June 30, 2011 Meeting

In Search of Amelia...

Our fascinating speaker, Megan Lickliter-Mundon, will thrill us with her adventure and experience participating on the dig and the recent discoveries of articles belonging to aviator, Amelia Earhart. Meghan has a master’s degree in archeology and is the administrator of Houston’s 1940 Air Terminal Museum at Hobby Airport. She joined The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery’s (TIGHAR) 10th expedition to Nikumaroro, an uninhabited tropical island in the southwestern Pacific republic of Kiribati on The Earhart Project.

Amelia Earhart and her twin-engine Lockheed Electra vanished on July 2, 1937.

Archaeologist Megan Lickliter-Mundon working at the dig site.

Hopefully by the time you receive this newsletter we will have had some rain. This drought is unprecedented. Speaking of unprecedented, there is a grant funded city study underway called the Main Street Implementation Plan. The purpose of the study is to develop a plan for improvements to the area which includes the Historic District and some contiguous areas. The plan will provide the city with specific prioritized projects such as streetscape improvements, landscaping, signage, parking and so forth. As part of this study my wife Nancy and I have been involved in several stakeholder meetings along with a number of other stakeholders such as the Parks Department, local residents and business owners. I am there representing The League City Historical Society. We want to be certain that the character of our Historic District is not changed but that we find new low impact means to bring more visitors to our shops and museums while improving pedestrian mobility and safety and protecting our residential component.

Planning is well underway for our major events upcoming in the Fall. We are looking for sponsors for the Living History Dinner and the Historic Homes Tour Committee is busy identifying the homes for the next tour. If you know any businesses or individuals that would like to be included as a sponsor for the Living History Dinner please contact Catharin Lewis. Want to help with the Historic Homes Tour or have a sponsor in mind, contact Diana Dornak.

Don’t miss our next meeting. We are hosting Megan Lickliter-Mundoon who recently participated in the Amelia Earhart archeological dig in the South Pacific as our next speaker. This should be great.

from the President...

Ronnie Richards
**Calendar**

**LCHS Meeting**

**June 30**  Megan Lickliter-Mundoon  
Amelia Earhart Archeological dig in the South Pacific  
6:45pm social 7:00pm meeting  
West Bay Common School  
Children’s Museum  
210 Kansas Street, League City

**July 4**  Teddy Bear Parade

**October 6**  Living History Dinner  
with General Robert E. Lee

**October 29**  Ghosts of the Past

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**Meeting Minutes**

**Diane Kerkhove**

May 27th meeting  
The May meeting was held at Butler’s Courtyard.  
President Ronnie Richards welcomed guests and members then encouraged them to attend the next meeting. There will be a report on digs for artifacts of Amelia Earhart.  
The Teddy Bear Parade will be July 4.  
The Annual History Dinner will be October 6. Robert E. Lee will be portrayed, and a silent auction will be held.  
President Richards introduced the speaker Nick Cimino. Nick had spent time in California and taught genealogy of Ireland and Italy. He has been working at the Clayton Library in Houston.  
Nick talked about a book of “30 Cercenasco Families in Galveston County.” He talked about ways to organize a family history.

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**A Special Welcome to Our New Members**  
Ruby Cubley  
Marie Niccolai  
Alice Braud Jones  
Mafalda Faillace

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**MusNews**

**Catharin Lewis, Director / Curator**

The American Association of Museums Annual Conference was held in Houston in May. We had a booth in their Discovery Zone and were situated right next to the Discovery Dome from the Houston Museum of Natural Science. We provided a hands-on exhibit where we made many new contacts, helped answer some questions and referred our resources to others with schoolhouses at their sites. It was time well spent and well worth the effort.

Last week, we attended the annual conference for the Country School Association of America held in New Jersey at the Rider University. There were two days of great presentations, time to be reacquainted with old friends and make new ones. The third day of the conference took us on a bus tour of other one-room schools in the area. I have included photos of some of the schools we visited. These schools date back to 1746.
One bit of exciting news that came out of the executive board meeting at the conference was that our museum is now the new headquarters for the Country School Association of America. I have been serving on the Board as the archivist and will continue to serve in that capacity. As schoolhouses across the country are restored, their stories and histories become part of the CSAA collection. In addition, authors or producers write about schoolhouses and education in these books, CD’s or videos then become a part of the collected works. We look forward to our new role and if you are interested in learning more about CSAA, just check on our website and click on the photo of the CSAA logo at the bottom.

We continue to look for papers, books, and items about education in League City or state wide. If you have items you are willing to share, we hope you will bring these items to the Museum for our care and to share with future visitors of the museum. We are also working on early family histories of the people in League City or those buried at Fairview Cemetery. If you have any of these items, please do share with us.

We continue to have summer classes, but there is still room for your group to register. Register on line or call the museum office at 281-554-2994. We are open and free for walk-in visitors Monday — Thursday 9 — 4pm and Friday 9 – 1pm. Do bring your family and friends through the summer and visit our gift shop.

