



ARCHEOLOGY DIVISION

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) Archeology Division works to identify, protect and preserve the state's irreplaceable archeological heritage.

What We Do

State Archeology Program

In the Archeology Division, the state archeologist oversees efforts of the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network, Texas Archeology Month, Historic Texas Lands Plaque Program, special projects and various forms of public assistance.

Texas Archeological Stewardship Network

The Texas Archeological Stewardship Network is composed of more than 100 stewards throughout Texas who work with agency archeologists to assist citizens statewide. The network serves as a model for other similar programs in the United States.

Texas Archeology Month

THC staff coordinates the annual observance of Texas Archeology Month in partnership with other archeological groups. The month-long October celebration acquaints Texans with their unique archeological heritage through many special events such as archeology fairs, museum exhibits, lectures and demonstrations.

Public Assistance and Education

Staff responds to public inquiries regarding prehistoric and historic archeological sites in Texas. The office offers archeological consultation to state agencies, professional and avocational archeologists, landowners, teachers, heritage groups and interested individuals.

Historic Texas Lands Plaque

This program recognizes Texas landowners who have worked to protect important historic places from frontier forts to Ice Age hunting camps.



Native American dancer at Hueco Tanks Interpretive Fair.

Marine Archeology Program

The state marine archeologist supports efforts to locate, investigate and protect hundreds of historic shipwrecks in Texas coastal waters. Staff conducts cultural resource management reviews for projects that might impact shipwrecks on state-owned submerged lands. The state marine archeologist also maintains a database of shipwrecks in Texas and carries out a program to identify and investigate significant shipwreck sites using volunteer assistance from the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network.

Cultural Resource Management

Staff assists federal and state agencies in complying with state and federal laws to preserve archeological and historic sites.

Division staff:

■ Reviews public construction projects and recommends ways to minimize impact to key sites. As part of the review process, the THC staff responds to more than 12,000 public inquiries annually and serves more than 2,600 cities, counties and agencies (both state and federal).

■ Issues State Antiquities Permits for all archeological investigations on public land or within coastal waters, approximately 400 permits each year.

Historical Designations

Staff coordinates the nomination of archeological sites as State Archeological Landmarks or for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Designation is often the most effective way to protect archeological sites threatened by new development or vandalism. The division also provides support to the Antiquities Advisory Board, citizens appointed by the THC to consider issues related to the Texas Antiquities Code.

Texas Archeological Sites Atlas Restricted Database

The Archeological Atlas is a computerized database of more than 65,000 archeological sites in Texas. Available to qualified researchers, it allows users to easily retrieve information about historic Texas sites.

Special Projects

La Salle Archeology Projects

In 1995, the THC discovered 17th-century French explorer La Salle's ship, the *Belle*, in Matagorda Bay. The ship was part of an expedition to establish a colony in the New World. THC archeologists excavated the *Belle* in 1996 and 1997. Artifacts are undergoing conservation at Texas A&M University for display in Texas museums. The award-winning book, *From A Watery Grave*, describes the search for and excavation of *La Belle*. The THC subsequently investigated La Salle's colony, Fort St. Louis, the first European colony in Texas, and uncovered more than one million artifacts. Major discoveries include eight French cannons, the remains of three French colonists and architectural evidence of a Spanish presidio.

Red River War Battle Sites Project

During the 1874–75 Red River War, U.S. military forces engaged in a campaign to remove Native American groups from the Texas Panhandle and Southern Plains regions. The THC was able to confirm and document significant battle sites from this period and to avoid further loss of historical information and damage by relic collectors. Archeology Division staff initiated the project in 1998 and



Panther Cave pictograph

made important discoveries about several major battles through field and archival research. The results of this work are detailed in the book *Battles of the Red River War: Archeological Perspectives on the Indian Campaign of 1874*.

Curatorial Facility Certification Program

The Curatorial Facility Certification Program certifies curatorial facilities that house state-associated held-in-trust archeological collections obtained off public lands. The certification program insures that a high quality care and management of held-in-trust collections is used by repositories and museums. Program staff also provides general outreach to museums and repositories on ways to properly care for artifacts collections.

How to Reach Us

Staff members are available to answer questions and provide preservation assistance. Please contact us at:
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