward to continue working with the Council and its members to secure our organization's financial future and our shared appreciation of Texas' ancient and historic past.

Sincerely,
Tom, CTA Treasurer

Newsletter Editor's Report

Hi Everyone-

I will not be able to attend the fall CTA meeting, or TAS this year, unfortunately. I hope everyone is doing well though, and hope to see some of you in the near future. The Spring 2023 CTA newsletter submission due date is not yet set, but will probably be in February.

Cheers,
Tina



Standards and Guidelines Committee Report

The Standards and Guidelines committee has been busy since the spring meeting. The committee has met a few times to discuss and review ongoing standards in development. The Ad Hoc Monitoring Committee has met and is in process of developing guidelines. The Ad Hoc Cemetery Best Practices Committee is currently revising their initial drafts based on comments from the main Standard and Guidelines Committee.

The majority of the work of the main committee has been focused on reviewing, commenting, and revising the updated Reporting Guidelines developed by the Ad

Hoc Reporting Committee. A full draft was completed and sent out to a handful of CTA members for peer review in late July with responses received by them in August. Based on those comments we have made additional revisions and plan to have a draft ready for review by committee for the fall meeting. The draft will be uploaded to the members section of the CTA website prior to the fall meeting. The committee's hope is to discuss the reporting guidelines draft and get feedback from CTA at large during the fall meeting. A final version will be in the spring newsletter and go up for CTA vote at the spring meeting.