Teddy Bear Parade
July 4th
9:30 – 11:30am
West Bay Common School Children’s Museum
Doug McKee, Chairman

The TEDDY BEAR PARADE will be held on July 4th at 10:00am beginning at the schoolhouse. It is great fun to see all the children and their decorated bikes going down Second Street to Butler’s Courtyard for the awards and prizes. Additionally, League City will have a Citizens Appreciation Day on the Fourth of July at League Park beginning at 11:00am.

The Historic District Commission approved at Public Hearing, a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a new residential structure at 1010 Coryell Street.

Wes Morrison, City Staff Liaison, announced that upcoming training sessions will be held for commission members at a future date yet to be scheduled. Training topics commissioners would like to hear discussed should be directed to Mr. Morrison as soon as possible. Councilmember Joanna Sharp has been appointed to serve as City Council Liaison to the Historic District Commission.

Memorial Day at Fairview Cemetery with LCHS Members
The sesquicentennial of the beginning of the Civil War is upon us. Come and eat with General Robert E. Lee. Save the date and join us on October 6, 2011 at Butler’s Courtyard for our Living History Dinner.

The first meeting of the 2011 Historic Homes Tour Committee was held on Thursday, June 9 at Butler’s Courtyard. This year’s event will be held on Saturday, December 10 from 10am to 5pm.

Nancy Richards and Diana Dornak are Co-Chairing the event this year and they were both excited to see a nice turn out at the first meeting. The line-up of homes and sites for the tour will probably be announced in August. Anyone who would like to be on the committee is welcome.

2011 League City Historical Society

Dues Form

Dues for various types of memberships are as listed below.

Choose the membership level that is best for you. Complete the form below and mail it with your check

Mail to: League City Historical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 1642
League City, Texas 77574

☐ $25 Single Membership
☐ $40 Family Membership
☐ $15 Senior Citizen Membership (65 years old and older)
☐ $50 Organization Membership
☐ $250 Life Membership

Note: If you have paid your dues in October 2010 or later, you are current for the year 2011.

Please update your membership information.

Name: ____________________________________________

(If Family Membership, please include names of family members.)

Address: _______________________________________
City: ___________________________ Zip:_________

Home phone: ____________________________
Cell Phone: ____________________________

Email address ____________________________

☐ Check if your name, address or email has changed recently.

☐ Check if you would like to receive your newsletter, meeting minutes and/or meeting notices by email, to help save on postage.
Bernardo Plantation Revisited...

One of the League City Historical Society’s past special speakers, Charlie Gordy, Volunteer Work Coordinator of the Bernardo Plantation Project presented an overview of the excavation at the Jared E. Groce II homestead. We thank Debbie Groce, a member of the League City Historical Society, for passing on the following history and update on the project from Charlie Gordy.

Fieldwork Seasons Two and Three Overview

Between August 17 and August 29, 2009 the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in collaboration with the Community Archaeology Research Institute, Inc (CARI) conducted archaeological investigations at the Bernardo Plantation site (41WL28) and the Pleasant Hill Plantation site (41WL29). This work involved remote sensing studies including magnetometry and ground penetrating radar surveys. Excavations were conducted utilizing the results of the remote sensing work which resulted in identifying the main house for the historic Bernardo Plantation, founded in 1822 by Jared E. Groce II on 10 leagues of land granted to him by the Government of Spain through the auspices of Impresario Stephen F. Austin. The location of the main house for the Pleasant Hill Plantation was also located during this investigation.

Dr. Jim Bruseth, Director of the Archeological Division of The THC, et al, reported in September of 2009 the conclusions based on the above-described fieldwork:

1. The location of the main house for the Bernardo Plantation was probably identified
2. The location of the Pleasant Hill Plantation was almost certainly located

Excavations conducted from December 10 through December 13, 2009 confirmed the location of the Bernardo main house. One stone chimney foundation and one brick chimney foundation were recovered, along with sections of footings for wall skirting designed to hide the gap between the ground and the floor joists which rested on piers. Further research was recommended by the THC Archeology Division and CARI was asked to conduct the work.

2010 & 2011 Archaeological Fieldwork

We worked twenty-two field days over eleven weekends. The average volunteer turnout was fifteen volunteers per work day, and participation ranged between seven and twenty-eight volunteers per day.

We opened twenty-eight 3 foot by 3 foot units and nineteen shoveled trenches two feet wide and ranging from 3 feet long to 12 feet long.

Five additional trenches were excavated mechanically during season three utilizing a backhoe equipped with a 30 inch wide bucket. Two more mechanical trenches were excavated under the direction of Scotty Moore, PhD, for the purpose of detailing the geological processes involved in site formation. This information, together with data gleaned from his excavation of a 3 foot by 3 foot unit in an area specifically chosen for low artifact density, will be included in the final report for this site

The Mother’s Room

An additional brick chimney foundation was exposed and is associated with the room labeled “mother’s room” on the Berlet drawing. The construction and design elements are consistent with and slightly smaller than the brick chimney base exposed in earlier excavations. A broken point of the late archaic period, tentatively typed as a Kent, was recovered at a depth of 2 feet. A small amount of Debitage was recovered at the same depth in the unit and an adjacent.

