

The Remarkable Life of Artist and Curator Eleanor Onderdonk

# TEXAS HERITAGE

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION | EST. 1954 | \$5 ISSUE | Volume 4 2018



CELEBRATING  
SAN ANTONIO'S  
TRICENTENNIAL

Digging Deeper at the Alamo

Flowing Through Time,  
San Antonio's Historic Acequias

Finding a Lost Spanish  
Colonial Military Site

# TEXAS ART

## Now Accepting Consignments



**Charles Taylor Bowling (American, 1891-1985)**

*West Texas Tank*, 1940 | Oil on canvas laid on board | 12 x 16 inches | Estimate: \$20,000 - \$30,000

**Inquiries:**

**Atlee Phillips**

**214.409.1786 | [AtleeP@HA.com](mailto:AtleeP@HA.com)**

DALLAS | NEW YORK | BEVERLY HILLS | SAN FRANCISCO | CHICAGO | PALM BEACH  
LONDON | PARIS | GENEVA | AMSTERDAM | HONG KONG

Always Accepting Quality Consignments in 40 Categories  
1 Million+ Online Bidder-Members

Paul R. Minshull #16591, BP 12-25%; see HA.com 47717

**HERITAGE**  
AUCTIONS  
AMERICA'S AUCTION HOUSE

# TEXAS HERITAGE

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION | EST. 1954 | \$5 ISSUE | Volume 4 2018

## FEATURES

- 8 **Flowing for Three Centuries**  
A network of 18th-century ditches, known as *acequias*, allowed for the success and permanence of modern-day San Antonio. Spanish missionaries installed these irrigation systems, which followed the natural downslope of the land, to water hundreds of acres of mission farm fields.  
**By Clinton McKenzie and Jessica Nowlin, Ph.D.**

- 20 **Discovering More...Archeology at the Alamo**  
In 2016, archeologists dug deeper into San Antonio and Texas history, excavating two sites corresponding to the south and west sections of a wall that once encircled the larger perimeter of the Alamo compound. Digging beneath concrete-covered soil, they made a few surprising discoveries.  
**By Nesta Anderson, Ph.D.**

## OTHER ARTICLES

- 28 **The Remarkable Life of Eleanor Onderdonk**  
The daughter and sister of two renowned Texas artists, Eleanor Onderdonk left her own lasting legacy as one of the most influential women in Lone Star art during the 20th century.  
**By Amy Fulkerson**

### EDITORIAL STAFF

**Editor,** Gene Krane

**Assistant Editor,** Pamela Murtha

**Proofreaders,** Molly Brown and Donna B. Jones

**Production Designer,** Stacey Van LANDINGHAM

## DEPARTMENTS

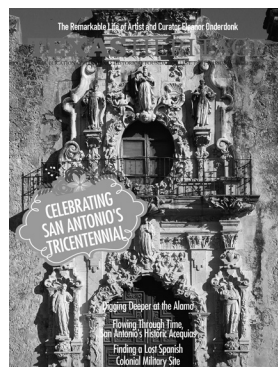
- 6 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- 14 **LOCAL LEGACIES**
- 18 **PICTURING TEXAS**
- 27 **TEXAS COLLECTIONS**

## LISTINGS

- 7 **CONTRIBUTIONS AND SPECIAL MEMORIALS**
- 26 **NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS**
- 30 **TEXAS HISTORICAL MUSEUMS**

### CONTRIBUTORS

Nesta Anderson, Ph.D., Eleanor Barton, Chandler Historical Museum, City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation, Commerce Public Library, Marshall Doke, Jr., Bruce Elsom, Matthew Elverson, Amy Fulkerson, Carol Highsmith, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Rosanna Luke, Clinton McKenzie, McNay Art Museum, National Park Service, North Texas Society of History and Culture, Jessica Nowlin, Ph.D., Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., Raba Kistner, Rosenberg Library, San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation, Arthur W. Stewart, The University of Texas San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research, Witte Museum



### ON THE COVER

Church facade of Mission San José in San Antonio. Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service.

Texas HERITAGE magazine is published quarterly by the Texas Historical Foundation, P.O. Box 50314, Austin, Texas 78763; 512-453-2154; admin@texashistoricalfoundation.org. Opinions expressed by contributing writers do not necessarily reflect those of the Texas Historical Foundation. THF is a private, nonprofit organization supported by membership dues, contributions, and grants. Unsolicited articles not exceeding 2,000 words will be considered by a review committee for publication. Articles pertaining to Texas heritage, culture, and preservation activities are given priority. Submissions become the property of the Texas Historical Foundation unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope for return of materials.

# Foundation Grant Record Continues to Grow

THF has given more than \$1.7 million to support nearly 300 projects—using privately raised funds and no state or federal tax money.

The Foundation’s endowments will assist with these projects that recently were approved:

- **The Wittliff Collections**, Texas State University, San Marcos, will use its grant to create *Rivers of Texas: A Literary Companion*, a book and exhibit highlighting artists inspired by Lone Star rivers and waterways.

- **Texas Wendish Heritage Society**, Giddings, received a grant for the installation of a concrete floor beneath an 1850 log home located on the TWHS grounds. This upgrade will provide support and allow for better viewing of historic artifacts within the structure.

- **Amigos of the Goliad State Park and Historic Site**, Goliad, won support for its Tejano History Conference set for May 2019. The group helps plan special programs and events, with the main focus on educational programs for all age groups.

- **Bellville Turnverein Pavilion Restoration Project**, Bellville, will use its THF grant for electrical, plumbing, and structural upgrades to the historic dance hall, built in 1897. It is one of only two 12-sided dance halls in Texas and the first “round” pavilion.

- THF’s fifth grant to the **Dickey House Museum & Multipurpose Center, Inc.**, Taylor, will help the group hire a preservation consultant. DHMMCI is restoring the Dr. James Dickey Home to become a health and wellness resource complete with community outreach.

For additional grant information, visit THF’s website at [www.texashistoricalfoundation.org](http://www.texashistoricalfoundation.org).



## ▲ CHANDLER HISTORICAL MUSEUM, INC., CHANDLER

Texas Historical Foundation directors Elizabeth Wahlquist, left, and Laura Wahlquist Stockdale, holding the ceremonial check on left, met with CHM board members at the home of the late United States Senator Ralph Yarborough. The grant funds assisted with painting the residence, which now serves as a museum and visitors center, with a mildew resistant product. Photograph courtesy of the Chandler Historical Museum.



## ▲ COMMERCE PUBLIC LIBRARY, COMMERCE

Foundation funds will help with the costs of restoring the aging parapet and surrounding trim on the city’s library. THF Chairman of the Board David Martinez, far left, and Vice President Michael Marchant, far right, made the presentation. Photograph provided by Commerce Public Library.



## ▲ NORTH TEXAS SOCIETY OF HISTORY AND CULTURE, NOCONA

THF Director Carol Lipscomb, Ph.D., second from left, presented a grant check to NTSHC representatives to assist with a museum expansion project. The work will enlarge portions of the venue in order to showcase its collection. Photograph courtesy of the NTSHC.

## Long-Serving THF Director and Supporter Passes Away

Barbara McCormick's smile might have been what a person first noticed upon meeting the diminutive native Texan. In little time, though, her genuine warmth and optimistic spirit would be revealed. A world traveler with friends across the globe—and a former THF director and benefactor—McCormick's death on September 6 in Kerrville left many mourning her passing.

Though she was born in Uvalde, her father's career with JC Penney led the family to Del Rio and later to Snyder. Following high school graduation, the young Barbara Taylor went to Abilene Christian University, where she met and then married Junior McCormick. His family's business in Snyder beckoned, and the couple returned to the Scurry County town where they made a home with their three children.

Barbara McCormick joined the Texas Historical Foundation board in 2002 and supported organizational causes behind the scene. Often dressed in jeans and cowboy boots—with a camera around her neck—she regularly attended board meetings across the state, documenting historic buildings and group activities. Many of those images appeared in this magazine.

McCormick is survived by her husband, children, eight grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.



THF Chairman Emeritus Marshall Doke, Jr., a Dallas attorney, donated 106 volumes of the official decisions of the Texas Supreme Court dating back to 1846 to the Bryan Museum in Galveston. Archivist Carol Wood, shown above, accepted the gift. Now, the legal opinions of the state's highest court will be available to the public for research by appointment. Photograph provided by Marshall Doke, Jr.

## Save Historic Texas Architecture



You can help preserve historic Lone Star architecture by becoming an early supporter of THF's newest endowment. Call 512-453-2154 to learn how.

### PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE



Excavations at San Felipe Spring,  
Val Verde County, 1998



Excavating Confederate Veterans,  
Texas State Cemetery, Travis County, 1995

### CONSERVING OUR ARCHEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

**PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.**  
Cultural Resources Services

2105 Donley Avenue, Suite 400 • Austin, Texas 78758-4513  
Tel: (512) 459-3349 Fax: (512) 459-3851  
E-mail: [staff@paiarch.com](mailto:staff@paiarch.com)

## A Profound Question, a More Profound Answer

By Bruce Elsom

The restoration completed, it was time for the artifacts to be returned to their rightful place. If these were any other antiques, and this was any other state, it would have been a simple matter to load them on a flatbed and haul them down the road. But these were Alamo cannons, and this is Texas.

Even 182 years after they fired their last shots, these relics still are regarded by Texans as military armament that are due honors. So on August 22, Texas A&M (whose Conservation Research Laboratory is the premiere restoration facility in the United States) and the Alamo held *A Salute to Alamo Cannon Conservation*. Texas General Land Office Commissioner George P. Bush was on hand, as was A&M System Chancellor John Sharp and other dignitaries. The Aggie Band played as a Corps of Cadets Honor Guard stood watch over the last two restored cannons. The ceremony concluded with a changing of the guard, during which reenactors from the Texas Army replaced the Corps, signifying the armament transfer back to the Alamo for transport to their rightful place.

The most inspirational point of the ceremony, at least for me, occurred during a speech by Marcus Luttrell, the former Navy SEAL whose harrowing experiences are recounted in the book and movie *Lone Survivor*. Any of Luttrell's life experiences would be enough to capture an audience's rapt attention, but Luttrell chose seventh-grade Texas history. As he related, one day his indifference to the lesson earned him a trip into the hall, where the teacher looked him in the eye and asked, "Marcus, what kind of Texan are you going to be?" That is a profound question for a 13-year-old—and for us all.