Texas Private Lands Heritage Preservation Partnership Update

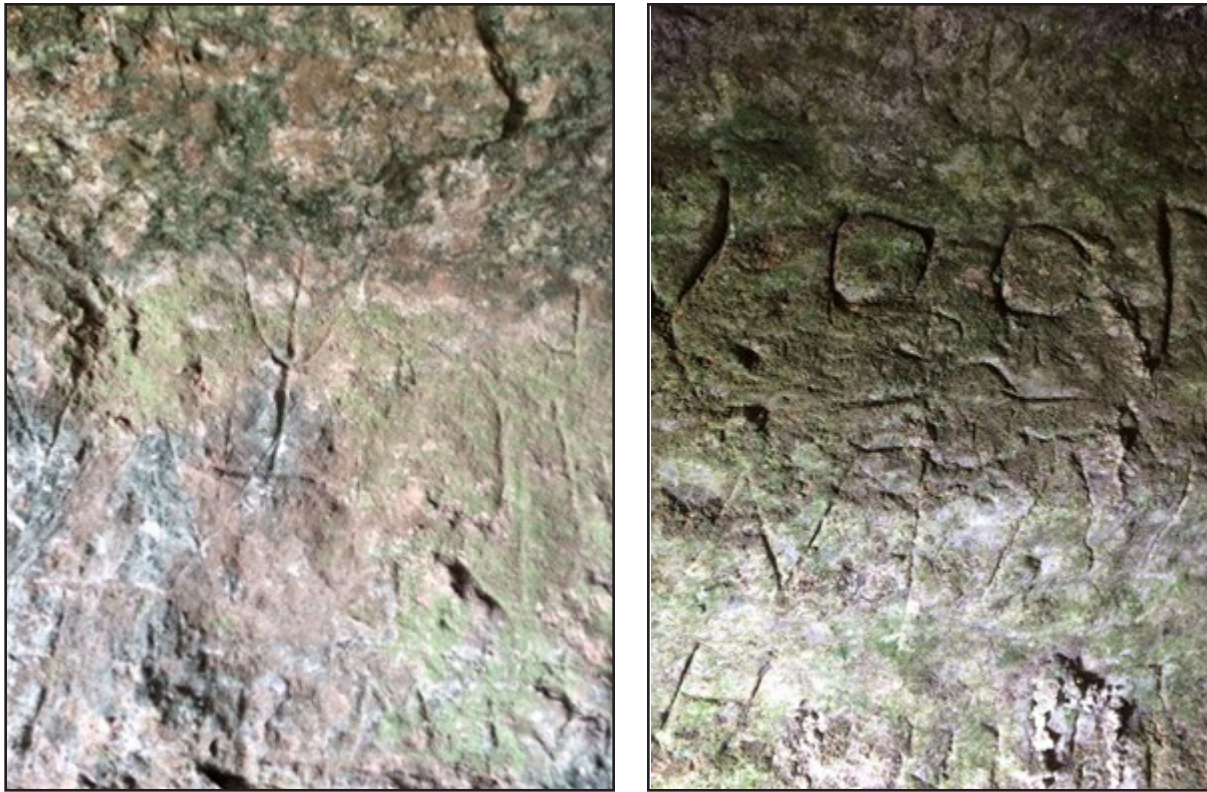
By: Eric Schroeder

Since the spring meeting the TPLHPP has been continuing its efforts to engage and education private landowners about the preservation of heritage resources. On March 25–27, 2022, we exhibited at the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Convention where 4,975 cattle raisers from Texas and eastern New Mexico descended on the Fort Worth Convention Center. During the event, our exhibit booth was visited by 56 visitors, we handed out 76 brochures, and received 2 questionnaires.

One landowner approached us saying that he had a cave on his property in Collingsworth County with petroglyphs in it, and that since the cave is in soft rock, he is concerned that the images will erode away before they can be documented. The landowner sent me pictures of the cave and the petroglyphs appear to be mostly historic in age: consisting of names, maybe cattle brands, and a number of enigmatics. I have contacted the TAS Rock Art Task Force about the site and we are in discussions as to how the site may be best recorded.



Exhibiting at the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Convention in Fort Worth



Images of petroglyphs in a cave on a private ranch in Collingsworth County

On July 14–17, 2022, we exhibited at the Texas Wildlife Association Convention in San Antonio. This was the first time we attended this annual event which included a one-day seminar and workshop discussing conservation issues on private lands. The event hosted 1,234 attendees and we had one-on-one engagements with 50 visitors at our booth. We handed out 65 of our brochures and collected one questionnaire. At the meeting we learned of a rather unique historic site on a private ranch in Callahan County, and in August, Drew Sitters and I visited and recorded the site which consisted of an interesting stone structure, what we think are two brick-lined cisterns, and the stone foundation of what may be an old farmstead. The landowner also told us of another similar structure on his property, but we did not have time to visit and record it. More research is needed to evaluate these sites and we will contact a local steward to pick up where we left off.

Last fall, I reported about a rather large collection of prehistoric artifacts housed at a local museum in Coleman, Texas. Since then, I had the opportunity to contact the collector, a Ms. Dunlap, and arranged a meeting with her at the museum in Coleman on a return trip from one of my TPWD surveys in Palo Pinto County. Ms. Dunlap showed me the collection, most of which was from her family's property and other private landholdings in Crockett County, with a minority from other parts of the state as well. The collection consists of approximately 200 or so frames as well as a few display cases situated in a 20 x 30-foot room of the museum. Despite the collection's impressive size and diversity of materials, the most astounding thing, and what sets Ms. Dunlap apart from most other collectors, is that she kept detailed notes on her finds and organized each frame of artifacts with reference to the properties and sites from which she collected them. While I visited with Ms. Dunlap, I emphasized to her that the documentation she has on the collection is as important as the artifacts and that she should consider providing copies of her notes to the museum as part of the collection. When we parted, she told me that she would consider doing so.



Drew Sitters at the Texas Wildlife Association Convention pointing out the importance of private landowners being preservation stewards



Historic Site on the Three Nails Ranch in Callahan County



Part of Ms. Dunlap’s collection in the Coleman Museum at Heritage Hall

The table below is a roll up of events conducted by the program to date. In summary, since January 2020 we have participated as exhibitors in seven events across the state, providing visibility to over 14,000 convention participants. Of these we have personally engaged approximately 469 landowners, distributed 630 informational brochures, and collected 19 questionnaires.

We look forward to continuing with this project and are seeking additional financial support through preservation grants. If you would like to participate in one of our events as an exhibitor or would like to go out on the road to visit with landowners and document sites, please contact either me at eric5chro3d3r@gmail.com or [Drew Sitters at drew.sitters@thc.texas.gov](mailto:drew.sitters@thc.texas.gov).

