

# COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY ARCHEOLOGY

## Finding The Untold Stories

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) builds and maintains roads in Texas, a big state with a growing population. This is a big job, but it is not TxDOT's only job. During the planning phase for each project, TxDOT must also consider the impacts that construction may have on the local communities, the environment, and on cultural resources such as historic structures and archeological sites.

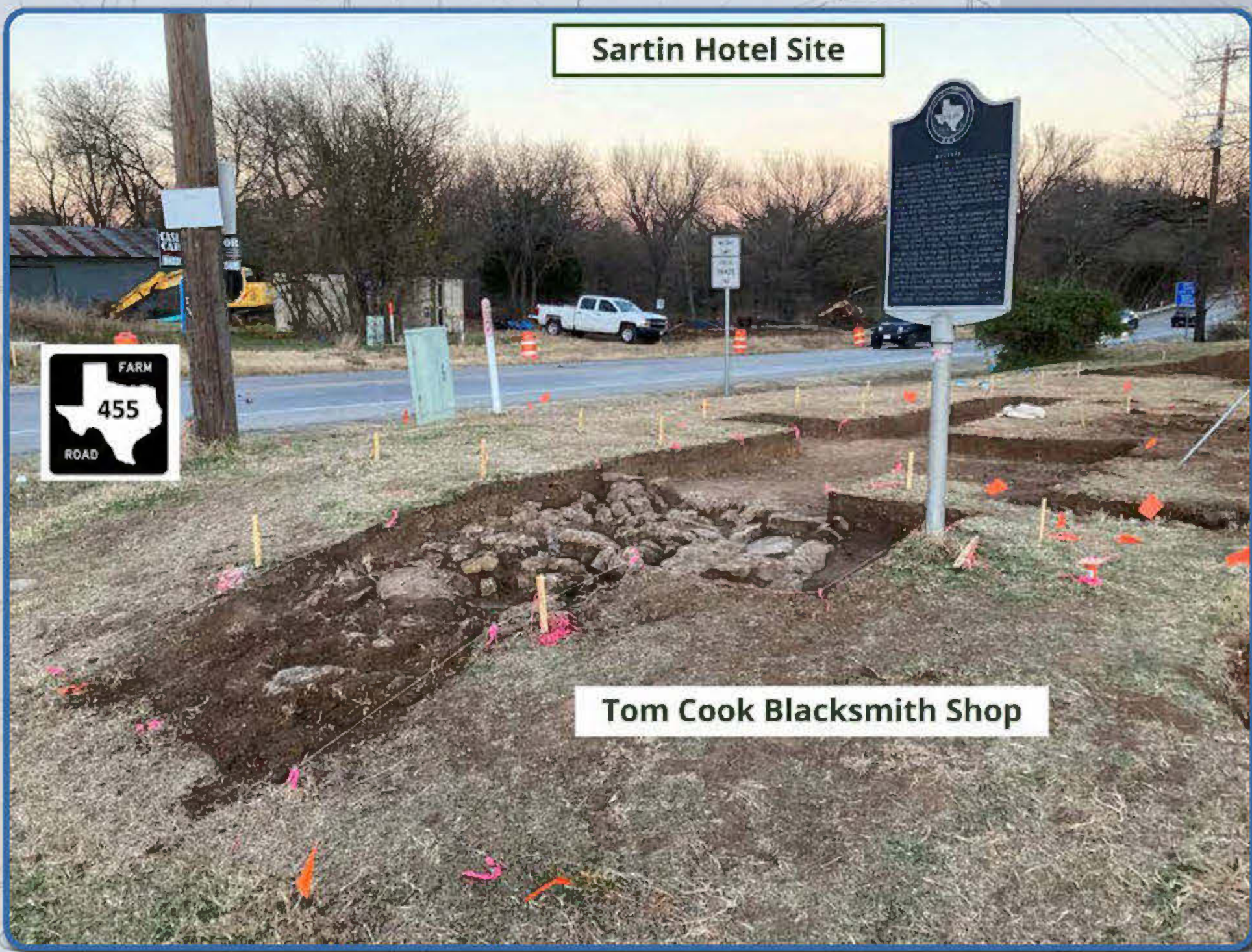
This story begins with a road improvement project proposed for Denton County. To allow for increased traffic, TxDOT planned to widen FM 455 over a four-mile stretch that runs between the towns of Sanger and Bolivar. Early in the planning stage, contract archeologists completed an archeological survey and found three historic sites along the road in the small town of Bolivar. Two of the sites were considered important enough to warrant archeological testing, and this investigation found that they were significant at the state and national levels.

In collaboration with TxDOT, archeologists with Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc. now Stantec, conducted excavations at the Sartin Hotel Site and the Tom Cook Blacksmith Shop in the fall and winter of 2020-2021. Both sites were commercial businesses in Bolivar during the late nineteenth century. The sites are particularly important because they were in operation during the time of the great cattle drives on the Chisholm Trail from 1867 to ca. 1886. One more detail made the blacksmith shop even more significant—it was owned and operated by an African American freedman. Such sites are rare in Texas, and these archeological investigations are contributing to revealing the "untold stories" in Texas history.

The project involves archeology, archival research, descendant community outreach, and oral history research. The Bolivar Archeological Project is breaking new ground revealing untold stories that you will not find in any history book.



The two archeological sites (in red) are located at the main intersection in Bolivar, where FM 455 and FM 2450 cross. Now farm-to-market roads maintained by TxDOT, in the late nineteenth century these were wagon and stagecoach roads. Many Texas highways closely follow the paths of historic roads.



TxDOT's project to widen FM 455 led to the discovery and archeological investigations of two nineteenth-century commercial sites in Bolivar—the Sartin Hotel and the Tom Cook Blacksmith Shop. Bolivar was an important town in the history of Denton County and the Chisholm Trail.



William Howard Clark is a retired law enforcement officer, and he is also the great-great-grandson of Tom Cook. Howard forged knife blades as a hobby before he knew his ancestor was a blacksmith. Now Howard is following in Tom's footsteps and taking blacksmithing classes.



In this photo, Halee Wright, a schoolteacher and Tom Cook's great-great-granddaughter, is being interviewed. Oral history interviews with direct descendants and others in the Denton County African American community provide context for understanding a more complete story of Tom Cook.



Dr. Maria Franklin is interviewing Betty Clark Kimble, who is a great-granddaughter of Tom Cook. The oral history interviews are an important part of the Bolivar Archeological Project, and many members of the local community are participating in the project.

### Historical Archeology

Cook Thomas	Blacksmith
.. To. Ma	.. 1859
.. Thomas	.. 1857
.. Samuel	.. 1848
.. Mary	.. 1843
.. Lawrence	.. 1841
.. W. Ballou	.. 1840
.. Kelly	.. 1835
.. Kelly	.. 1835
.. Kelly	.. 1835

### Archival Research

### Community Outreach & Oral History

The Bolivar Archeological Project was a multi-disciplinary effort involving three interrelated tasks: (1) Archeological excavations to find features and recover artifacts; (2) Archival research to discover historical documents about the properties and people; and (3) Outreach with the local African American community.

**THANK YOU TO THE BOLIVAR ARCHEOLOGICAL PROJECT COLLABORATORS:**

# BOLIVAR ARCHEOLOGICAL PROJECT



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Environmental Consulting

now



Stantec



**BEYOND THE ROAD**  
TxDOT