So, now, I ask you: What kind of Texan are you going



to be? First or 10th generation Texan, we are all part of something exceptional. Leader or loner, ranch rich or dirt poor, whether neighbors are nearby or more than a day's ride away, Lone Star kinship is in our DNA—drawn from the soil with the first roots planted. We are raised to ride for the brand, never giving a passing thought that another is worthy. Texans pass down a legacy, built on and better than the one they inherited. So fly your Texas flags, cover your bumpers with "Don't Mess with Texas" and "Come and Take It" stickers. Make sure the next generation carries on with the same pride and conviction so that they, too, can answer thoughtfully when

asked, "What kind of Texan are you going to be?"

As for Marcus Luttrell, he gave the following response at the Alamo cannon ceremony:

*The Alamo is the House where our warrior spirit was born, and it's a great example of what kind of people we are, how resilient we are, and how long we're going to last. The same iron that runs in that cannon runs in my veins.*

Editor's note: The Texas Historical Foundation awarded two grants, totaling \$21,000, to support the conservation of the Alamo cannons and will make a formal presentation of these funds at the historic mission soon.

*Bruce Elsom is a sixth-generation Texan who traces his roots back to the Texas Revolution. He has enjoyed living in several areas of the state and currently resides in Houston. Send comments regarding this column to: THF, P. O. Box 50314, Austin, Texas 78763 or via email to [admin@texashistoricalfoundation.org](mailto:admin@texashistoricalfoundation.org).*

## TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN, David D. Martinez, Corsicana  
PRESIDENT, Bruce Elsom, Houston  
VICE PRESIDENT, Sylvia Tillotson, Dallas  
VICE PRESIDENT, Michael Marchant,  
Grapevine  
SECRETARY, Carol Lipscomb, Ph.D., Fort Worth  
TREASURER, Patrick O. Rayes, Dallas

#### • HONORARY DIRECTORS

J.P. Bryan, Houston  
Red McCombs, San Antonio  
Sheila Umphrey, Beaumont  
Walter Umphrey, Beaumont

#### • BOARD MEMBERS

Jonathan Allred, Coppell  
John Aughinbaugh, Fort Worth  
Fred Bangs, Irving  
Martin D. Beirne, Houston  
Dr. Robert Bettis, Irving  
Patrick Biggins, Corpus Christi  
John F. Boyle, Jr., Irving  
Shannon Wilson Callewart, Dallas  
Sam Coats, Dallas  
R.J. Johnson Collins, Uvalde  
Brian P. Costanza, Colleyville  
Judy Davis, Elgin  
Patrick DePole, Frisco  
Tom Doell, Dallas  
Marshall J. Doke, Jr., Dallas  
Thomas R. Driskell, Houston  
Michael Duda, Dallas  
Lewis S. Fisher, AIA, San Antonio  
Caira Franz, Llano  
Joseph J. French, Jr., Dallas  
Joseph J. French, III, Georgetown  
Don B. Frost, San Antonio  
Barbara Gandy, Nacogdoches  
Paulette Gerukos, Houston  
Carol Gideon, McLean, VA  
Beverly Hansen, Huntsville  
Stephen L. Hardin, Ph.D., Abilene  
Robert A. Higley, Houston  
Kay Hindes, San Antonio  
Darrel Holmquist, Georgetown  
Eleanor Jordan, Dripping Springs  
Dian Malouf, Dallas  
Henry E. Meadows, Jr., Austin  
John B. Meadows, Austin  
Dr. Tom Middlebrook, Nacogdoches  
John Moore, Corpus Christi  
Kathy Myers, Dallas  
Joe Nebhan, El Paso  
Lee Pfluger, San Angelo  
Margaret Purvis, Midland  
Kelly Rushing, Houston  
Michael A. Sabota, Tyler  
Hank Seale, III, Dripping Springs  
Billye Proctor Shaw, Abilene  
William J. Sibley, San Antonio  
J. Allen Smith, Lone Oak  
Michael Sparks, Houston  
Dian Graves Stai, Fredericksburg  
Laura Wahlquist Stockdale, Dallas  
William E. Strother, Dallas  
Angela Styles, Washington, D.C.  
Elizabeth Susser, Corpus Christi  
Marylee Taylor, Del Rio  
Margaret A. Thomas, Cuero  
Ralph Thomas, Houston  
Wendy S. Thomas, Kaufman  
Kurt von Plonski, Houston  
Elizabeth Wahlquist, Dallas  
Clark Wernecke, Ph.D., Pflugerville  
Helen Widener, Trinidad  
Ty Wood, Colorado City  
Jack W. Young, Dallas



### MISSION OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The Texas Historical Foundation serves past, present, and future Texans by supporting research in and publication of Texas history, assisting in the preservation of historic and prehistoric artifacts and information, and raising and providing funds for these purposes.

### The Texas Historical Foundation wishes to thank these generous supporters:

**\$2,150**

All THF Board  
and Executive Committee members  
(listed at left)

#### Other

Hyunkyu Jang, Woodridge, IL  
Paul Hersey, Austin  
Albertsons Safeway, Phoenix, AZ  
William Scott Farrarr, Arlington

### Special Memorials and Acknowledgments

#### In memory of Patricia Mast

Betty and Marshall Doke, Jr., Dallas  
Vicki and John Meadows, Austin  
Elizabeth and Jerry Susser, Corpus Christi

#### In memory of Barbara Taylor McCormick

Betty and Marshall Doke, Jr., Dallas  
Gene Krane and Jim Evans, Austin  
Vicki and John Meadows, Austin  
Linda and Patrick Rayes, Dallas  
Laura Wahlquist Stockdale, Dallas  
Elizabeth and Jerry Susser, Corpus Christi  
Elizabeth Wahlquist, Dallas

#### In memory of Paula Sparks

Debbie and John Aughinbaugh, Fort Worth  
Louann Gallagher, Houston  
Linda and Patrick Rayes, Dallas  
Leslie Sparks, Claude

#### In memory of Jack R. Wahlquist

Shannon Wilson Callewart, Dallas



This page: The Espada Aqueduct has the distinction of being the only remaining one of its kind in the United States and the oldest continuously operating aqueduct in North America. Opposite page: The Espada Acequia winds for nearly five miles, a centuries-old feat of Spanish Colonial engineering that still supplies water to crops grown on privately-owned farms. Both photographs by Carol Highsmith, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.





# Flowing FOR THREE CENTURIES

How Irrigation Ditches Became  
Part of San Antonio's History

By Clinton McKenzie and Jessica Nowlin, Ph.D.

**DURING THIS YEAR**, both the City of San Antonio and Bexar County are celebrating their 300th anniversaries. Observation of these tricentennials has renewed the focus on the area's rich Spanish Colonial history and, in particular, the architectural legacy of the region's founding missions. Largely unsung, though, is the network of 18th-century irrigation canals that made the success and permanence of what is now modern San Antonio possible.

The Villa de Bexar, the Villa de San Fernando, the Presidio San Antonio de Bexar, and the five mission pueblos—San Antonio de Valero (later renamed the Alamo), San José y San Miguel, San Juan Capistrano, Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, and San Francisco de la Espada—all relied on water from these often-forgotten irrigation channels. Collectively, all of these separate entities were referred to by the geographic place name “San Antonio de Bexar” by the beginning of the 19th century and became known simply as San Antonio following the Texas Revolution.

The presence of two springs that fed the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek, along with the gently sloping north-to-south topography of the San Antonio valley, likely influenced the Spanish to colonize the region in the early 1700s. Settlers took advantage of these natural resources and features to excavate canals, called *acequias* (ah-say-key-uhs), to water crop fields.

A member of the Espinosa-Olivares-Aguirre Expedition, Franciscan Friar Isidro Félix de Espinosa, first described the discovery and naming of the bountiful springs, as well as San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River. He wrote in a diary entry dated April 13, 1709:

*We crossed a large plain...and after going through a mesquite flat and some holm-oak groves we came to a canal, bordered by many trees and with water enough to supply a small town...We named it San Pedro Spring...and at a short distance we came to...a copious spring which rises near a populous ranchería of Indians... The river, which is formed by this spring, could supply not only a village but a city...we called [it] the river of San Antonio de Padua.*

The Governor of Spanish Coahuila and Texas, Martín de Alarcón, mounted an expedition in 1718 that resulted in the founding of Mission San Antonio de Valero, the Presidio de San Antonio de Bexar, and the Villa de Bexar—all on San Pedro Creek. In January of the following year, Governor Alarcón “...gave orders to begin with all assiduity the construction of the acequias for both the *villa* [the Spanish word for town] and the said mission of San Antonio de Valero.”

#### **UNDERSTANDING ACEQUIAS**

Acequia is a Spanish word derived from the Arabic *al-asaqiya* meaning “the canal” or “the waterway.” The term and the technology were brought to Spain during the Islamic conquest and occupation from 732 to 1492. The system does not require pumps or pipes but instead relies upon gravity for the gentle flow of water downslope.

All Spanish settlements in the New World, from Florida in the east to California in the west, utilized acequias, if the water and land conditions allowed for their construction. Many, in fact, are still in operation in New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas, including San Antonio. By