Event	Date	Total Attendance	Total Booth Visits	Total Brochures Handed Out	Questionnaires
American Farm Bureau	January 2020	2,756	75	160	6
Texas Land Conservation Assn	February 2020	257	133	88	10
Texas Land Conservation Assn	April 14-16, 2021	279	0	8	0
Texas Southwest Cattle Raisers	July 23-25, 2021	5,000	121	177	0
Texas Land Conservation Assn	March 2-4, 2022	250	34	56	0
Texas Southwest Cattle Raisers	March 25-27, 2022	4,975	56	76	2
Texas Wildlife Association	July 14-17, 2022	1,234	50	65	1
	Totals	14,751	469	630	19



Dear CTA Members,

The Texas Historical Commission's Archeology Division will be hosting an eTrac Archeology Zoom Meeting on 11/8/2022 at 9:30 am. Over the last year and a half, we have added an extraordinary number of new features and would appreciate your insight into how these work for you. It is our mission to continue to improve the eTRAC permit portal experience and facilitate the completion of permit requirements. This will be a forum to share ideas for potential improvement and for you to participate in the development of the system. Your feedback will be used to set priorities for our developmental plans over the coming year. All archeologists are welcome to participate and give feedback. Please register and fill out the subsequent questions at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_aOUlrl4QSCCRxNeZq7eCg by 11/1/2022 as your answers will be used to set the agenda for the meeting!

Sincerely,

Laney Fisher

Archeology Permit Coordinator

Rehabilitating TxDOT's Legacy Collections

By Amy E. Reid

On May 1-2, 2022, TxDOT delivered around 145 boxes of artifacts and archival materials to the Center for Archaeological Studies (CAS) Curation Facility (Figure 1). This submission represents TxDOT's commendable action and investment to rehabilitate their legacy project collections and make them accessible for research and public education. The Society for American Archaeology defines legacy collections as collections that should have been curated long ago but, for various reasons, were not. Legacy collections can include abandoned or forgotten collections, artifacts inherited from an advocational collector, or collections from salvage archaeology projects conducted by federal or state agencies (Knoll and Huckell 2019). Collections from within TxDOT right-of-way are owned by the State of Texas. However, it is TxDOT's responsibility as the collecting agency to ensure adequate permanent storage in an archaeological repository that is certified by the State of Texas through the Texas Historical Commission's Curatorial Facility Certification Program. To help accomplish this, CAS has been tasked with evaluating, preparing, and curating these legacy collections.



Figure 1. TxDOT Legacy Collections at the CAS Archaeological Curation Facility.

The first task in our rehabilitation efforts was to evaluate the condition of, and preparation tasks needed for, each collection. As a result of this evaluation, the materials have been preliminarily separated into 88 discrete collections based on information written on their physical containers, as well as notes provided by TxDOT. Some collections are comprised of both artifacts and records, while others are either records-only collections or contain artifacts without any associated project records. I found that most artifacts were still in their original brown paper field bags, which have deteriorated significantly over the years, putting both the artifacts and provenience data at risk (Figure 2). Paper bags are also a notoriously tasty treat for pests and can promote biological growth (i.e., mold). All the collections will need to be rehoused into archival-grade primary and

secondary containers, and nearly all need to be catalogued. None of the artifact collections have electronic catalogs, so we will be doing a lot of data entry! This is all to be expected, though, since our standards for collection processing and curation have come a long way since the 1980s and 1990s, and technology has advanced making computerized database management more common in our field today.



Figure 2. Example of deteriorating, torn paper field bags with degraded rubber bands.

Luckily, I have the best team of professionals at my side helping to get these collections into shape one by one. Curatorial assistant, Michael Clayton Eppler, is a former Veterans Curation Program technician. His experience with rehabilitating U.S. Army Corps of Engineers archaeological collections has been instrumental in this project. Doreeahn Parra, who has worked for CAS as a student curatorial assistant for a couple years, has the attention to detail, efficiency, and work ethic that is necessary for this type of work. Kelsie Hart, CAS Collections Manager, has been overseeing the day-to-day tasks. I asked her for her thoughts so far about this project:

"The rehabilitation of the TxDOT legacy collections has been both demanding and gratifying. CAS is no stranger to preparing large collections for curation, however this is my first time managing a project of this scope and complexity. It has been a great opportunity for us to refine our procedures and develop new training materials for our curatorial workers. Each box we open is a surprise! The TxDOT legacy collections hold a wide range of archaeological and archival materials that each have unique preservation needs. I think one of the most important aspects of this project is the digitization of the archival materials - we have negatives, slides, microfiche, and even floppy disks (Figure 3). Migrating these materials to modern digital formats is critical for the preservation of these collections and will make them much more accessible for researchers."