Walkways and Storage

A pad of bricks in situ were exposed outside of, and adjacent to, the room labeled as the parlor in the Berlet drawing. They appear to have served as a floor for a work area, possibly roofed and/or enclosed with walls, and featuring a 24 inch by 36 inch stone-lined box abutting the parlor chimney. Similar boxes have been interpreted as storage areas, perhaps utilized for drying vegetables. The pad appears to have been rectangular with walkways leading toward the
front of the house (grid south) and toward the cistern (grid north). The extent of the walkways associated with this feature remains to be revealed.

The Detached Kitchen

During season one, evidence for the location of the detached kitchen was found at a depth of approximately 1 foot about 30 feet grid north of the main house. It consists of brick rubble and contains ceramic fragments of both domestic utensils and salt-glazed utilitarian vessels. Additional evidence for the presence of the kitchen was found in season two, and appears to be a wall trench filled with brick rubble, running north/south and seems to be oriented within a few degrees of grid north/south line. Areas investigated directly grid north of the main house revealed the hard-packed earth interpreted as a path that ran between the detached kitchen and the gallery (back porch) of the main house.

A Large Structure (Bachelor’s House?)

During season one, we began to investigate a large L-shaped linear magnetometer anomaly that appeared to be oriented along the direction we’ve called the Bernardo Angle (Jim Bruseth coined this term early in the first season of fieldwork). A 36 inch by 18 inch section of dressed sandstone was exposed at a depth of approximately 12 inches. The sandstone was oriented grid east/west.

During season two, additional excavation located a line of sandstone rubble extending grid east which may be a wall trench. Units were excavated 18 feet toward grid north, and approximately 12 feet grid east of the dressed sandstone, and revealed brick rubble at a depth of 12 inches, and were rich with ash. These results seem to correlate very well with the anomaly and suggest a structure about 30 feet square.

Household Slave Quarters

During season one, a single unit was opened grid north of the main house and was excavated with very tight provenience. Nine subunits, 1 foot by 1 foot were excavated in levels measuring 2 tenths of a foot in thickness. Domestic ceramics, square nails and glassware was recovered but artifact density was low. While results in this area are deemed inconclusive, it does not appear to be the location of the three cabins which housed the enslaved household workers.

During season two, a find was made by Jim Woodrick further out in the same pasture as the previously described unit. Mr. Woodrick, using a metal detector, located a large piece of cast iron at a depth of approximately 18 inches. Other artifacts recovered included square nails, fragment of glassware which appear to have been hand-blown and ceramic fragments with a pearl ware glaze.

These finds precipitated the excavation of a trench by hand nearby. The trench was placed just west of Mr. Woodrick’s find extending 12 feet grid north/south. We only had time enough to excavate to a depth of 8 inches and the orientation of the artifacts recovered suggest they have been disturbed by both intensive gopher activity and possibly by agricultural activities. Artifacts recovered include square nails, ceramics and glass shards of the plantation
occupation period. The ceramics include fragments of utilitarian vessels, white ware, undecorated earthenware and a few fragments of stoneware. The blade of a square nosed garden spade was found in the bottom of the last level excavated and seems to be laying flat, in situ, giving hope that the deposition is below the plow zone. It may be that we will have sufficiently undisturbed deposition below this level to evaluate our proximity to the household quarters.

Artifacts and Lab Processing

We have recovered more than 12,000 artifacts over the course of these excavations. More than 8,000 of them have been cleaned and classified and will soon be sent out for expert typing. The remaining artifacts will be cleaned, classified and typed over the summer hiatus.

Conclusion: A Successful Effort

Altogether, we have had a very successful field effort. It seems obvious that this site has been heavily robbed for its bricks and sandstone over the years since occupation by the Groce household and enslaved workers. Anecdotal reports suggest extensive activity by artifact hunters and metal detectorists which have seriously impacted artifact densities, counts and types, especially for metallic artifacts.

Still, there remain exceptionally good prospects to learn about the activities and behaviors that comprised the daily lives of those who made Bernardo Plantation a powerhouse resource in the early days of the Texas Republic. There is quite good prospects for adding to knowledge regarding trade and commerce in the early days of the Austin Colonies.

While interpretation would certainly be premature, speculation is always in season. The architectural features of the main house are largely intact, excepting the chimney base for the “children’s room.” I think we have good evidence for the location of the detached kitchen. The location the kitchen hearth and chimney remain to be located, but we have rubble, features and artifacts that lead me to believe we are very near to it. The location of large, 30 foot by 30 foot structure to the east of the kitchen site is an exciting development. The artifacts and features associated with this structure suggest that we may have found the location of the Bachelor’s House.

Further work needs to be done in the vicinity of the large structure (Bachelor’s House?), the kitchen area and the brick walkways and other outbuildings. We still need to explore the yard around the main house. Most importantly, the field workers quarters, the overseer’s house, the first cotton gin, and the entire Pleasant Hill Plantation remain to be explored. CARI will be seeking funding to continue the fieldwork and the all-important descendants and stakeholders research. We estimate that there is an additional 6-10 field days of work required in main house area and about 22-30 field days needed for investigation of the Pleasant Hill Plantation component. I look forward to working with everyone again in the near future.