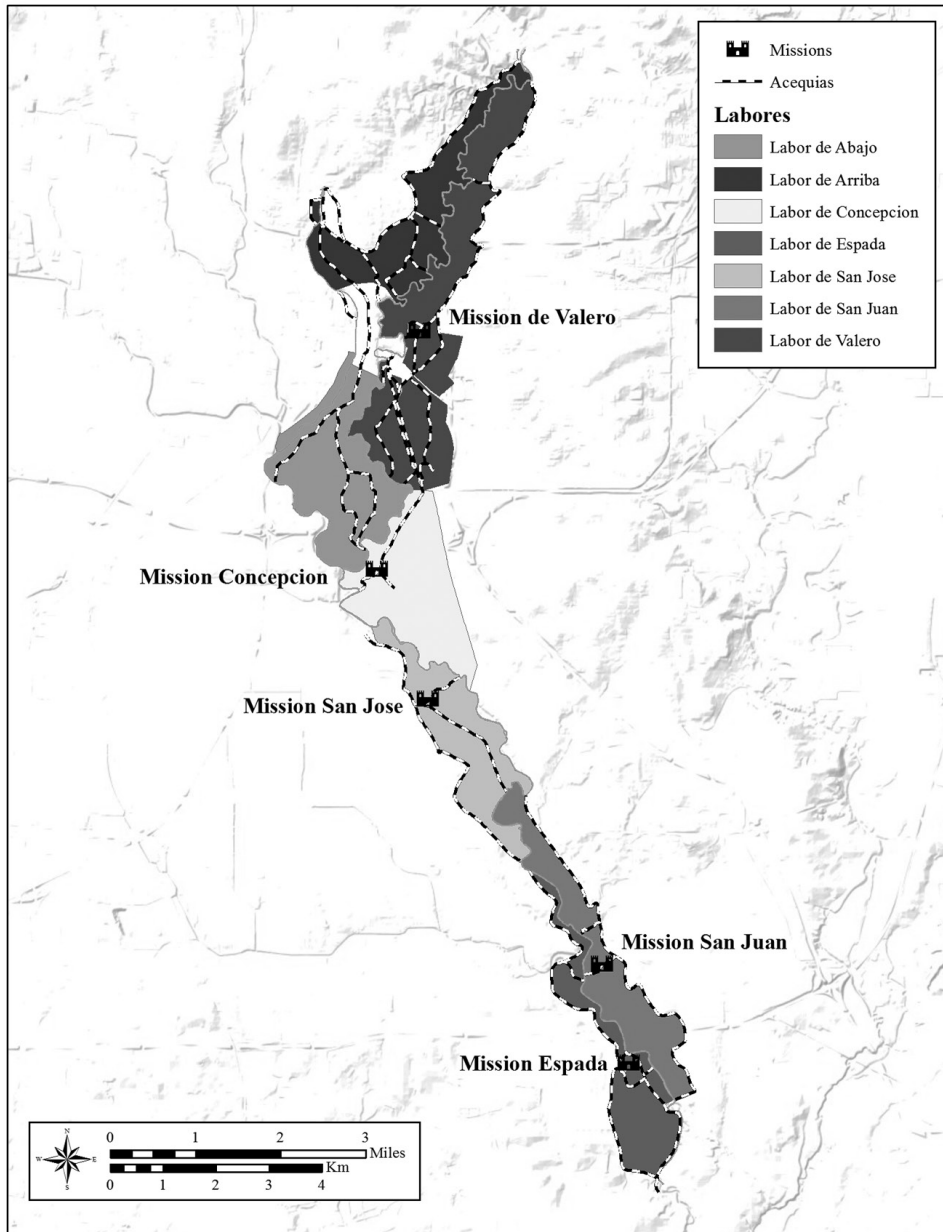
the end of the Spanish Colonial era, there were nearly a dozen of these irrigation ditches in San Antonio. Each of the five mission pueblos had their own, and the Villa de San Fernando was served by four. There were two small private canals within the municipality as well.

#### **AN ENGINEERING FEAT**

Each acequia watered a municipal labor, the word for farm in Old Spanish. That agricultural acreage was in turn divided into smaller plots. Known as a *suerte*, literally translated as “a chance,” these land parcels were assigned to individual citizens of the villa at random by lottery. The labores of the San Antonio missions were farmed communally by the Native American converts.

An acequia always originates and ends on a river or creek. Designed as an open system, the water continuously flows through the canal. San Antonio's Upper Labor Acequia, for example, began on the west side of the San Antonio River and watered 52 suertes before returning to the San Pedro Creek, north of the villa. Likewise, the San Pedro Acequia started on the San Pedro Creek and flowed south, where it fed some 40 civilian suertes before joining the San Antonio River below the town.

Because they rely on gravity, these agricultural waterways always flow from higher to lower ground, typically following elevation contours. As a result, acequias do not follow straight lines, often crossing the landscape in curving lines that adhere to a downward slope. These trenches are able to cross a major elevation change by use of an *aque-duct*, which serves as a bridge to move the water past an obstacle that otherwise would inhibit its function. For example, the Espada Aqueduct



This graphic illustrates the network of acequias that supplied water to the *labores* (farm fields) for five Spanish missions established along the San Antonio River in the mid-18th century. Courtesy of The University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research.

called *dulas*, directed the specific day, time, and duration a farmer could irrigate in order to ensure this vital resource was available to all within an acequia system.

Once established, these agricultural channels required annual maintenance to keep them functioning properly. Each year, the headgate was closed to drain water from the system, allowing for needed repairs and the removal of sediment and other debris. Farmers along the route of the acequia formed “companies,” with each member responsible for maintenance of the section within their suerte. Landholders, who were required to assemble in January or February, faced a fine if the system was not clean and in working order.

### DEMISE OF THE ACEQUIAS

Following Texas independence, the term “acequia” was slowly exchanged for “ditch,” and municipal irrigation canals were overseen by a ditch commissioner, appointed by the City Council of San Antonio. The office collected rent from users, and the income was used for maintenance. However, several of the old mission acequias remained in the hands of private ditch companies just as they had in the Spanish and Mexican periods. In fact, the Espada Acequia still is maintained by a ditch company, which has the oldest confirmed water

carried the flow of the Espada Acequia over the low elevation of Piedras Creek so that instead of terminating there, the irrigation ditch could continue on to reach the Espada Mission fields another mile downstream.

The Spanish laid out agricultural fields all along both sides of the acequia route. The design of the ancient irrigation system also incorporated a dam, headgate, and multiple watergates. A dam (or *pre-*

*sa*), located at an acequia’s origin, raised the water level and directed it into the canal. The headgate, positioned close to that barrier, was the on/off switch, starting or stopping the flow as needed. The watergates were smaller control points along the route that farmers opened to water their acreage. Once the soil was soaked, the gate was shut. This method is known as “flooded field irrigation.” Spanish water rights,



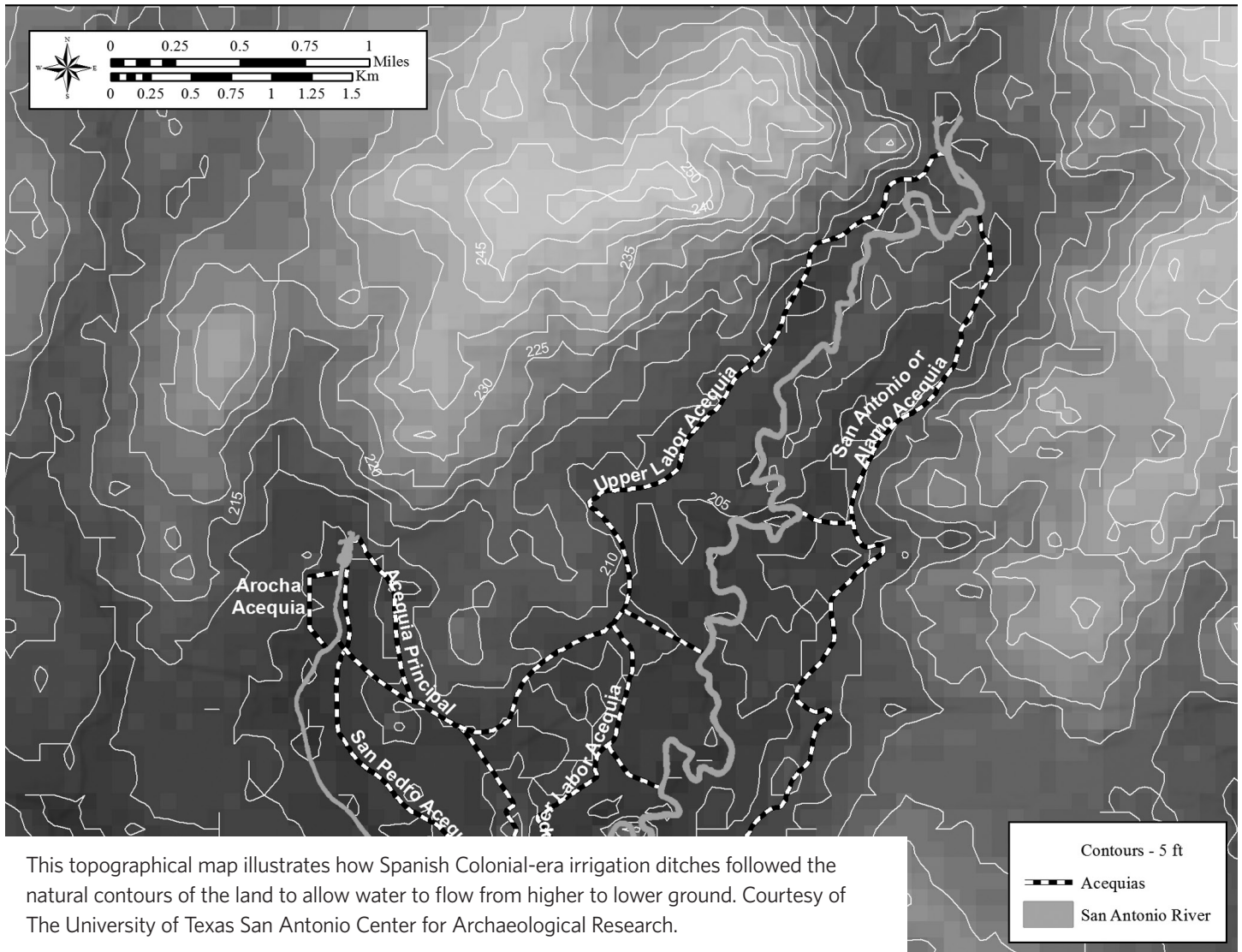
This page, top: The Espada Aqueduct was constructed in the 1740s to carry the flow of water over a low elevation point in Piedras Creek and allow for the irrigation of mission farmlands a mile further downstream. Photograph by Carol Highsmith, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Original in color. Bottom: A series of gates positioned along an acequia were opened and closed according to water rights that dictated the day, time, and duration that fields could be irrigated. Courtesy of the National Park Service. Original in color.



rights in the state, and the system remains in use today—287 years after it began in 1731.

The last quarter of the 19th century saw a precipitous decline in the use of the municipal water ditches. City growth meant that farms were gradually replaced by neighborhoods, shops, and factories. After the opening of the water works, an underground mechanized (pump-driven) pipework system in 1878, one mayor characterized the old acequia network as "an expensive luxury." In addition to declining rents, pollution of the ditches resulted in frequent warnings to residents not to drink the water. Finally, by the early 1890s, the city began closing off and filling in downtown municipal ditches, with the majority largely gone by 1910. Only the rural San Juan and Espada acequias continued to operate after this period.

A renewed interest and appreciation for the role of the canals in the development of San Antonio dawned late in the 20th century, and they were declared a Historic Engineering Landmark in conjunction with the 1968 Hemis-



This topographical map illustrates how Spanish Colonial-era irrigation ditches followed the natural contours of the land to allow water to flow from higher to lower ground. Courtesy of The University of Texas San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research.

fair. Preservation initiatives restored remnants of the irrigation channels in Brackenridge Park, Hemisfair Plaza, San Pedro Park, Mission San José y San Miguel, and Mission San Juan, as well as on the grounds of the Alamo. Today, anyone who wants to inspect a functioning acequia system can visit the Farm at Mission San Juan.