Figure 3. Selection of photographic archival material.

We are only a fraction of the way through the collections, and we have already found some exciting research potential. It sounds cheesy, but it is like we are rediscovering these forgotten sites and collections each time we open a box. For example, the collections associated with TxDOT's investigations at 41BO185 and 41BO201 contain some interesting diagnostic artifacts just waiting for a historical archaeologist's love and attention (Figures 4 and 5). We also found some archival materials created by CAS Zooarchaeologist Dr. Chris Jurgens 40 years ago! Dr. Jurgens surveyed the Kent-Crane site in 1981, then conducted testing investigations and mapped the site in 1982 to complete a National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination. So, although he was working for the Texas Department of Water Resources at the time, Jurgens's documentation is now being archived as part of the background records for TxDOT's 1987 investigations. Check out this note we found and digitized with Jurgens's State of Texas Letterhead (Figure 6). A good reminder to us all that even a simple handwritten sketch or note about an archaeological site, artifact or collection can itself become a historical resource that will one day require deciphering, stabilizing, and digitizing.



Figure 4. Selection of diagnostic artifacts from the TxDOT 41BO185 Collection.



Figure 5. Selection of diagnostic artifacts from the TxDOT 41BO201 Testing, 1998 Collection.

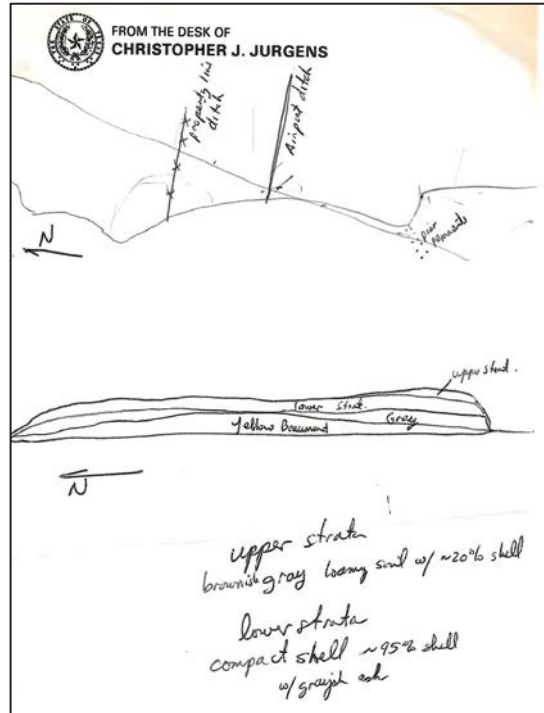


Figure 6. Handwritten note by Dr. Christopher J. Jurgens with State of Texas Letterhead. Full sketch map not shown to protect site location information.

Below is a quick table listing the collections we have completed so far. In addition to these collections, we are preparing other sets of materials for temporary curation at CAS until final disposition is determined through TxDOT’s ongoing NAGPRA inventory and consultation efforts. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about the legacy collections we have already completed, or if you would like to discuss which collections we will be tackling next. Spoiler alert: we are currently working on materials from site 41CX95 (see Figure 7) and next up are the large Hog Canyon IH-10 and 41SP158 artifact collections. As part of our rehabilitation efforts, we are writing collections management reports (CMRs) for each collection which serve well as a finding aid and great starting point for research, especially for collections lacking final reports. We plan to compile and publish these CMRs as a single report in our new Repository Report Series once they are all finalized, but we are more than happy to share them as stand-alone reports with our archaeological community in the meantime.

