



August Program: “1840 Waters Plantation and Sugar Barn Preservation”

At our August meeting, Fred R. Beeler and John Walker will present the history of the Waters Plantation and Sugar Barn in Fort Bend County and the progress on their preservation of the plantation features. Join us at 7:00 pm Thursday, August 18, in room 103, Anderson Hall, University of St. Thomas, to learn about this historic site.

The Waters Plantation in Fort Bend County was established by Jonathan Dawson Waters, who purchased the land after his arrival in Texas on March 1, 1840 and named it Arcola Plantation. (This name lives on as the Arcola prison farm in southern Fort Bend County.) Waters continued buying land, and by 1860 he had one of the largest plantations in Texas and was considered the wealthiest person in Fort Bend County.

Waters grew sugar cane and cotton; he also built a sugar mill and a brickyard in 1849, and he had a cotton gin on the plantation. He later was a major stockholder and president of the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado Railway, which was operational by 1855. The 1860 census shows he had 216 slaves, and that made him

the third-largest slaveholder in Texas. Apparently he was a hard slave master, with a reputation for overworking and under-feeding his slaves.

Waters is known to have shot and killed an unarmed man in a dispute over property, an action for which he was never brought to trial. He outlived

three wives, never had children of his own, but adopted his third wife’s three children. In 1863 he purchased a colonial mansion in Galveston, later known as the Waters-Moody house and pictured in



Brick yard at the Waters Plantation

Historic Galveston Homes. The house was used as a hospital during the Civil War. The war cost Waters his fortune, since he had supported the Confederacy with a \$100,000 donation. He died in Houston on July 3, 1871, and was probably buried in Galveston.

One of our speakers, John Walker, is a resident of Fort Bend County and a member of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. He operates a web page, www.LifeOnTheBrazosRiver.com. Fred R. Beeler, who describes himself as an “average person” is a native Houstonian with a deep interest in the plantations of Fort Bend County.



Sugar Barn at the Waters Plantation

“I have always have had an interest in historical items,” Beeler says. “Some years back I happened to find the cistern for the Dewalt Plantation and I then realized that there were still items in the Fort Bend County area that needed to be preserved for Texas History. I was aware of the Sugar Barn,

but when I saw how everything had grown up around it,

I realized someone needed to clear all the trees and vines from around it. There was only one person that I could count on to do that and that was me.”



President's Message

REMINDER: THIS MONTHS MEETING *will be August 18, 2011; 7:00 P.M. to 9:30 P.M. PLEASE NOTE We will again be meeting at the UST Anderson Hall; room 103.*

I'm sure you have all heard the expression "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." And I bet you have all noticed our website has appeared to be "broke" lately. In fact, it has taken on that appearance for the past several months, but in reality it wasn't broken. I understood the situation from our webmaster, Richard Carter, the web site host had been bought out by another company. The new host demanded payment in a different manner than how we had been paying. They were requiring payment through PayPal or credit card, neither of which was in our banking capability. The problem was discussed during our July 21 membership meeting, and Vice-President Michael Bailey agreed to front the website payment personally with him being reimbursed by the Treasurer. Now I'm happy to say (thanks to Michael Bailey) our website went back on line effective July 26, just three work days after our meeting. Naturally, this method of payment cannot go on forever. Somewhere down the line, the HAS treasurer needs to arrange the payment responsibility directly with the web host. But until then, we are safely online.

But while dealing with that confusion, the board's attention to the problem called notice to the opportunity to propose a re-evaluation of our website. While the site may not be broke, it is felt the site may have the need for an "overhaul." Some potential improvements observed are in the areas of eye appeal, membership access to non-public information (some maybe to be added), professional image, and efficiency in meeting the public's expectation. There may be some topics (or tabs) that could be eliminated and perhaps new menu tabs added.

Another area that could stand some improvement is that of communications with the public or members. At times, I have heard from some new members of their inability to be able to contact someone through the website. They never seem to get a response from the contact link given. I know this is a fact, as I have tested the link myself to no avail. I realize there is a need during these days and times to keep everyone's full names and contact information confidential, so perhaps what is needed is a HAS specific email address that can be monitored by a board member (or members), the membership chairman, editor, or whoever it is decided. In addition to the web page, this address can be advertised in our newsletter and Facebook page. This method would allow a consistent address for communications even though officers and chair persons come and go out of office. Here is another important point: In further discussions with Richard, we should have others in training to be webmasters to serve as assistants so that our web information is kept promptly current and not neglected due to illness, absence, or retirement.

So now is an opportunity to maybe make something better that isn't broke. To better review and evaluate these and other ideas, the board is proposing to establish a special committee as authorized under Article VII, Section 3 of the HAS Constitution. The purpose of the committee will be to review the website in an effort to assure its maximum effectiveness with an overall objective to meet the information demands of the society's membership, to be inviting to the public's interest, and to facilitate a desire for potential membership. (Hey, maybe we will even decide to change hosts!) The committee's duties and responsibilities are already outlined in an "action" guide prepared for the committee members as soon as they are named. Can the Houston Archeological Society count on YOU as being one of these committee members? If you have a talent or skill that can be used on such committee, or perhaps you have an interest to learn more about website planning or webmaster maintenance, contact me or any one of the board members and let's get started.

