Louisiana

Archaeological

Survey and

Antiquities

Commission

December 8, 2020 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, December 8, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. in a virtual meeting in accordance with Act 302 of the 202 Regular Session.

# Members Attending Electronically:

Dr. Chip McGimsey

Dr. Ryan Gray

Dr. Mark Rees

Mr. Mark Hogan

Ms. Julie Doucet

Mr, Thurston Hahn

Mr. Ray Berthelot

Dr. Heather McKillop

Mr. Darryl Hambrick

Ms. Kim Walden

Ms. Pat Arnould

# Members Absent:

# Others Attending Electronically:

Ms. Abbie Bleichner

Dr. Rachel Watson

Ms. Emily Dale

Ms. Karla Oesch

Dr. Diana Greenlee

Ms. Nancy Hawkins

# Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. Dr. McGimsey took the notes for meeting. The meeting took place using Webex that produced a video and transcript of the meeting.

Dr. McKillop noted in her welcome that she wished everyone well in what has been a trying fall semester. Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION:** *A motion was made by Ms. Pat Arnould and seconded by Ms. Julie Doucet to accept the minutes of the September 8, 2020, Antiquities Commission Meeting*. *The motion carried unanimously.*

# Old Business

Division Update

Dr. McGimsey gave a brief update on the Division of Archeology focusing on the current interview process for the vacant Outreach and Education position. Discussion addressed the anticipated schedule for filling the vacancy and the applicants.

Update on Los Adaes Treefalls

Dr. McGimsey gave a Powerpoint presentation on the field results of the treefall excavations at Los Adaes State Historic Site. A permit for this work was requested at the September 8, 2020, Commission meeting. Hurricane Laura had toppled five trees at the site.

The presentation outlined the field process with Dr. Avery overseeing the washing and screening and Dr. McGimsey managing the excavations. All sediment removed from a treefall was water-screened through 1/8 inch mesh; everything retained on the screen was retained for sorting in the lab.

Five treefalls were excavated. The largest, Treefall 47, created a hole nearly 3.5 m wide. It was located in a part of the site where historic maps indicate a structure was nearby. The treefall produced the majority of the artifacts recovered during this project, including European ceramics, metal, glass, and American Indian pottery. This assemblage is typical of materials collected at the site. Another treefall was located immediately behind the visitor’s center near the presidio; it produced a number of beads. The remaining three treefalls are located well away from known historic resources and produced only a few artifacts.

Laboratory processing of the collections is ongoing but was significantly slowed due to the pandemic limiting opportunities for students and volunteers to work in Dr. Avery’s lab at Stephen F. Austin State University. Dr.’s McGimsey and Avery hope that a complete report will be available in the fall of 2021.

Dr. McKillop asked why so many beads were found in Treefall 46. Dr. McGimsey replied it was unclear at the moment. Dr. Rees asked if Dr. Avery could give a report on the interpretation and conclusions when that data was available. Dr. McGimsey replied that it was their intent to do so once the report was complete.

# New Business

Update – Poverty Point Station Archaeology Annual Report

Dr, Greenlee gave a Powerpoint presentation on activities of the Station program over the past year. She discussed four projects that the program undertook.

One project examined a small rise and adjacent depression near the Mound E ridge. An irregularly shaped rise was suffering from erosion and Park personnel wanted to reshape it to slow erosion and allow mowing. The shape of the rise and pit looked like the result of a large treefall. An initial core placed in the base of the pit revealed 2.5 m of soft sediment underlain by 1.5 m of apparent constructed fill. Two attempts to core the rise were limited by very compact sediment. A NRCS truck was employed to take a 5.7 m long core through the rise. It revealed nearly 5 m of constructed fill. The limited data does not clearly indicate what this feature represents; there are no historic reords to suggest this is an historic-era feature. Dr. Greenlee intends to take some additional cores to try and clarify the feature. One piece of wood was noted in the NRCS core and may be submitted for a date.

The second project dealt with the replacement of the sewage treatment plant for the dormitory and lab facilities. Dr. Greenlee had previously conducted limited excavations where the lift station and associated facilities were proposed. This year the contractor indicated additional area was necessary and that new area was examined. The 2019 Block A was expanded and six features identified. Five of these appeared to be historic and probably associated with the original sewer plant construction. Feature B was a small amorphous pit with no diagnostic artifcts. Feature G was an oval pit that expended up to 80 cm below surface. It produced pottery sherds and two radiocarbon dates in the AD 1200-1400 interval. This feature represents the first late pre-contact facility identified at the site.

Feature H was encountered in a utility trench as a large and somewhat ambiguous feature. Exposed only in the trench, soil probes were used to define its extent. It is at least 1 m in diameter and up to 1.3 m deep. Limited excavations produced an Archaic type point and a few sherds; a radiometric data came back in the AD 1400-1600 interval. Additional work will be need to assess the nature and context of this feature.

During the year, Dr. Greenlee along with Dr. Rinita Dalan and a researcher from Norway received a grant to conduct 3D GPR survey at the site. The survey was undertaken this fall. In several instances, apparent circular features were determined to represent the modern post circles created using PVC pipe. The data processing is ongoing for the survey. One hope was that the 3D approach would identify the base of fill aross the plaza but initial analysis indicates that this surface was not recognizable. One interesting feature that appeared in the data suggests it is the top of a small, buried mound. This feature was cored last week, but the results of the core analysis are not yet available.

The final project for this year was the curation of the 1991 NLU/UAB summer field school at the site. This investigation explored an area on Ridge 2 NW where Dr. Greene of NLU had previously identified two possible structure floors separated by a burned stratum. A report on this investigation was never completed. This year’s project involved tracking down all the available field records and photos. In some cases, records were retrieved from former students. At this time, most of the field records have been located, but many of the photographs are still missing. Two students worked to process the collection for curation and to transcribe the field notes and records. Examination of the collection suggests that most of the diagnostic artifacts appear to be missing; their whereabouts are unknown.

Dr. Greenlee has recently taken a core in the area of the 1991 excavation and identified the two strata that probably represent the ‘structure floors’.

Dr. Rees asked about the late dates from Features G and H and if there is evidence for a late pre-contact occupation of the site. Dr. Greenlee replied that these are the only contexts with dates of that period, and that artifacts of that time period are rarely found across the site. She did note that Mound D is a somewhat earlier late construction dating to around AD 700-800. Dr. McGimsey also noted that surveyors have found evidence of Coles Creek and later occupations in the property just north of the park.

# Other Business

Dr. McGimsey announced the opening of the art exhibit at the Capitol Park Museum featuring the work of 4 artists illustrating some 10 different mound sites across Louisiana.

Dr. McKillop noted that the LSU Native American Student Organization recently held a panel discussion on the LSU Campus Mounds. At this event, Dr. Corey Sills, former LSU grad student, discussed the modern uses of the mounds, and Dr. Brooks Ellwood discussed his recent research at the site. The suggestion was made to invite the NASO to come meet with the Commission. NASO has expressed interest in trying to do something to preserve the mounds while marking their significance. Ms. Arnould noted that NASO and Tribes in general have a strong interest in the site and want to participate in discussions about their future. There was discussion of the ongoing efforts by LSU to develop a new Campus Master Plan and how the mounds will be incorporated into the plan. Dr. McGimsey and other archaeologists, as well as federally-recognized Tribes have participated in those discussions. NASO was invited to participate but has not responded at this time.

***Motion:*** *Dr. Ray Berthelot moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Ms. Julie Doucet. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 2:47 PM.