Relics of the past, these historic canals were integral to the development of the city. The water they brought to farms and fields in the 1700s sustained life for early set-

tlers. Those acequias that survive today continue to function as they did when built nearly three centuries ago. ★

*Clinton McKenzie is a project archaeologist at The University of Texas San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research, sits on the Bexar County Historical Commission, and is an archeological steward for the Texas Historical Commission. Jessica Nowlin, Ph.D., is a professional archeologist, professor at UTSA, and Geographic Information System specialist*

*for The University of Texas San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research.*

For more information, visit <https://www.sanantonio300.org/> and <http://bexar.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=483e4d0ce14d452b85bb1a6680218181>.

Editor's note: Although "archaeology" is an acceptable spelling used by many professional organizations, "archeology" is the preferred style of Texas HERITAGE magazine.

# *In Search of La Garita* and San Antonio's Spanish Colonial Powder House

By Matthew Elverson

During the summer of 2016, the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) launched an archeological investigation to identify the location of two Spanish Colonial military landmarks that were no longer standing. The project was conducted in conjunction with the city's tricentennial celebration and the San Antonio Founding Initiative 2018, an OHP-led effort to archeologically verify significant lost sites within the city.

## HISTORIC STRUCTURES

The Powder House and its associated Watch Tower, known as *La Garita*, were erected between 1808 and 1809 under the orders of Manuel Antonio Cordero y Bustamante, then governor of Spanish Texas. Both were constructed of stone. The Powder House was a one-story building used to store munitions and gunpowder. The three-story Watch Tower commanded a strategic view of San Antonio de Bexar and the surrounding countryside. The two structures comprised a significant military post that was occupied, in order, by the militaries of Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the United States, and the Confederate States of America. Historical accounts suggest that troops led by Mexican General Joaquín Ramírez y Sesma camped near or at the site of the



Powder House and Watch Tower prior to attacking the Alamo.

## ARCHIVAL STUDY

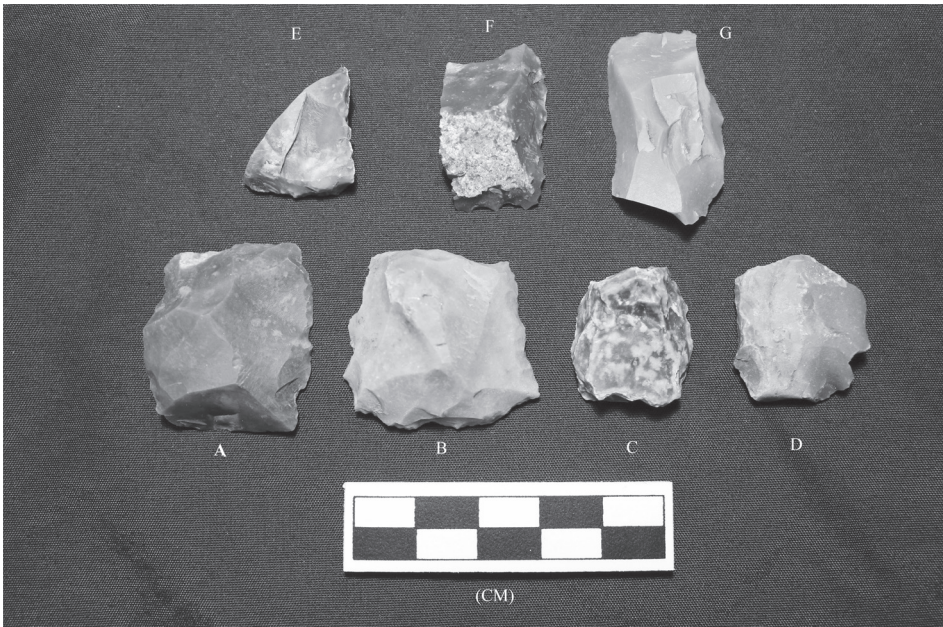
Previous research and the review of historical documents, including several descriptions of the buildings, maps, plats, and deed records, suggested that the site of the 19th-century military installation was within San Antonio's City Cemetery Number Two. The munitions depot and strategic lookout had been razed at some point prior to the municipal burial ground's establishment in 1884.

## NEW TESTING

With the investigative work completed, the OHP obtained a Texas Antiquities Permit to perform a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey within the cem-

etry to identify any subsurface structural remains. The geophysical technology is a non-invasive tool that uses radar pulses to view underground anomalies. The investigation revealed the likely presence of foundation walls that corresponded to the original location of the Powder House and Watch Tower. The wall-like anomalies ran in a southeast to northwest alignment, essentially fronting the original Spanish Colonial-era Alameda Road (now East Commerce), in contrast to the cemetery's burial plots and

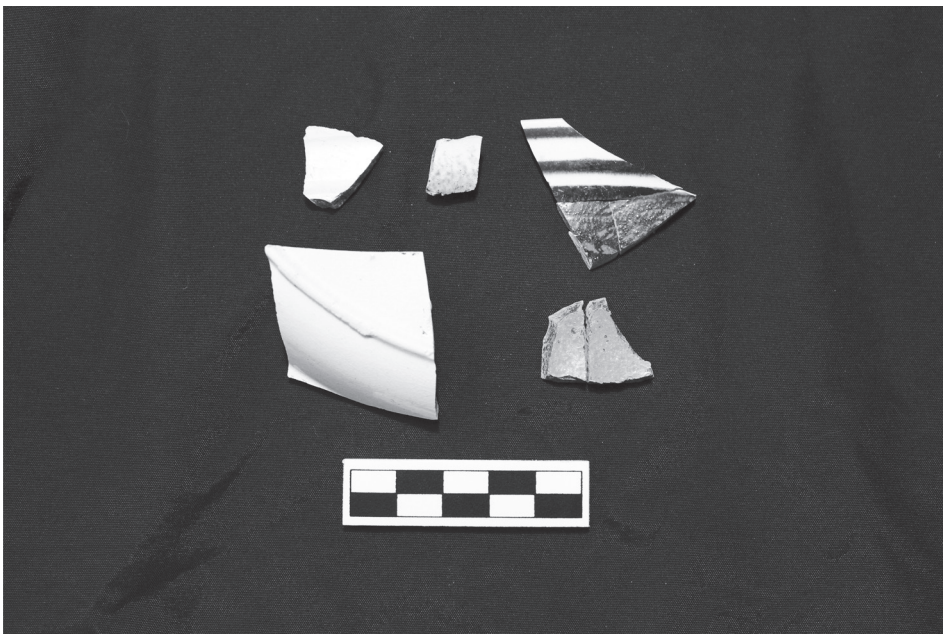
Above: *Old Mexican Lookout, or Watch Tower, 2 Miles from the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas, November 1848*, by military artist Seth Eastman. Image courtesy of the McNay Art Museum. Original in sepia.



modification of locally sourced *chert* (flint stone) to manufacture gunflints. All artifacts recovered during the excavation will be curated by a certified state repository.

The archeological confirmation of the Powder House and Watch Tower site represents a significant discovery for the City of San Antonio, helping document its rich military history.

*Matthew Elverson is assistant archaeologist for the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation and led the effort to locate the lost key military depot.*



Top left: Gunflints found during the archeological dig helped confirm the site as the location of the Powder House munitions depot. Below: Possible early 19th-century ceramics also were uncovered. Photographs courtesy of the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation. Originals in color.

monuments that run in an east-to-west grid pattern.

In July 2016, the OHP began archeological investigations at the cemetery in two locations, away from interments, that corresponded to the structural anomalies seen in the GPR survey. Excavation revealed well-preserved stone walls and material deposits aligned with the Spanish Colonial origins of the property. These structural remnants were left in position, documented, then reburied upon completion of field work.

Artifacts recovered from the in-

vestigation included glass, cut nails, horseshoe nails, and 19th-century ceramics. Of particular significance, however, were several *gunflints*, pieces of flint stone used to spark ignition, and evidence of gunflint production that fit with the early 1800's military function of the Powder House. Two larger pieces of the stone artifacts fit the dimensions for a Brown Bess musket, a popular firearm from the second half of the 18th century to the first quarter of the 19th century. The presence of cobbles and flakes, byproducts of stone carving, indicated on-site

*The Friends of Gillespie County Country*  
**Schools**

**Restoring and Preserving Our History**

In the heart of the Texas Hill Country visit 17 historic one-room schools built between 1847 and 1930 by following the 120 mile Gillespie County Country Schools Driving Trail through the scenic Fredericksburg, Texas countryside.

Visit our website for a tour map and information on our historic schools and community centers.

All schools listed on the National Register of Historic Places.  
 Member of Country School Association of America.

**WWW.HISTORICSCHOOLS.ORG**



# A History of Saving History

## *The San Antonio Conservation Society*

On March 22, 1924, 13 women founded the San Antonio Conservation Society, one of the first community preservation groups in the United States. Focusing not only on the city's historic built environment, but also the natural one, these individuals made the cultural conservation of San Antonio their goal.

Today the Society advocates for the reuse of historic buildings, provides annual grants for local preservation projects, maintains a research library, and supports heritage projects.

In 1926, two years after the San Antonio Conservation Society was established, the organization made its first purchase—the last original doors to the Mission San José granary. This acquisition marked the beginning of the group's efforts to preserve the city's five Spanish Colonial missions. Almost 90 years later, the Society played a key role in nominating those historic structures for recognition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). On July 5, 2015, the World Heritage Committee gave its approval, and the missions became the first World Heritage site in Texas.

An educational initiative, the Heritage Education Tours program, now in its 58th year, provides local fourth-graders with the opportunity to experience San Antonio's historic sites firsthand. The Society orga-

nizes free field trips, offering a teacher's workshop and arranging for charter buses and professional guides. These tours are among the organization's largest ongoing outreach programs, bringing Texas history to life for roughly 2,500 students each year.

Another event, A Night In Old San Antonio® (NIOA), recognized as the largest celebration and fundraiser for preservation in the country, finances much of the Society's work. Since 1948, NIOA® has been a staple of Fiesta San Antonio, an annual festival celebrating the heritage, culture, and spirit of the Alamo City.

As the preservation group prepares for its 95th anniversary in 2019, the San Antonio Conservation Society continues to champion responsible stewardship of the city's built and natural resources, guided by founding member Anna Ellis' motto: "Shall I say, 'Yes, I remember it,' or 'Here it is, I helped to save it?'"

Visit [www.saconservation.org](http://www.saconservation.org) to learn more.  
—Rosanna Luke, San Antonio Conservation Society Membership & Communications Coordinator

Above: A man stands beside one of the arches on the ruined second floor of Mission San José's convento (priests' quarters), looking southeast. The church's bell tower is visible behind him. Courtesy of the San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation, 11.0084RE.



