

TIME CAPSULE

THE 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 / FAX 281-342-2439

October 2021, Volume 29, Number 10



Note: New location for this month's meeting! The meeting will be held at the Fort Bend Museum located at 410 S. Fifth Street in Richmond, Texas.

General Meeting, October 19, 2021

“History of the Forts Velasco”

Speaker: Chris Kneupper, Brazosport Archaeological Society

A small circular palisade fort was built by a garrison of Mexican soldiers in 1832 at what would later be known as Velasco, Texas. The site is at the present-day location of Surfside Beach on the left bank at the mouth of the Brazos River. The name Fort Velasco also applies to at least three other forts built at almost the same location, one during the Texas Revolution, and two during the Civil War.

In response to fear of annexation of Texas by the United States during the era of Mexican Texas, the Mexican Congress passed the Law of April 6, 1830, which halted legal immigration by Americans and established military occupation. Initially, sporadic efforts were made to establish a customs post at this location in 1830 and then again in 1831, but these efforts were less than successful. As a result, "Fortaleza de Velasco" was erected in April to May 1832 by the order of General Terán to enforce the customs and immigration provisions of the new law for the customs port of entry.

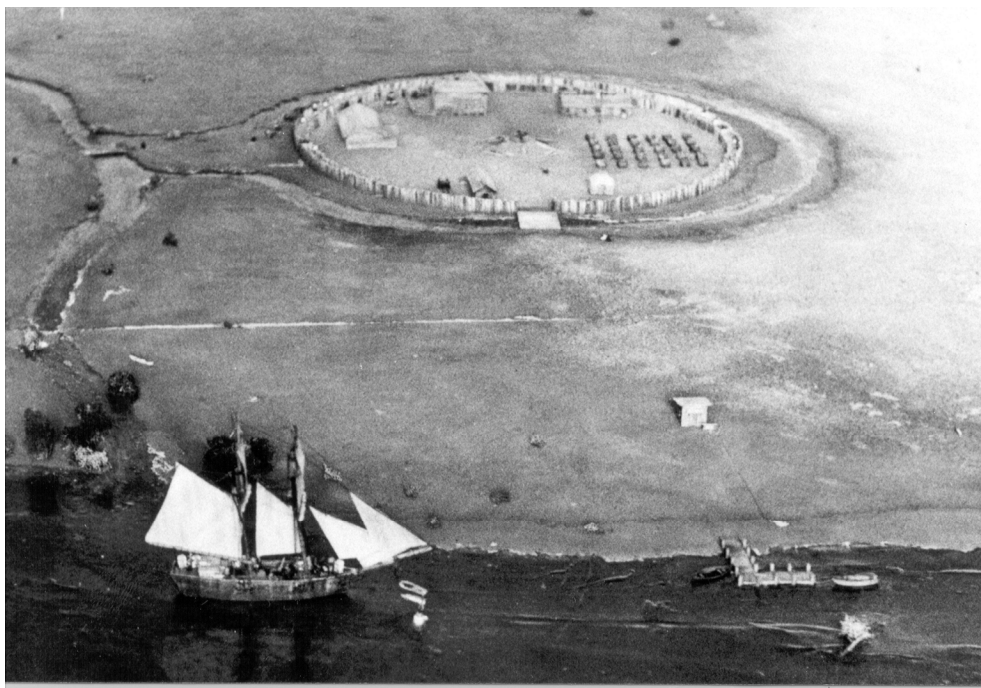


Photo credit: Old Fort Velasco Historical Association

It is a thesis of the author Chris Kneupper that Velasco played a more significant role in early Texas history than is generally recognized today, and that efforts should be made to redress the situation by historical interpretation of the area, to teach locals and promote history-based tourism for visitors. So, extensive research into primary sources and others has been accomplished by Chris Kneupper. Believing that any interpretation should respect historical facts to the fullest extent possible, a detailed history of the Velasco area has been assembled, focusing on the several forts built there.

Soon after the initial “Fortaleza de Velasco” was constructed in 1832, it was the site of a skirmish called the Battle of Velasco, sometimes memorialized as the “first battle of the Texas Revolution” or its version of the “Boston Tea Party” or “Lexington and Concord”, after which it was largely abandoned. Although many accounts have been published about the Battle of Velasco, very few details (size or dimensions) were mentioned about the 1832 fort’s actual construction. Due to the strategic nature of the mouth of the Brazos, other later forts were also built during the Texas Revolution and the Civil War at almost the same location. Since the history of the several “Forts Velasco” can be very confusing, ongoing research is intended to sort and align all of the chronological and archaeological facts to describe the several military emplacements on the left bank of the Brazos River at its original mouth, now the entrance to Freeport Harbor. Thus, this history of the site can inform and enable any historical interpretation projects in coming years.