Collection Name	Accession/ Incoming Loan No.	Collection Type	Final Report
TxDOT Survey of 41AS2 and 41AS3 for SH 35, 1987	CAS.2022.102	Archival/Records Only	Yes: Report of Survey Along State Highway 35 In San Patricio and Aransas Counties, Texas, and Research Proposal for the Kent-Crane Site (41AS3) and the Live Oak Point Site (41AS2)
TxDOT Investigations at 41AS3 and 41SP158, 1994	CAS.2022.105	Archival/Records Only	Yes: Archaeological Investigations at 41SP158 and the Kent-Crane Site, 41AS3, on Live Oak Peninsula Along the Middle Texas Coast
41BL1201 Pepper Creek Pauper Cemetery, 2002	CAS.IL2022.02	Artifacts & Records	Yes: Search for Unmarked Graves at the Pepper Creek Paupers' Cemetery (41BL1201), Bell County, Texas
TxDOT 41BO185 Testing, 1994 and 1999	CAS.2022.100	Artifacts & Records	None
TxDOT 41BO201 Testing, 1998	CAS.2022.101	Artifacts & Records	None



Figure 7. In-process rehousing of 41CX95 artifacts.

Collections-based research, sometimes referred to as “archaeology in reverse,” is an increasingly popular method of studying archaeological sites and their inhabitants. Artifacts within existing curated collections can help address questions about the daily lives of the Indigenous communities who thrived in Texas long ago. As a curator of archaeological collections, I feel it is important to advocate for and facilitate collections-based research because there is significant research potential inherent in existing collections and because this research helps justify the need for their long-term curation to project sponsors, granting institutions, agencies, and taxpayers. I believe collections-based research should also be considered, when feasible, as an alternative to field investigations since excavation is necessarily destructive to archaeological sites and results in the creation of new collections requiring costly long-term curation. We tend to become paralyzed when dealing with legacy collections and think that the only way forward is to finish writing up the final reports before we curate the collections. The time and cost of doing a full analysis and write-up can delay the curation of the collection, which creates legitimate preservation concerns. Instead, we should all consider rehabilitating legacy collections first and prioritizing the rehousing of artifacts from their field bags into archival quality storage containers, even if they have not yet been analyzed. I also argue that Collections Management Reports can be useful substitutes for traditional final reports (until one can be written), and that access and research are greatly enhanced when collections are, first, fully cataloged and organized for curation. Existing collections, like TxDOT’s legacy collections, have stories to tell and I am hopeful that our work can set the stage for future research that will help bring those stories to light.

Mapping Errata in the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas

By Jeff Turpin, PhD, and Terry Burgess

In the summer of 2019, Turpin and Sons archeologists conducted targeted survey on University Lands (UL) up and down the China Draw valley in Upton County, Texas. During that survey, two minimal, ephemeral prehistoric campsites were recorded near the northern boundary of the survey block and entered into the State Archeological Sites Atlas (Atlas).

The same two sites were included as part of a larger block survey in 2021. This last visit was in part to determine their exact location, as their original locations were mapped on the Atlas as “Atlas” in Figure 1, while their listed UTM locations lay at points “B” and “b” in Figure 1. Of concern was the obvious fact that positions “Atlas” and “B/b” were both outside of University Lands’ northern boundary, and thus had to be erroneous, since the 2019 surveys were restricted to UL, and in this case the UL boundary is marked by a distinct, intact road and fence, which the recording crew would not have crossed to record a site. It was also noted that the mapped location of these sites and the UTM locations provided in the 2019 revisit were different, and that the errors in both cases involved similar distance and cardinal direction differences.

The 2021 revisit used a combination of GPS data, pace, compass, aerial photos, and map feature orientations to ascertain that the sites were actually located at points “A” and “a” on the map, and they are currently mapped as such on the Atlas.

