

Council of Texas Archeologists
E. Mott Davis Award for Excellence in Public Outreach
Nomination Form

I. CRM Project Name: Frost Town Archeological Project (41HR982)

II. Archaeological Contractor Prewitt and Associates, Inc.

Key Person Douglas K. Boyd and Sandra L. Hannum

Project Role (PI, PA, etc.) Principal Investigator and Graphics Supervisor

Telephone 512-459-3349 ext. 204 / 512-751-1682

Email dboyd@paiarch.com

III. Agency or Sponsor Texas Department of Transportation (Archeological Studies Branch)

Key Person Jason W. Barrett and Allen Bettis

Project Role (Project Manager, Contracting Officer, etc.) Project Managers

Telephone 713-802-5804 / 512-350-9819 (Jason)

Email Jason.Barrett@txdot.gov

IV. Other Agency or Institution Houston Archeological Society

Key Person Linda Gorski, Louis Aulbach, and Bob Sewell

Project Role President, Vice President, & Secretary

Telephone 713-557-1496 (Linda)

Email lindagorski@cs.com

Note: Typically one key person from an archaeological firm, usually the principal investigator, and one from the sponsor or client are nominated. If more than one contractor, sponsor or institution is involved, these should be nominated as well. If more than one person at a contracting firm or agency is responsible for the design and successful completion of the public outreach portion of the project, these should also be nominated. Use extra nomination forms if necessary.

V. Describe the Public Outreach Effort

(Open House, Educational Materials, Televised Coverage, Public Dig, Web Page, etc. Use additional pages if necessary.)

See Attached Pages

VI. Discuss Why the Nominee Deserves this Award

(What special initiatives did the nominees take to promote archeological awareness? What aspect of the effort is exceptional and achieves excellence? Use additional pages if necessary.)

See Attached Pages

VII. Nominator Douglas K. Boyd

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V. Describe the Public Outreach Effort

The Frost Town Archeological Project is a data recovery effort being undertaken in conjunction with the demolition and replacement of a raised bridge roadway, called the Elysian Viaduct, that extends 1.7 miles northward from downtown Houston. The southern end of the roadway crosses an 8-block area on the south side of Buffalo Bayou that was once the Frost Town community. It began in the 1830s as a settlement of German immigrants, and it evolved over time into a mixed European and African American neighborhood (ca. 1870s to 1910) and then into a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood called Barrio del Alacran (1920s to 1950s). When the original Elysian Viaduct bridge was built in the mid 1950s, most of the houses and small businesses were removed and the neighborhood disappeared completely by the 1990s.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) is undertaking the road improvement project, and historical and archeological studies were required under the provisions of the Texas Antiquities Code and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The demolition of the old bridge and the construction of a new wider roadway will impact the remains of the Frost Town community, and they have been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places. A portion of the site is already designated as a State Antiquities Landmark, and the City of Houston designated the site as its first Houston Archeological Landmark.

The historical and archeological investigations of the Frost Town community is being done by Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (PAI), and the work is overseen by TxDOT's Archeological Studies Branch (Cultural Resources Management Section). In addition, a major part of the data recovery effort involves the collaboration of the Houston Archeological Society (HAS) as part of TxDOT's public outreach efforts.

The first of two phases of data recovery field investigations was completed in November 2016, and the second phase of data recovery is scheduled to begin in April 2017. Because this major data recovery project is still in its early stages, this nomination focuses primarily collaborative nature of the project and on the contributions of the HAS in support of this effort. The public outreach activities that have occurred for the Frost Town Archeological Project to date are summarized below.

1. HAS On-site Screening Project

From June 2016 through February 2017, the Frost Town site became a "public dig" where people helped screen stockpiles of sediment containing an abundance of artifact, primarily from the 19th-century occupations. For safety reasons and to maintain an accurate accounting of volunteers, on-site participation was limited to members of the HAS. But this also led to many interested people joining the HAS so that they could participate in the effort.

The HAS team worked primarily on Fridays and Saturdays, and on any given day between 5 and 25 volunteer HAS members would show up to work. The HAS team recovered thousands of artifacts from our targeted Frost Town zone, with hundreds of items that are temporally and functionally diagnostic. They recovered some of the earliest glass and ceramic artifacts found at the site, with many items dating from the 1820s to 1860s (manufacture dates). Not only did they recover the artifacts by screening (or troweling through dense clay), they also set up an on-site field lab each day to wash and dry the artifacts!

HAS members contributed the following volunteer hours in 2016:

Total Volunteer Hours = 1139.65

Total Working Days = 36 Working Days

Total HAS Members who Volunteered = 47

(most worked on multiple days and 11 of the people worked for more than 10 days each)

Total Half Person Days = 293 Person Half-Days

(This is the number of person days but the average time spent on site was 3.9 hours)

Total Full Person Days = 142

NOTE that the HAS members continued this work on four days in January and February of 2017, but the volunteer hours have not been calculated yet.

In addition to the on-site work, various HAS members routinely would spend time at the end of the day doing research to identify many of the artifacts that they had found. They would often text or email information to the PI, with precise identifications and dating many of the diagnostic artifacts, along with supporting references.