# CASETA★

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND STUDY OF EARLY TEXAS ART

## THE NANCY AND TED PAUP CASETA RESEARCH INITIATIVE \$2,000 AWARD

**TOWARD THE COMPLETION OF A PROJECT OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH  
RELATED TO THE HISTORY OF EARLY TEXAS ART AND ARTISTS**

### **What is Original Research?**

Original research is primary research and refers to unpublished facts, arguments, concepts, statements or theories. The term also applies to any unpublished analysis or synthesis of published material that appears to advance a position, or amounts to an original narrative or historical interpretation.

### **What is Early Texas Art?**

CASETA defines it as art produced at least 40 years prior to the present date by artists who were born in, lived in or worked in Texas.

### **Who May Apply?**

- Any upper level undergraduate or graduate student enrolled in a Texas, Colorado, Louisiana, Oklahoma, or New Mexico public or private college or university or any undergraduate or graduate student enrolled in an accredited on-line or distance program in History, Art History, Education, or other related fields to pursue original academic research related to the history of early Texas art and artists.
- Curatorial staff at any art museum located in Texas
- Independent curators/researchers working on projects related to early Texas art

**Submissions are accepted any time of year.** All proposals are reviewed by the CASETA Research Awards Review Committee.

### **For complete proposal requirements contact:**

CASETA Administrator  
caseta@samfa.org  
325.212.4827



[www.caseta.org](http://www.caseta.org)  325.212.4872

caseta@samfa.org • PO Box 3726 • San Angelo, TX 76902

## *Spanish Colonial Gems*

### San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

*In 2015, the Alamo City's Spanish Colonial missions were designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site—the only one in the state.*



#### ↑**Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo**

Founded in 1720, Mission San José was the largest in the region, deemed “Queen of Missions.” In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration provided the labor needed to help restore the building, which had fallen into considerable disrepair.

The baroque architecture of *La Ventana de Rosa*, the Rose Window (circa 1775), on the south wall of the church, is a celebrated feature. According to lore, sculptor Pedro Huizar created the piece in honor of his fiancée Rosa, who was lost at sea on the journey to join him in New Spain.

*All images are courtesy of the National Park Service. Originals in color.*



### ← Mission San Francisco de la Espada

Originally founded in 1690 as San Francisco de los Tejas in East Texas (near present-day Nacogdoches), Mission Espada was renamed upon its relocation near the San Antonio River in March 1731.

The small chapel and *convento* (priests' quarters) were built in 1745. The church's front façade features an *espadaña*, a triple bell gable, which was added in 1790. The arched doorway has a distinctive shape of Moorish design.

### → Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña (fresco details)

Dedicated in 1755, Mission Concepción's church, with 45-inch thick walls, was constructed using limestone quarried on site and took 15 years to complete. The Spanish Colonial architecture features Gothic arches, twin bell towers, and a vaulted dome roof.

Frescos originally adorned the building's exterior front and interior. While time and the elements have worn away the outside paintings, handmade adornments, such as the two at the right, can still be seen in four rooms.



### ← Mission San Juan Capistrano

Mission San Juan was first located in East Texas in 1716 but re-established on the east bank of the San Antonio River in 1731. By the mid-1700s, its *labores* (farmlands) produced surplus crops sold in area markets.

The church, built in 1756, underwent extensive restoration in 2012. The refurbished San Juan Acequia supplies water for a living demonstration farm at the National Historic Park. Fifty acres of mission farmlands are used to grow crops distributed to those in need through the San Antonio Food Bank.

# DISCOVERING MORE



## Archeology at the Alamo

By Nesta Anderson, Ph.D.

Most visitors to the Alamo, originally established as Mission San Antonio de Valero in 1718, are not aware that 300 years of history rests beneath their feet. Looking at the church and the long barracks, their gaze is drawn to the visible, above-ground landmarks. However, underneath the buildings and concrete infrastructure, another piece of the Alamo's story remains hidden.





Above: The front elevation of the Alamo as photographed on April 8, 1936, by Arthur W. Stewart for a Historic American Buildings Survey. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division.

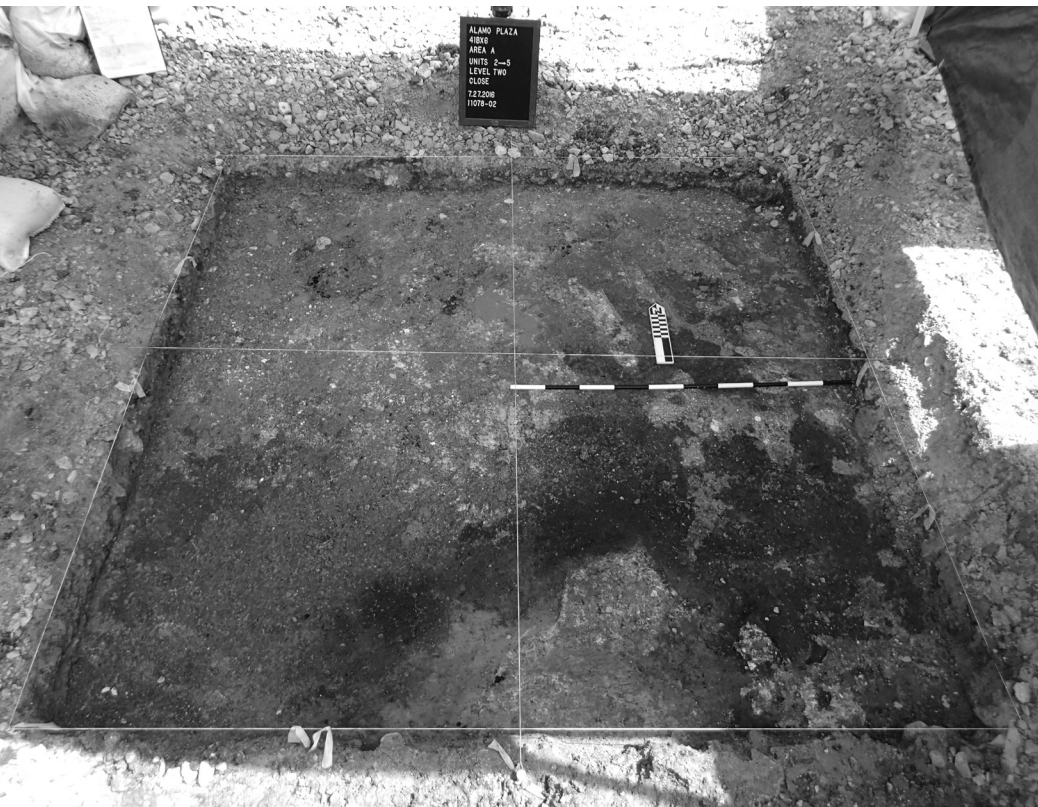
**I**n 2016, a group of archeologists from Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., The University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research, and Raba Kistner, an engineering consulting and program management firm, along with San Antonio City Archaeologist Kay Hindes, were able to uncover some of this historic site's underground secrets. What they found was surprising.

In coordination with the Alamo Master Plan, these professionals excavated two areas corresponding to the locations of the south and west sections of a wall that once encircled the larger perimeter of the Alamo compound. Logistically, these were the most accessible areas for archeologists to work without causing major traffic disruptions. The goal of these excavations was to learn whether archeological deposits (artifacts, trash pits, or remains of the wall) were present at these sites. Such physical evidence would confirm that historic maps accurately depicted the location of the compound wall and that

archeological deposits had not been destroyed by development that has occurred during the past three centuries.

Based on the findings of excavations dating from the 1960s through the 2000s, the 2016 team knew deposits existed in some areas in and around the Alamo. However, significant development had also taken place, including underground utility installation and landscaping, both of which required ground disturbance. When large-scale digging occurs, there is a potential for archeological evidence to be destroyed. While there are local, state, and federal regulations that help protect important archeological deposits from destruction, the earliest ones were not passed until the 1960s and 1970s. In many cases, initial enforcement of these regulations was erratic because it required the institutions or responsible parties to have an awareness of these new requirements. As a result, there are areas within the Alamo compound





Opposite page: Flanking the walkway, this stone *arcade*, a series of column-supported archways, was added to the Alamo grounds in the 1930s as part of a Depression-era (New Deal) public works improvement project. Image by Arthur W. Stewart, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division. This page: A west wall excavation unit revealed areas of lighter-colored soil consistent with adobe melt that had spread around toppled bricks. Image courtesy of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., Raba Kistner, and UTSA Center for Archaeological Research. Original in color.

that no longer contain intact archeological deposits.

With these concerns in mind, the 2016 team worked with city archeologist Hindes to choose dig sites that would most likely contain undisturbed remains. This process involved reviewing historic maps illustrating the Alamo buildings and perimeter wall footprint, studying reports from previous archeological work in and around the historic complex, and on-the-ground assessment of buried utility locations.

The team anticipated that deposits originally recorded by Thomas Hester, Ph.D., (1975-76) and Anne Fox (1975-1976 and 1988-1989) at the south wall, and by James “Jake” Ivey (1979) and Anne Fox (1979, 1983) at the west wall might have been destroyed as a result of utility installation and development of the staircases, walkways, and ramps that connect Alamo Plaza to

the Riverwalk. In the 1980s, concrete pillars and benches meant to replicate the footprint of the historic landmark’s west wall, based on results of prior digs, were built between the buildings lining the west side of Alamo Street. Whether this construction had disturbed underlying soils and archeological deposits was unknown. A similar concern was raised for the south wall because of utility and road improvements, as well as installation of raised landscaping beds. Ultimately, the decision was made to dig in and around the replicas at the west wall and partially under the sidewalk at the south wall where ground disturbance may have been shallower.

Excavation at the west wall began in late July 2016 after contractors removed the pavement covering the chosen dig site. Using shovels, the team carefully removed gravel fill placed beneath the concrete,

exposing the underlying dirt. A grid of square excavation units was set up before digging began.

The expectation was to find artifacts related to 19th- and 20th-century businesses that once lined Alamo Street and possibly evidence of the Battle of the Alamo. Using trowels, the archeologists methodically scraped away the dirt, collecting it in buckets for screening. The first artifacts recovered were modern materials, such as linoleum, PVC pipe fragments, and asbestos tile, as well as historic relics, including 19th-century glass and ceramics, along with Spanish Colonial and Native American ceramics. This mixture of new and older materials was anticipated based on findings from previous excavations at several locations within the Alamo complex.