Last, but not least, we all owe Richard Carter our greatest appreciation for all the attention and work he has given to maintaining our website over more years than I can count.

--Charlie Gordy

Minutes of the Houston Archeology Society Meeting July 21, 2011

Meeting at the University of St. Thomas was opened by Charlie Gordy who welcomed the members and visitors and introduced the speaker for the program, Tom Williams. Tom gave a slide and film presentation on the TAS Annual Field School held June 11-18 in Medina County where Tom was a pit supervisor.

After the presentation a business meeting was held. Minutes of May 19 meeting were approved as shown in the newsletter.

New Business:

Announcement of Nominating Committee for HAS officers for the coming year: Muriel Walker, Fred Kelly, and Bob Sewell. Nominations will be announced at the next meeting.

Website payment status: The HAS website has been down since March. The host merged with another company and request a monthly payment of approximately \$10 be made by debit card. In the absence of Michael Johnston, Treasurer, Charlie read an e-mail received from Michael concerning the payment for the website.

"I haven't contacted the website because I don't intend to use a debit card in my name. I think debit cards are a stunningly bad idea, and I've never accepted one. I haven't had time to pursue alternatives. I can't do business during business hours without using vacation time."

Michael Bailey volunteered to use his personal credit card to pay the monthly fee and HAS would reimburse him. Board will meet to decide on payment to Michael. Gordy asked Michael to get together with Richard Carter to discuss the website.

Request to host the TAS annual meeting October 2012: After discussion, Tom Williams made the motion to table the decision until the next HAS meeting. Bill Haskell seconded the motion. Vote was six in favor of tabling the vote until the August meeting, seven opposed. Motion made by Linda Swift to vote on the request of HAS hosting the TAS meeting, Carol Roberts seconded the motion. Majority vote was to decline the invitation to host the TAS meeting with two abstaining votes.

Decision on participating in San Jacinto Day Spring of 2012: Motion made by Tom Williams to vote to participate in the San Jacinto Day festival, motion seconded by Phyllis Bradley. After further discussion of the event, Roy Whitney made the motion to table the vote on this activity until the next month's meeting. Michael Bailey seconded the motion. Vote was to postpone decision for next month's meeting.

Refreshments provided by Michael Bailey. Meeting adjourned after motion made and seconded.

-- Phyllis Bradley, Secretary

August Lab Schedule

Lab will be held on Monday, August 15th and 29th in Room 103, Sewall Hall, Rice University from 7-9 p.m. Work continues documenting two private collections from a prehistoric coastal shell midden site. For a map, see www.rice.edu/maps. Closest parking is Founder's Court/Visitor Parking and requires a credit card.

HAS Member Jean Epperson Authors Book on Texas Pirates

Filibusters, Pirates, and Privateers of the Early Texas Coast, written by HAS member Jean Epperson, is now available. The cost of this 137-page hardcover book containing maps and color pictures is \$23.00 (postage and handling included). The manuscript and all rights were given to the Liberty County Historical Commission, which published the book. Checks should be made to LCHC and mailed to 550 CR 401, Dayton, TX 77535.

--Beth Aucoin

Nominees Still Needed

As we go to press, there are still slots available for nominees to serve on the HAS Board, and there is only one week to go before the nominating meeting. Many have been asked to serve, but so far, few have accepted. Please consider offering yourself or recommending another worthy candidate. Contact Muriel Walker, Fred Kelly, or Bob Sewell.

Final Legislative Update (from Steve Davis):

On July 20, Gov. Rick Perry signed into law the remaining bills resulting from the Special Session of the 82nd Legislature. Included in the legislation is Senate Bill 1 (SB1) which became the conduit of funding for various programs requiring special consideration out of the House Appropriations Bill. One major victory was to increase Texas Historical Commission operations budget by \$4,310,000 over the biennium and increase staffing by 26.5 FTE (full time employee equivalent). This required the transfer of those funds out of the Texas Preservation Trust Funds and into the General Revenue for assignment to the THC. This funding transfer was made law under SB1 and will become available to the THC beginning September 01, 2011.

Other than the Marketing unit which got wiped out, it appears that the Archeology Division took the largest hit with the loss of six full time staff. Some of these positions have already been absorbed through the retirement of two senior personnel. Sadly four others will lose their jobs at the end of August. We wish them well in their future endeavor and thank them for their faithful service to the citizens of Texas.

On the positive side, it appears that several major programs within the Archeology Division will be preserved and functional through the next two years:

1. The Texas Archeology Stewards Network (TASN) will continue to operate as a function of the THC. This will be good news to countless landowners throughout the State who rely on these local volunteers to assist them with site survey, recording, monitoring and coordinating with the State;
2. Texas Archeology Month will continue as a statewide educational effort; albeit with a greatly reduced budget and staff time;
3. The Regional Archeologist program will continue to serve the state through a combination of management restructuring that will combine staff to multi-task and accomplish a broad set of services.

Please submit articles for publication to *Profile* Editor Linda Swift at swiftlinda@sbcglobal.net.

Submit articles no later than September 1 for the September 2011 issue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ARCHEOLOGY IN THIS AREA, CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

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The Profile

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