HAS officers Linda Gorski, Bob Sewell, and Louis Aulbach coordinated the HAS volunteer effort, with field activities supervised by TxDOT archeologist Jason Barrett. During the project, the on-site screening effort was highlighted regularly on the HAS website and in the HAS newsletter, *The Profile*, which is posted on the HAS website. In February 2017, Doug Boyd presented a program on Frost Town archeology to the HAS at their monthly meeting. Links to coverage of the Frost Town Archeological Project in *The Profile*:

October 2016 <http://www.txhas.org/PDF/newsletters/2016/2016%20October%20Profile.pdf>
December 2016 <http://www.txhas.org/PDF/newsletters/2016/2016%20December%20Profile.pdf>
January 2016 <http://www.txhas.org/PDF/newsletters/2017/2017%20January%20Profile.pdf>
February 2016 <http://www.txhas.org/PDF/newsletters/2017/2017%20February%20Profile.pdf>
March 2016 <http://www.txhas.org/PDF/newsletters/2017/2017%20March%20Profile.pdf>

2. HAS Archival Research

One HAS officer, Louis Aulbach, regularly contributed to the Frost Town project by doing occasional archival research to help PAI identify the historical context of particular features or artifacts that were found. Louis did years of archival research culminating in the first comprehensive published history of Frost Town (Chapter 10 in his 2012 book titled: *Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings*). He used his extensive research files, volunteering his time, to help PAI while we were working in the field. For example, Louis would identify who owned a particular block and lot at a particular time so that PAI archeologists could understand the likely associations when digging cisterns and other significant features.

3. Oral History and Documentary Video-Taping

Frost Town Archeological Project has also begun an oral history effort and on-site videotaping. The oral history work is aimed at interviewing knowledgeable informants who have some connection to the Frost Town community or the Hispanic Alacran neighborhood. We have conducted one on-site, video-taped, oral history interview with an 86-year-old man (Mr. Sergio Garcia) who grew up in Alacran. He remembers many details of his life and his house in Alacran, and many details correspond precisely with archeological evidence that we found at the site. The oral histories add an important human dimension to the archeological findings, and we have identified more than a dozen more informants that we will be interviewing over the next year.

Besides videotaping the interview, the project team is doing regular on-site videotaping to capture the archeological work and site setting, document the discovery excavation of features, record the HAS involvement, and conduct periodic interviews with project personnel. Videotaping is being done by Public Information Office personnel with TxDOT's Houston District Office and by a local nonprofit called "Houston Media Source" (under a collaborative agreement with TxDOT). The ultimate goal of this effort is to archive video footage and do a short documentary film at the end of the project.

At this time, one short video clip has been posted online for public consumption. It is a 5-minute clip produced by TxDOT and accessible on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPDyQt6TfMU>

4. Discovery and Investigation of the Baugh Cistern (41HR1188)

Following the accidental discovery of a brick-lined cistern at another site within the Elysian Viaduct project corridor (but not in the Frost Town project area), HAS volunteers worked with TxDOT personnel (Jason Barrett) to investigate and document the cistern at 41HR1188. Many volunteer person-days of work went into the excavation and screening of sediment from the bottom of the cistern, and to drawing and photographing the interior shape and plastered wall of the cistern. Notable, the name "M Baugh, Natchez, Miss" was etched into the concrete plaster. Research has confirmed that James Monroe Baugh was a brick mason and cistern builder who lived in Houston's Fifth Ward from 1870 to 1892. Baugh died in Houston in 1903 and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery. Sanborn map and Houston City Directory research indicate that the cistern was likely constructed in 1884. Primary operation as a water-holding feature is likely to have ceased in the 1890s when the associated house lot was connected to the municipal water grid. The feature appears to have been permanently sealed and buried following the Great Fifth Ward Fire of 1912.

5. GIS Poster

PAI personnel Sandy Hannum and Rob Thrift created a poster for the TNRIS 2016 GIS Forum held in Austin on October 24–27, 2016. The poster title is: “Frost Town: Using GIS to Guide Archeological Excavations.” They entered their creation into TNRIS’s poster contest and won second place. The poster is displayed online at:

<https://tnris.org/news/2017-01-04/poster-gallery-winners-2016-texas-gis-forum/>

6. Frost Town Archeology Radio Broadcast

On September 2, 2016, Jason Barrett conducted a radio interview on the Frost Town archeology project for the "Houston Matters" program on the Houston Public Media News station (88.7 FM). The program segment was called "Treasures of Frost Town Unearthed Near Minute Maid Park." On September 22, the audio tape and an introduction were posted online on the Houston Public Media News website:

<http://www.houstonmatters.org/segments/segment-c/2016/09/22/treasures-of-frost-town-unearthed-near-minute-maid-park>

7. Frost Town Exhibit at International Archeology Day

On October 15, 2016, Jason Barrett displayed Frost Town artifacts at the “International Archaeology Day” at Houston Museum of Natural Sciences (from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm). This event was widely advertised by the museum, and it was well attended. TxDOT also advertised their participation in the International Archaeology Day by posting a notice on the TxDOT website:

<http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/environmental/archaeology-history/cultural-resources/0916.html>

VI. Discuss Why the Nominee Deserves this Award

The project team, consisting of TxDOT, PAI, and the HAS, is a model for community partnering and public outreach on archeological data recovery projects, especially ones that occur in urban areas. The team planned the HAS participation and oral history/video taping efforts well in advance of beginning the on-site investigations. As stated earlier, the Frost Town Data Recovery is ongoing and the another phase of field investigations is scheduled to begin in April 2017. The project team will continue these public outreach efforts during this next phase of work.

NOTE FROM DOUG BOYD AND JASON BARRETT:

Our primary objective in submitting this nomination is to recognize the amazing volunteer efforts contributed by the Houston Archeological Society to an ongoing CRM project. The volunteer time spent by many HAS members, including field, lab, and research time, comprises a significant contribution to the Frost Town Archeological Project.