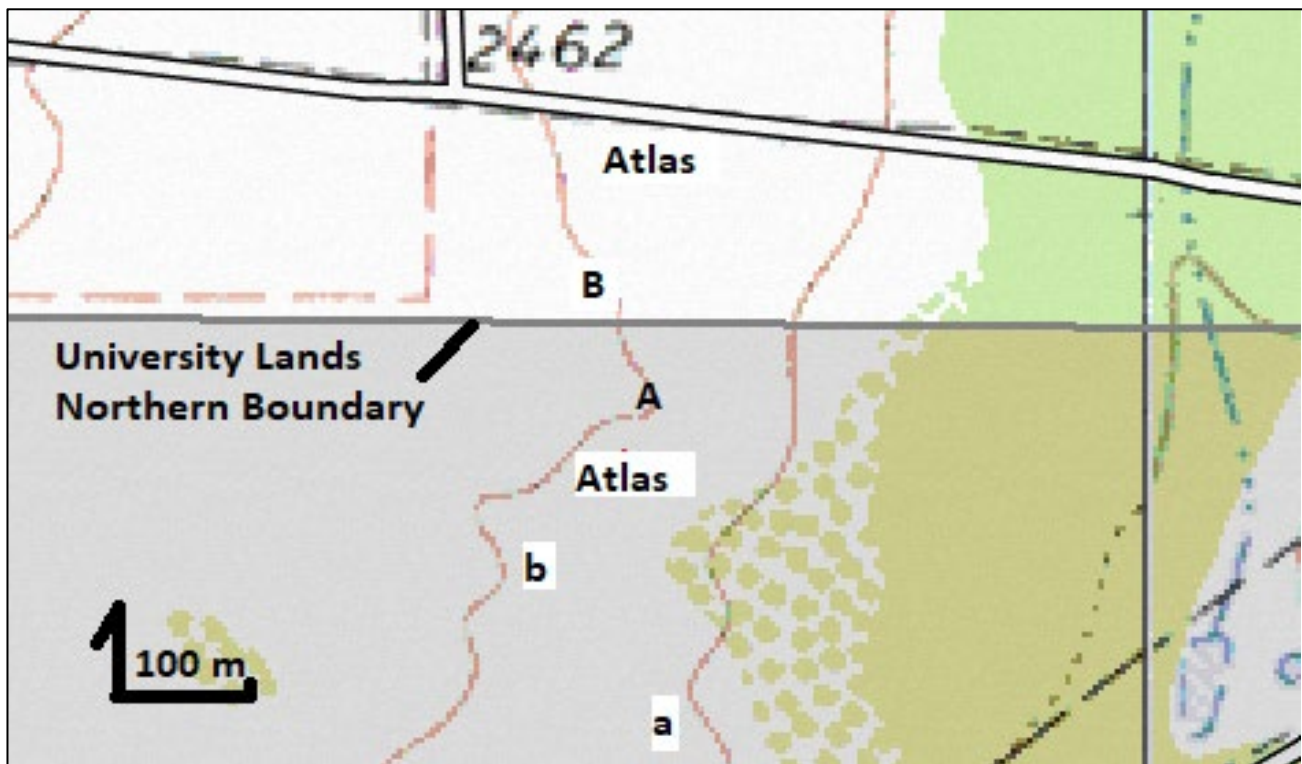


Figure 1. Various archived locations 2019 recordings (locations approximate).

Errors of this general type are relatively common both in the field and on the Atlas. They are usually attributed to GPS operators who switch between base datums (in this case North American Datum [NAD] 27 and NAD 83). Datum errors usually produce a dislocation of about 200 meters (m) north/south, causing subsequent recording/reporting errors of that scope. And in fact, these types of mis-locations have been noted on other sites on UL this year.

In these two cases, though, the various locations differ by from 100 to 350 m north/south, rather than by the expected 200 m, and vary by up to 100 m east/west, suggesting that these errors are not in fact due solely to the use of different base datums. In addition, the 2019 and 2021 recording crews were both aware of the potential mis-location errors derived from switching base datums and took special care to adhere to NAD 83 during survey and recording.

Together this all suggests that the mapping errors in this case resulted from some other cause. Since Atlas and UTM locations for sites are sometimes treated as scripture in the CRM industry, and often become important points in legal and financial discussions with various contractors and stakeholders, the information on these two sites was presented to Atlas staff to help with rectifying whatever errors produced the mapping errata. We shot new, confirmed UTMs for the two sites, reported the issue to Atlas staff, and continued with our field work.

As part of annual field training for UL personnel in 2022, we were asked to direct UL staff to previously recorded rock art sites in a restricted geographic area in west Texas. Again, the preliminary review of the Atlas showed that several sites appeared to be inaccurately located (e.g., rock shelters were plotted in floodplains, etc.). Field-truthing indicated this to be true for 12 sites within the area (the most that could be visited in the one-day field session). Given the size of the flawed sample (12 sites), the ubiquity of the error (12/12 sites sampled), and the uniformity of the offset (200 m in a non-cardinal direction), we undertook to determine the cause of the error, which, if found elsewhere in the Atlas database, would effectively render the Atlas maps useless as tools for avoiding or revisiting previously recorded sites.