Digging a little deeper, archeologists discovered something unexpected. Areas of lighter-colored soil, identified as adobe, began to appear below the mixed deposits. In one location, this adobe was

clearly recognizable as bricks, with three noticeably grouped into a square. The dark soil visible between the bricks indicated where mortar would have bonded them to form a pillar. According to Jake Ivey, a special consultant for the project, the formation likely would have supported an *arcade*, a series of brick columns connected by arches, lining the plaza. This support feature closely resembled those Ivey had discovered in 1979, confirming that nearly four decades later, archeologists again had located a section of the west wall complex.

Within the largest unit of the excavation grid, the lighter-colored adobe was widespread. This rather puzzling observation was initially attributed to “adobe melt” or “puddling.” In Texas, adobe typically was constructed from soil containing sand and clay, grass or straw, and water. Given the fact that these ingredients are readily available, the construction material was relatively easy to create, even though it also was particularly vulnerable to weathering. Rainstorms caused the adobe bricks to erode quickly, and this melting effect created a puddle on the ground, which then dried again in the sun.

Upon closer inspection, some of the puddled areas appeared to have a straight or linear edge, with a similarly patterned adjoining darker gray substance. While preparing to photograph the grid section, archeologists realized that the linear edges represented the remains of bricks lying on their sides, and the darker gray substance was identified as mortar. The picture suddenly became clear: the newly uncovered section of the west wall partially had collapsed or been knocked over, and

with subsequent weathering, the adobe melt had spread around the toppled bricks.

In order to confirm this interpretation, it was necessary to more deeply explore a smaller area within the unit. This strategy allowed the majority of the adobe deposit to remain intact while simultaneously gathering additional information from the earth beneath it. This deeper excavation revealed a layer of soil exclusively containing Native American-produced ceramics, which was consistent with the early years of the Alamo’s function as a mission. During that time, indigenous converts lived within the complex, residing in rooms built into perimeter walls. Finding this undisturbed, circa 18th-century ceramic deposit was an unanticipated and significant discovery.\*

Digging beyond that artifact-laden layer, the soils below revealed fist-sized rocks that likely provided a base for an adobe floor. Work was halted at this point in order to record as much information as possible from the exposed dig area before reburying it. While additional information could have been learned from the adobe deposits, digging through them would have meant the artifacts and structural remains would no longer be preserved for future generations to study with new technologies.

In the meantime, excavation of the south wall had begun under Alamo Street and the adjacent sidewalk. There, the layer of gravel fill beneath the pavement was much deeper than at the west wall site and required a backhoe to reach the soil underneath. Additionally, after setting up excavation grids, archeologists found two utility trenches that partially ran

through the work area. Despite these disturbances, however, there were exciting finds at that location as well.

While not as plentiful as at the west wall, artifacts found in the south wall soil also consisted of 20th-century materials mixed with 19th-century and Spanish Colonial-era artifacts. Among the finds was the tip of a noncommissioned Mexican officer’s sword, which Sam Nesmith, of the Texas Military Forces Museum, identified as a French-manufactured blade called a *briquet*. This artifact tentatively dates back to 1835 or 1836 and possibly was used during the Battle of the Alamo. However, because the sword fragment was recovered from *mixed context* (among materials from other time periods), it probably was not in its original location due to subsequent ground disturbance in the area.

Additionally, the south wall team found intact structural remains. The soil farther down revealed a cluster of rocks stacked on top of one another with no mortar between them. In a few areas, patches of adobe were present on top of the stones. In one excavation unit, a faint line appeared to indicate that a pit had been dug to contain the rock pile. The formation was consistent with a Spanish Colonial construction method in which a trench was filled with uncut, dry-stacked rock bonded with adobe to serve as footings for a wall. While some areas of the structural remnant had been disturbed, the presence of these intact deposits confirmed similar findings from previous digs at neighboring locations along the south wall—an exciting and welcome outcome for project archeologists.



This page, top: The upper right-hand area of this grid section shows a square grouping of three adobe bricks that likely served as a *pier* (upright support) for a column. Bottom: In addition to Spanish Colonial-era artifacts, including the tip of a Mexican sword, workers at the south wall dig site uncovered this cluster of stacked rocks that were footings for the Alamo's outer defensive barricade. Both images are courtesy of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., Raba Kistner, and UTSA Center for Archaeological Research.

The 2016 investigation of what lies beneath the Alamo confirmed previous findings and yielded some interesting discoveries. However, archeologists did not fully excavate or remove material deposits at the south and west wall locations. Instead, they preserved the integrity of these sites by covering both locations in landscaping fabric before adding a layer of clean fill. The screened soils (from which artifacts had been removed) were replaced on top of the fill. Thus, the underground history of the Alamo, ever-threatened by development, now remains protected for future generations—and available for possible further exploration. ★

*Nesta Anderson, Ph.D., senior archaeologist and project manager at Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., Austin, was the lead investigator on the Alamo excavation project.*

\*Archeologists presumed these were all 18th-century ceramics because of the context but noted that the remains might have been brought to the mission and, if so, could have predated that time period. *Context* in archeology refers to the relationship artifacts have to each other and the location in which they are found.



# Thanks To These New and Renewing Members

especially the following Pioneer-level supporters:

Campana Foundation, George West; Carrie and Ronald Woliver, Houston

## RANGER MEMBERS

Tom Abbott, Dallas; Laurie and Richard Baish, El Paso; Nancy and Bill Blackwell, Cuero; David Dunnigan, Dallas; D. M. Edwards, Tyler; Karen and Richard Goodin, Austin; Jane and Peter Hayman, Austin; Historic Fort Worth, Inc., Fort Worth; Tamsen Kiehnhoff, Houston; Grace King, Odessa; Patsy Light, San Antonio; Patty and Thomas McGinty, Bellaire; Patrick Swearingen, San Antonio; W. P. Wright, Abilene

## PARTNER MEMBERS

Greg Cain, Houston; Sondra Durso, Austin; Janice and Milton Erickson, Houston; William Scott Farrar, Arlington; Margaret Hoogstra, Clyde; Melvin Klein, Corpus Christi; Stan Laster, Plano; Margaret Loveless, Eden; Martha Mills, San Antonio; David Segrest, Dallas; Marlene and Jack Super, Corpus Christi; Thomas Swann, Waco

## INSTITUTION MEMBERS

Brownsville Historical Association, Brownsville; Burton Cotton Gin and Museum, Burton; CASETA, San Angelo; Commerce Public Library, Commerce; Friends of the History Center for Aransas County, Fulton; Heritage Museum of Montgomery County, Conroe; Jefferson Historical Museum, Jefferson; Maner Memorial Library, Cisco; Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg; Museum of the American Railroad, Richardson; New Braunfels Conservation Society, New Braunfels; Odeon Preservation Association, Inc.,

Mason; San Angelo Area Foundation, San Angelo; Schreiner University, Kerrville; Stanzel Model Aircraft Museum, Schulenburg; Summerlee Foundation, Dallas; Texas City Museum, Texas City; Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro; Texas State Historical Association, Austin; Texas Wendish Heritage Society, Giddings; The Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park, Houston; Victoria Preservation, Inc., Victoria; Villa Finale, San Antonio; Wilson County Historical Society, Floresville; Wisconsin Historical Society Acquisitions Section, Madison, WI; Wise County Heritage Museum/Historical Commission, Decatur

## CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

Dora and Neil Akkerman, Houston; Wendy Alise, Grapevine; José Luis Aliseda, McAllen; Marcia Allen, Grapevine; Claudine Annis, Colleyville; Jan Appleby, Mason; J. P. Barentine, III, Dallas; Sherri Bobbitt, Grapevine; Judy Briscoe, Grapevine; Hal Bybee, Richardson; Jane and Fred Chandler, Ozona; LuAnn Chapman Gatts, Grapevine; Steven Chevier, Grapevine; City of Grapevine, Grapevine; John Cobb, Stafford; Jackie and Vick Cox, Grapevine; Todd Crosby, Grapevine; Delbert Dagel, Coppell; John Dalri, Grapevine; Bonnie and Joe Dalton, Colleyville; Kenisha Deloach Gee, Euless; Barry Feldner, Hurst; Charles Gabriel, Plano; Ruben Garza, Victoria; Gayle Hall, Grapevine; Katherine Hambright, Beaumont; Carlene Harris, Terrell; Dave Herrington, Grapevine; Stacy Holt, Grapevine; Ralph Jentsch, San Antonio; Charles John, San Antonio; Jennifer Jones, Grapevine; Shirley and James Jordan, Horseshoe Bay; Doss Kornegay, Jr., Harlingen; Candace Kyler, Grapevine; Natalie Luke, Taylor; Marcille and Bonham Magness, Houston; Lou and Gene Mallory, Mineola; Caroline Martin, Houston; Robert Matthews, Grapevine; Kim Monroe, San Antonio; Evelyn Montgomery, Dallas; Joel Mosier, Buda; Wendy Nelson McMillan, Grapevine; Keith O'Gorman, San Antonio; Jim Parker, Grapevine; Christie and Sean Partee, Grapevine; Carey Proctor, Bedford; Melissa Ramsay, Elgin; Debbie and Tom Reynolds, Bedford; Carolyn Richardson, Vega; Deta Rogillio, Houston; Rose-Mary Rumbley, Dallas; Christine Moor Sanders, Woodville; Julia Sizemore, Grapevine; Melva Stanfield, Grapevine; Rodney Steman, Hurst; Jody Stock, Austin; Scott Taylor, Grapevine; Sonya and Mark Terpening, Grapevine; Marjorie Therrell, Seabrook; Tim Towery, Seabrook; Anne Peden Tucker, Houston; Bob Ward, Austin; Molly Watt, San Antonio; June Whisenhunt, Euless; Victoria Wilson, Justin

At this special season of the year,  
our thoughts turn gratefully to those  
who have made our progress possible.



Thank you for your support of the  
Texas Historical Foundation.

*Best wishes for the new year.*

## STUDENT MEMBERS

Katie Michna, San Antonio; Chris Raemsch, Austin; Irene Rendon, San Antonio

## SPOTLIGHTING THE HOLDINGS OF THE INSTITUTION MEMBERS

— *Rosenberg Library, Galveston* —

On March 22, 1888, the cornerstone of a new city hall was laid during a ceremony in downtown Galveston. Located along 20th Street, the building faced Market Street and extended one block north to Mechanic Street.

The original City Hall and Market House—a simple frame structure on the same site—was built in 1846. The lower level included stalls for meats, produce, and seafood; city offices were on the second floor. A bell tower rang out on the hour and also was used to alert residents of fires. Galveston was a much smaller city at that time, and four decades later, city leaders recognized that subsequent growth had spurred the need for a larger, more substantial building.

