

TIME CAPSULE

Newsletter of the **FORT BEND ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

An affiliate of the Fort Bend History Association

600 Houston Street / Richmond, TX 77469, 281-342-6478 ext. 1301

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Archeology News

On March 18 and April 1, several members of FBAS traveled to Sabine Pass to perform work with a ground penetrating radar (GPR). Archeological stewards from Jefferson County invited Bruce Grethen to help locate mass burials known to be in the Sabine Pass Cemetery. The burials are from the yellow fever epidemic of 1862. The historical marker in the cemetery says it is the oldest continually used cemetery in Jefferson County and has served the citizens of the Sabine Pass area since the 1840s. The earliest documented grave is that of a 12-year-old John A. Dashiell, son of William V.C. and Mary Dashiell, who died on August 27, 1847. The large site now known as Sabine Pass Cemetery represents a combination of five formerly distinct burial grounds.

In 1861, the population of Sabine Pass was about 1,500, and four major commission merchants were shipping 20,000 bales of cotton annually and importing the necessities for frontier living. Yellow Fever swept through the area the fall months of 1862. Within three months, many residents and Confederate soldiers died of Yellow Fever. Three-fourths of the town fled to inland destinations and never returned to the area. Mass graves were hastily dug during a Yellow Fever epidemic. The Sabine Pass Cemetery has a deep and wide vacant spot in the middle. Although there are no tombstones in this spot, historians estimate there are 100-150 people buried here in several mass graves.

The first day started off with Bob Crosser sighting in the areas to investigate with his surveying equipment. Using a transit and several long tapes, Crosser and the volunteers laid out three large rectangular areas. FBAS members spent a total of over nine hours operating the GPR back and fourth across the open areas. Over these two days, the society members were able to cover an area of 4,074 square meters which is the equivalent of 1 acre. Parallel passes with the GPR, spaced a half meter apart, were made in hopes to find some evidence of the graves.



Field Notes

Excavation Site - FBAS volunteers continue to investigate a historic homesite near Richmond.

Want a closer look? We dig every Saturday morning and welcome all new volunteers - come join us, or just come out to watch!



In our ongoing research of what appears to be a root cellar, we've been carefully excavating to find its four corners. On March 25, we finally located the fourth corner of the large rectangle. Knowing where three of the corners were, we just needed a small two foot square pit where we expected to find the last corner. On the top left Rich and Bruce document the fourth corner after its discovery. On the right, is our first look at the corner. The lighter tan colored soil in the upper right hand corner of the image is the interior of the root cellar. The arrow is pointing to the north.



As we dug down to the root cellar, we found lots of interesting artifacts. A few that were found on March 25 are shown above. On the left is a decorated edge of a blue colored glass shard. Next to it in the middle is a large molar; we're not sure what animal it may be yet. On the end is a small vertebrae. In the right hand image, is a small bead measuring about 3/8". We're not sure yet what it is made of. The last object on the right is a long sliver of tooth enamel. Also found but not pictured was a small shell button.



Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2023

The Fort Bend Archeological Society met virtually via a Zoom meeting.
In attendance were 4 members.

President Paul Spana, called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

The minutes for the March meeting as well as the treasurer's report were presented. However, the meeting did not have a quorum present, therefore no action items were handled at the meeting.

Old Business:

- Excavation work continues at the Lamar site. FBAS members continue to investigate possible root cellar at the Lamar home site.

New Business:

- On March 18, FBAS members spent six hours operating the ground penetrating radar at the Sabine Pass Cemetery. The goal was to locate where the 1863 Yellow Fever mass burial may be. The group will return at a later date to spend a few more hours to complete the project.

Announcements:

- We will meet virtually for our next meeting to be held on April 18th. The next in person meeting will be May 16 featuring a guest presenter.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Kevon Hunter, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Balance as of February 15, 2023	\$5,425.05
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1989	3/2/2023	Paul Spana	Facebook ad for February meeting	-25.20
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Balance as of March 15, 2023	\$5,399.85
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Submitted by Claire Rogers, Treasurer

Upcoming Meetings

Our next meeting will be a virtual meeting and will be held online via Zoom. It will be a short meeting. We'll look at the minutes from the March meeting and discuss the treasurer's report. We'll also share updates on our current projects including the findings from the GPR work done at Sabine Pass. Everyone is welcome to join to discuss our projects with the group. Next month in May, we will all meet in person once again to hear our guest presenter.

For next week's meeting, you can join us on Zoom.com using this code - Meeting ID: 784 1752 6331, Passcode: G1se78.