The revisited sites were mostly small and contained locations of rock art panels lying in convoluted geologic masses, so that UTMs within each "site" would not vary by more than a few meters, and where errors of even 25 m could put researchers on the other side of a precipitous rock wall, from which the recorded site would be invisible. Refinement of the mapped locations was clearly mandatory.

Various causes for these errors were considered: data transposition errors, UTM NAD changes, and recorder error were all potential causes. Consequently, we used the UTMs recorded on original site forms registered with the Atlas and plotted those datums in both NAD 83 and NAD 27, then compared them to the datums recorded on the Atlas. In most cases this produced three different datums, with an approximate 200 m difference between actual UTMs at site datum and the location plotted on the Atlas (Figures 1 and 2).

Multiple steps are involved in ascertaining and plotting site positions, with multiple potential errors: field recorders could have taken the original UTM coordinates on a GPS unit set to either NAD 27 or NAD 83; they then could have transferred those to in-house mapping programs (in these cases to Trimble's Terrain Navigator Pro [TN] set to either NAD 27 or NAD 83); and could have submitted UTM coordinates to the Atlas that were transcribed directly from the GPS unit, or transcribed from the mapping program itself. Any of these could be a potential source of error. However, again here, experiments with those variables on the recorder's end produced at least one accurate plotting on TN in each case (usually with GPS unit and TN both set to NAD 27, using the originally recorded UTM coordinates), and that plotting was always quite different from the plot on the Atlas.

Figure 2 illustrates another example of mis-plotting. Plot "Atlas" is the Atlas mapped location; plot "A" shows the original coordinates if the mapping program preferences are set to NAD 27; plot "B" shows the coordinates when the mapping program is set for NAD 83. Plot "A", using the originally recorded coordinates with mapping program in NAD 27, is the correct location of the site. In these 12 revisits, in no combination of sender/receiver coordinates was the Atlas mapped location found to be correct.



Figure 2. Various plot locations for site (Terrain Navigator).

In all other revisits in this area this approximate pattern was replicated. So, again, the exact explanation for these multiple mis-plots remains elusive.

Internal discussions revealed sites that had been re-recorded in the past by our archeologists on large-scale seismic surveys, but which had been previously recorded by other cultural resource firms. Similar offsets and mis-plots were found, but since these revisits were isolated, and represented a very small percentage of total sites recorded within a given project area, we again chalked these up to one random error or another, took new UTM's, confirmed the new plot locations, and went on with our work. It was only when we discovered the large number of small sites mis-plotted en masse on State lands that we had a sufficiently large database to arouse suspicion.

The purpose of the current article is thus to report the existence of these problematic errors, and to invite other field archeologists who are reliant on the Atlas to report any similar errors, if they exist, and determine the extent of the problem. The Atlas maps are primary tools in the relocation and avoidance of sites across the state, and most field archeologists rely on their accuracy. But if these errors are common the Atlas maps are effectively useless, and avoidance or mitigation efforts based on these maps could put both field archeologists and the State in legal limbo.

Message about the Spring 2022 Minutes

Dear membership,

As you are flipping through the pages of this newsletter, you may be wondering why the Spring 2022 minutes were not included. This was not an inadvertent omission but the result of an odd situation that cropped up at the end of last month. The short version is that the Spring 2022 minutes are currently inaccessible.

Here is the slightly longer story: I took the minutes last spring during the April 2022 meeting and then edited them for clarity as I usually do on my work laptop. Later in the spring I changed jobs and had to turn that computer in to my old employer. Before I did so, I copied non-proprietary files (including the minutes) to a USB thumb drive for access later. What I didn't realize at the time was that the company laptop automatically encrypted any thumb drive so that it would not work on non-company computers. When I tried to access the drive this fall, I got a big "none shall pass" warning. I've reached out to that company's IT, and their local IT folks took a look at it but were unable to easily gain access. They have taken the drive to a specialized location to extract the data, but the timeline for that was not conducive to getting the minutes into this newsletter. That's where we stand now.

I must admit, this is a new one for me (and for CTA, I'm sure). Our goal is to get the Spring 2022 minutes ready for viewing as soon as possible, then vote on them in Spring 2023. I apologize for the inconvenience that this causes and I'm happy to speak with anyone about it further if they wish.

Regards,

Scotty

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