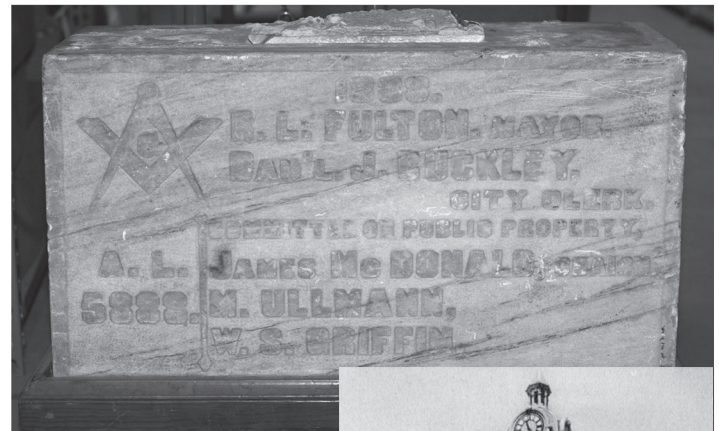
Various architectural firms in the region proposed designs for the replacement structure, with city officials selecting Alfred Muller (1855-1896) as the architect. Born in Krefeld, Prussia, he trained at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin before immigrating to the United States. In 1886, he moved to Galveston to work in the architectural firm of Nathaniel Tobey, Jr. The following year, Muller established his own company and, shortly thereafter, won the competition for his first major building on the island: the new Galveston City Hall.

The completed City Hall extended 110 feet at its highest point—the central clock tower. Muller opted for brick support walls rather than iron, as that material was prone to cracking and twisting during fires.

The structure included three stories, each with a distinct purpose. Just as with the original city hall, the ground level housed the city market. The second floor held local government offices, a recorder's court, and the police station. The third level accommodated the council chamber and a fire alarm system.

The central tower, flanked by four galvanized iron statues, contained both a clock and a fire bell. Outside, at the front, winding stairways cascaded from the main entrance on the second floor to the street-level sidewalk.

The devastating hurricane that struck Galveston on September 8, 1900, caused extensive damage to the building, then just 12 years old. Repairs were made, but plans for a more modern City Hall and Auditorium were adopted within a few years. With local grocers



now offering home delivery services, the market house had grown obsolete.

In 1916, a more contemporary City Hall was completed on 25th Street (Rosenberg Avenue) between Ball Street and Sealy Street. Completely renovated, including removal of the third story, the 1888 building became the Central Police and Fire Station.

In 1964, the two departments relocated to a newly constructed Public Safety Building adjacent to the City Hall. The following year, the 1888 structure was torn down, but not before the building's cornerstone was preserved. That relic is now housed in the collection of the Rosenberg Library. Although plans for the site initially called for a public park, it is now used as a parking lot. To learn more about other objects at the library, visit [www.rosenberg-library.org/special-collections](http://www.rosenberg-library.org/special-collections).

—*Eleanor Barton, Rosenberg Library curator*



Above: The cornerstone from the 1888 Galveston City Hall was saved before the structure (inset) was demolished. Images courtesy of the Rosenberg Library. Top photo originally in color.



# More Than Just A Daughter and Sister

The Remarkable Life of Artist  
and Curator Eleanor Onderdonk

By Amy Fulkerson

This feature, sponsored by the Center for the Advancement and Study of Early Texas Art (CASETA), explores the state's art legacy and spotlights the works of Texas masters.

Though not particularly well known, Eleanor Onderdonk was one of the most influential women for Texas art in the 20th century. She left a lasting legacy in San Antonio and in the state as an artist, educator, and curator at the Witte Museum from 1927 through 1958. Additionally, Onderdonk was an active correspondent, diarist, and recordkeeper—leaving behind a trove of information that provided insight into her life and career.

If Onderdonk's surname sounds familiar, it may be because both her father Robert and brother Julian were noted artists. The family patriarch's monumental *The Fall of the Alamo* hangs in the Texas Governor's Mansion, and the work of Julian Onderdonk is among the most sought after by collectors of early Texas art. Like her famous relatives, Eleanor Onderdonk studied at the Art Students League in New York, and she eventually became known for her exquisite miniature portraits. The artist also taught her craft to others, but found her true calling in 1927 when she joined the Witte Museum art staff.

During her 31 years in a curatorial role at the San Antonio institution, Onderdonk cultivated a collection of early Texas art that tells the full story of the state. Theodore Gentilz, Thomas Allen, Seth Eastman, Ida Hadra, and Carl Iwonski are among the artists whose works she assembled to create the core of that collection.

Onderdonk kept her finger on the pulse of the art world through her work on juried exhibitions such as the Edgar B. Davis Wildflower Competition, the Texas General Exhibition, and the Local Artist Exhibition. Along with Jerry Bywaters, artist, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts director, and art critic, and James Chillman, the first director for Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, she organized the Texas General Exhi-



bition that traveled to Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. Collectively, these efforts helped define Texas art as part of the broader national creative experience.

These exhibitions also introduced Onderdonk to the best and brightest talents, who she would, in turn, acquaint with the Lone Star State. Additionally, the Alamo City native was passionate in her support of emerging artists, frequently offering them their first shows at the Witte Museum. Lifelong friendships often ensued, and the corre-

spondence between the curator and artists provides a unique insight into the lives of some of the finest creative individuals of the 20th century in Texas.

Humble, self-deprecating, and never one to draw attention to herself, Onderdonk's contributions to the Texas art scene have long been overlooked. It is time now to shine a light on the life and career of this accomplished woman who believed that art should be accessible to all and that Texas art was American art.

*Amy Fulkerson is chief curator at San Antonio's Witte Museum.*

All images in this article are courtesy of the Witte Museum.

Opposite page: In this circa 1950's photograph, Eleanor Onderdonk works in the art storage area of the Witte Museum.

This page, left: Eleanor Onderdonk, *Portrait of a Lady*, watercolor on ivory, 3-3/8 x 2-1/2 inches, circa 1914.

This page, right: Eleanor Onderdonk, *San Antonio River*, oil on canvas, 19-1/2 x 23-3/4 inches.

## THE LASTING LEGACY OF ELEANOR ONDERDONK



She exhibited her work in 1912 at the San Antonio Art League and in shows at the State Fair of Texas and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

For her service to the city, San Antonio celebrated Eleanor Onderdonk Day when the museum curator retired on May 4, 1958.

A memorial garden at the Witte Museum now bears her name.

Eleanor Onderdonk was one of the founders of the San Antonio Conservation Society (see page 16). She died on November 11, 1964.

**IN THE PAST IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO ASSEMBLE AS MANY SHOWS OF MUSEUM QUALITY FROM THIS REGION. TEXAS IS FAST BECOMING A STRONG FACTOR IN ART AND IS BEING SO RECOGNIZED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.**

— *Eleanor Onderdonk*

# TEXAS HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

## CENTRAL

### ANDERSON MILL MUSEUM AND GRIST MILL

13974 F.M. 2769, Volente 78641;  
512-258-2613; Open 2-5 on the fourth  
Sunday of each month March-Oct, or  
special tours by appointment;  
[www.volente.org/amgc](http://www.volente.org/amgc)

### BASTROP COUNTY MUSEUM

904 Main St., Bastrop 78602;  
512-303-0057; Mon-Sat 10-5;  
Sun 1-4;  
[www.bastropcountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.bastropcountyhistoricalsociety.com)

### BRISCOE WESTERN ART MUSEUM

210 W. Market St., San Antonio 78205;  
210-299-4499; Tues-Sun 10-5;  
[www.briscoemuseum.org](http://www.briscoemuseum.org)

### BURTON HERITAGE SOCIETY/ RAILROAD DEPOT

507 N. Railroad St., Burton 77835;  
979-353-0050; Tours by appointment;  
[www.burtonheritagesociety.org](http://www.burtonheritagesociety.org)

### CAMP HEARNE MUSEUM

12424 Camp Hearne Rd., Hearne 77859;  
979-814-0733; Wed-Sat 11-4;  
[www.camphearne.com](http://www.camphearne.com)

### FORT MARTIN SCOTT

1606 E. Main St., Fredericksburg 78624;  
830-217-3200; Thurs-Mon 10-5;  
[www.ftmartinsscott.org](http://www.ftmartinsscott.org)

### FORT MASON

204 W. Spruce St., Mason 76856;  
Open year round; [www.masontxcoc.com/attractions-recreation/fort-mason](http://www.masontxcoc.com/attractions-recreation/fort-mason)

### FRONTIER TIMES MUSEUM

510 13th St., Bandera 78003;  
830-796-3864; Mon-Sat 10-4:30;  
[www.frontiertimesmuseum.com](http://www.frontiertimesmuseum.com)

### PIONEER VILLAGE LIVING HISTORY CTR.

2122 N. St. Joseph, Gonzales 78629;  
830-672-2157; Tues-Sun 1-5;  
[www.thepioneervillage.vpweb.com](http://www.thepioneervillage.vpweb.com)

### PRESIDIO DE SAN SABÁ

191 Presidio Rd., Menard 76859;  
Daily 8-5; [www.presidiodesansaba.org](http://www.presidiodesansaba.org)

### STAR OF THE REPUBLIC MUSEUM

23200 Park Road 12, Washington  
77880; 936-878-2461; Sun-Sat 10-5;  
[www.starmuseum.org](http://www.starmuseum.org)

### TEXAS COTTON GIN

307 N. Main St., Burton 77835;  
979-289-3379; Tues-Sat 10-4;  
[www.cottonginmuseum.org](http://www.cottonginmuseum.org)

### TEXAS HERITAGE MUSEUM

112 Lamar Dr., Hillsboro 76645;  
254-659-7500; Mon-Thurs 8-4:30,  
Friday 8-4; Research Center hours,  
Mon-Fri 9-1;  
[www.hillcollege.edu/museum](http://www.hillcollege.edu/museum)

### TEXAS WENDISH HERITAGE MUSEUM

1011 County Road 212, Giddings 78942;  
979-366-2441; Tues-Sun 1-5;  
[www.texaswendish.org](http://www.texaswendish.org)

### VILLA FINALE AND VILLA FINALE VISITOR CENTER

401 King William, San Antonio 78204;  
210-223-9800; Tues 12-4, Wed-Sat  
9:30-4; [www.VillaFinale.org](http://www.VillaFinale.org)

### THE WITTLIFF COLLECTIONS,

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
601 University Dr., San Marcos 78666;  
512-245-2313; Hours vary, call ahead;  
[www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu](http://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu)