Author Chris Kneupper is a retired engineer, having lived in Brazoria County for over 40 years. He is a charter member of the Brazosport Archaeological Society, and long-term member of the Texas Archeological Society, having participated in many excavations in the county and around the state. He is also a member of the Sons of The Republic of Texas and a Texas Master Naturalist, and sits on the board of the Cradle of Texas Conservancy. This latter entity has a long-term goal of financing and managing the building of a replica of the 1832 fort.

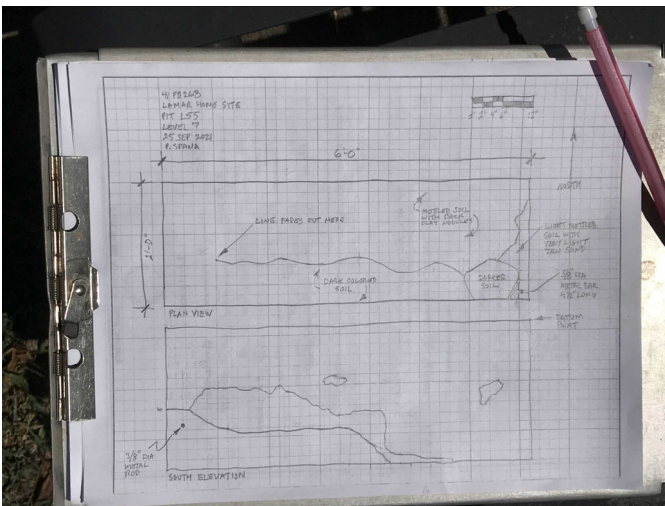
Location: Fort Bend Museum, 410 S. Fifth Street in Richmond, Texas. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome - the program is free and open to the public.



Photo credit: Old Fort Velasco Historical Association

Field Notes – Archeology along the Brazos

Soft dirt and cool weather - we finally got a break from the intense heat of the summer recently. That combined with all of the rain has made for ideal digging conditions. FBAS members are out every Saturday morning digging at our excavation site near downtown Richmond. The society is searching for evidence of an historic home that was built on the bank of the Brazos River around 1850. The group is hoping to locate evidence of piers of a foundation to give an idea of the orientation and size of the home. Locating the remains of the fireplace would be ideal. FBAS members dig every Saturday and welcome anyone who would like to help. If you are interested in joining please contact us. No experience necessary – we'll help train you with the proper methods of excavating.



Along with photographs, we also draw artifacts and features found in the excavation pit.



Soils samples are identified with a color by comparing actual samples to colors in a book called the Munsell Soil Color Book used by geologists.



Bruce Grethen uses a line level and folding ruler to check his depth. The pit is excavated in levels of four inches.



We've had lots of new volunteers join us recently to help dig and screen for artifacts.

FBAS Minutes

September 21, 2021

The Fort Bend Archeological Society met at the Gus George Law Enforcement Academy, Richmond, TX.

In attendance were 10 members and 1 guest.

Jay Roussel, President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes from August 17, 2021

No objections, minutes stand as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Balance as of September 14, 2021: \$4,757.69.

No objections, Treasurer's Report stands accepted.

Projects:

Bruce Grethen gave a brief update about what the society is currently working on. Excavations are continuing at the Mirabeau Lamar home site. The society is checking out anomalies discovered with their electronic equipment. They are currently looking at what may have been a root cellar that was excavated on the site in 2003.

New Business:

Paul Spana made a motion to move future FBAS meetings to the new Fort Bend Museum building. Rich Murphy seconded the motion and all voted in favor for the move. No one had any concerns about moving to the museum with many commenting it was a good idea.

Presentation:

Vice-President, Rich Murphy introduced speaker Becky Shelton who is a THC regional archeologist. She gave a presentation titled "Investigations of Early Norwegian Settlers on the Texas Frontier Discover the Home of Cleng Peerson." It was about the search for the home of Cleng Peerson, founding father of Texas's earliest Norwegian settlement in Bosque County.

Meeting adjourned: 8:09 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Paul Spana

FBAS Treasurer's Report

FORT BEND ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

October 12, 2021

Balance as of September 14, 2021	\$4,757.69
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1971	9/21/2021	FB Museum	Book for Sept speaker - Sowell	24.57
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1972	9/21/2021	Friends of THC	Honorarium for Rebecca Shelton	125.00
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1973	10/12/2021	FBHA	Postage - October 2021	5.30
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Balance as of October 12, 2021	\$4,602.82
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Submitted by

Claire Rogers, Treasurer