## EAST

### CHANDLER HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

721 Hwy. 31 East, Chandler 75758;  
903-849-2243; Wed-Sat 1-4;  
[www.chandler.tx.com/index.aspx?NID=542](http://www.chandler.tx.com/index.aspx?NID=542)

### EAST TEXAS ART LEAGUE INC.

364 N. Austin St., Jasper 75951;  
409-384-2404; Wed-Fri 10-4, Sat 10-2;  
[www.easttexasartleague.org/](http://www.easttexasartleague.org/)

### HERITAGE MUSEUM OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

1506 I-45 North, Conroe 77305;  
936-539-6873; Wed-Sat 9-4;  
[www.heritagemuseum.us](http://www.heritagemuseum.us)

### THE HISTORY CENTER

102 N. Temple, Diboll 75941;  
936-829-3453; Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat 9-1;  
[www.thehistorycenteronline.com](http://www.thehistorycenteronline.com)

### MCFADDIN-WARD HOUSE

1906 Calder St., Beaumont 77701;  
409-832-2134; Tues-Sat 10-11:30,  
Sun 1-3; [www.mcfaddin-ward.org](http://www.mcfaddin-ward.org)

### MUSEUM OF HARDIN COUNTY

830 S. Maple St., Kountze 77625;  
409-246-8434 or 409-755-7313;  
Wed 10-1 or by reservation

### STONE FORT MUSEUM

1808 Alumni Dr. North, Nacogdoches  
75961; 936-468-2408; Tues-Sat 9-5,  
Sun 1-5; [www.sfasu.edu/stonefort/](http://www.sfasu.edu/stonefort/)

### RUTHERFORD B. H. YATES MUSEUM

Andrews St. and Wilson St., Houston  
77019; 713-739-0163; Mon-Fri 9-4;  
[www.rbhy.org](http://www.rbhy.org)

### TEXAS FORESTRY MUSEUM

1905 Atkinson Dr., Lufkin 75901;  
936-632-9535; Mon-Sat 10-5;  
[www.treetexas.com](http://www.treetexas.com)

## NORTH

### AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth  
76107; 817-738-9133; Tues-Sat 10-5,  
Thurs 10-8, Sun 12-5;  
[www.cartermuseum.org](http://www.cartermuseum.org)

### COMMERCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

1210 Park St., Commerce 75428;  
903-886-6858; Mon, Wed, Fri 10-5,  
Tues 10-6, Thurs 10-8, Sat 9-12;  
[www.commercepubliclibrary.org](http://www.commercepubliclibrary.org)

### DALLAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

7900 Northaven Rd., Dallas 75230;  
214-239-7120; Mon-Fri 9-5;  
[www.djhs.org](http://www.djhs.org)

### EASTLAND COUNTY MUSEUM

114 S. Seaman St., Eastland 76448;  
254-631-0437; Thurs-Sat 10-2;  
[www.eastlandcountymuseum.com](http://www.eastlandcountymuseum.com)

### FARMERS BRANCH HISTORICAL PARK

2540 Farmers Branch Ln., Farmers  
Branch 75234; 972-406-0184;  
Mon-Fri 8-6, Sat-Sun 12-6;  
[www.fbhistoricalpark.com](http://www.fbhistoricalpark.com)

### GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

206 W. Hudgins St., Grapevine 76051;  
817-410-3526; Tue-Sat 10-4,  
Sun 1-4;  
[www.grapevinehistory.weebly.com](http://www.grapevinehistory.weebly.com)

**Join as a THF institution  
member to be included  
in this museum list.**

HISTORIC FORT WORTH, INC.  
1110 Penn St., Fort Worth 76102;  
817-336-2344; Two historic properties:  
McFarland House and Thistle Hill;  
Individual/group tours Wed-Fri 11-2,  
Sun 1-3; [www.historicfortworth.org](http://www.historicfortworth.org)

HISTORIC WACO FOUNDATION  
MUSEUMS  
810 S. Fourth St., Waco 76706;  
254-753-5166; Four historic houses:  
Earle Napier Kinnard, East Terrace,  
Fort House, and McCulloch;  
Tues-Fri 11-3, Sat-Sun 2-5;  
[www.historicwaco.org](http://www.historicwaco.org)

JEFFERSON HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
232 W. Austin, Jefferson 75657;  
930-665-2775; Mon-Fri 9:30-4:30;  
[www.jeffersonmuseum.com](http://www.jeffersonmuseum.com)

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN RAILROAD  
6455 Page St., Frisco 75034;  
214-428-0101; Wed-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5;  
[www.museumoftheamericanrailroad.org](http://www.museumoftheamericanrailroad.org)

STEPHENVILLE HISTORICAL HOUSE  
MUSEUM  
525 E. Washington St., Stephenville  
76401; 254-965-5880; Open daily;  
Guided tours Tues-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5;  
[www.stephenvillemuseum.org](http://www.stephenvillemuseum.org)

TALES 'N' TRAILS MUSEUM  
1522 E. Highway 82, Nocona 76255;  
940-825-5330; Mon-Sat 10-5;  
[www.talesntrails.org](http://www.talesntrails.org)

THE SIXTH FLOOR MUSEUM AT  
DEALEY PLAZA  
411 Elm St., Dallas 75202;  
214-767-6660; Mon 12-6, Tues-Sun 10-6;  
[www.jfk.org](http://www.jfk.org)

WISE COUNTY HERITAGE MUSEUM  
1602 S. Trinity, Decatur 76234;  
940-627-5586; Mon-Sat 10-3;  
[www.wisehistory.com](http://www.wisehistory.com)

#### PANHANDLE

PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM  
2503 Fourth Ave., Canyon 79015;  
806-651-2244; Mon-Sat 9-6, Sun 1-6;  
[www.panhandleplains.org](http://www.panhandleplains.org)

WOLF CREEK HERITAGE MUSEUM  
13310 Highway 305, Lipscomb 79056  
806-852-2123; Mon-Fri 10-4;  
[www.wolfcreekheritagemuseum.org](http://www.wolfcreekheritagemuseum.org)

#### SOUTH/GULF COAST

BRYAN MUSEUM  
1315 21st St., Galveston 77550;  
409-632-7685; Thurs-Mon 11-4;  
[www.thebryanmuseum.org](http://www.thebryanmuseum.org)

CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE MUSEUM  
302 N. Esplanade, Cuero 77954;  
361-277-2866; Tues-Sat 10-4:30;  
[www.chisholmtrailmuseum.org](http://www.chisholmtrailmuseum.org)

GALVESTON AND TEXAS HISTORY  
CENTER  
2310 Sealy Ave., Galveston 77550;  
409-763-8854 ext. 127; Tues-Sat 9-6;  
[www.gthcenter.org](http://www.gthcenter.org)

HISTORY CENTER FOR ARANSAS  
COUNTY  
801 E. Cedar St., Rockport 78382;  
361-727-9214; Fri-Sat 10-2;  
[www.aransashistorycenter.org](http://www.aransashistorycenter.org)

MUSEUM OF SOUTH TEXAS HISTORY  
200 N. Closner Blvd., Edinburg 78541;  
956-383-6911; Tues-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5;  
[www.mosthistory.org](http://www.mosthistory.org)

STANZEL MODEL AIRCRAFT MUSEUM  
311 Baumgarten St., Schulenberg 78956;  
979-743-6559; Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat  
10:30-4:30; [www.stanzelmuseum.org](http://www.stanzelmuseum.org)

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY AT  
SAM HOUSTON PARK  
1100 Bagby St., Houston, 77002;  
713-655-1912; Park open daily, dawn to  
dusk; Museum hours: Tues-Sat 10-4;  
Guided tours: Tues-Sat 10, 11:30, 1:00,  
2:30; [www.heritagesociety.org](http://www.heritagesociety.org)

TWENTIETH CENTURY TECHNOLOGY  
MUSEUM  
231 S. Fulton St., Wharton 77488;  
979-282-8810; Mon-Fri 10-3, Sat 1-4;  
[www.20thcenturytech.com](http://www.20thcenturytech.com)

WHITEHEAD MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
1308 S. Main St., Del Rio 78840;  
830-774-7568; Tues-Sat 10-6; Sun 1-5;  
[www.whiteheadmuseum.org](http://www.whiteheadmuseum.org)

YOAKUM HERITAGE MUSEUM  
312 Simpson St., Yoakum 77995;  
361-293-2309; Sun, Tues, Thurs 1-4,  
Fri 10-4; [www.yoakumareachamber.com/pages/yoakumheritagemuseum.html](http://www.yoakumareachamber.com/pages/yoakumheritagemuseum.html)

#### WEST

EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
603 W. Yandell Dr., El Paso 79902;  
915-533-3603; Mon-Fri 10-2;  
[www.elpasohistory.com/](http://www.elpasohistory.com/)

EL PASO MUSEUM OF HISTORY  
510 N. Santa Fe St., El Paso 79901;  
915-212-0320; Tues-Sat 9-5, Sun 12-5;  
<https://history.elpasotexas.gov/>

FORT CHADBOURNE FOUNDATION  
651 Fort Chadbourne, Bronte 76933;  
325-743-2555; Tues-Sat 8-5;  
[www.fortchadbourne.org/](http://www.fortchadbourne.org/)

FORT CONCHO NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARK MUSEUM  
630 S. Oakes St., San Angelo 76903;  
325-481-2646; Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5;  
[www.fortconcho.com](http://www.fortconcho.com)

HALEY MEMORIAL LIBRARY AND  
HISTORY CENTER  
1805 W. Indiana, Midland 79701;  
432-682-5785; Mon-Fri 9-5;  
[www.haleylibrary.com](http://www.haleylibrary.com)

MARTIN COUNTY HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM  
207 Broadway St., Stanton 79782;  
432-756-2722; Mon-Fri 12:30-5:30;  
[www.martincountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.martincountyhistoricalsociety.com)

WEST OF THE PECOS MUSEUM  
120 E. Dot Stafford St., Pecos 79772;  
432-445-5076; Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-4;  
[www.westofthepecosmuseum.com](http://www.westofthepecosmuseum.com)

---

**Please visit these  
state historical  
venues...**

**that support the  
Texas Historical  
Foundation with  
their memberships.**



**TEXAS HERITAGE**  
P.O. Box 50314  
Austin, Texas 78763

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTIN, TEXAS  
PERMIT NO. 2863

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

---

**THF carries out its work using no public funds.  
NOT ONE PENNY.**

---

## Impacting Historic Preservation in Texas

**65 years old**  
in 2019....  
established in 1954

**\$1.7 million**  
awarded  
since 1990

**292 projects**  
received  
funding

**143 issues**  
of Texas HERITAGE  
magazine to date