



# MAKING HISTORY RELEVANT

A Student Investigation of the Williams Farmstead  
Texas Historical Inquiry  
Austin Academy for Excellence

by Deborah Gray

# REAL PLACES

Essential Question – What is the benefit to be gained from studying the remains of an old farmstead?

Enduring Understanding – A rare perspective can be attached to the conclusions drawn from the analysis of documents, artifacts, and oral histories associated with the farmstead of the post slavery Ransom and Sarah Williams family.

These conclusions allow us to construct a picture of what life was like for former slaves, Ransom and Sarah, as they farmed and raised horses as well as raised a family on their 45 acres. \*

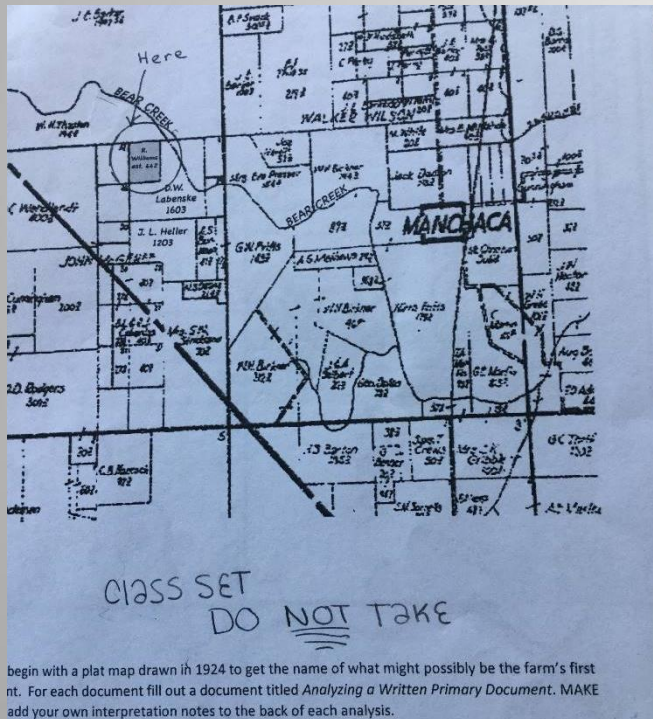
\*Meets and at times exceeds TEA skills requirements (TEKS)



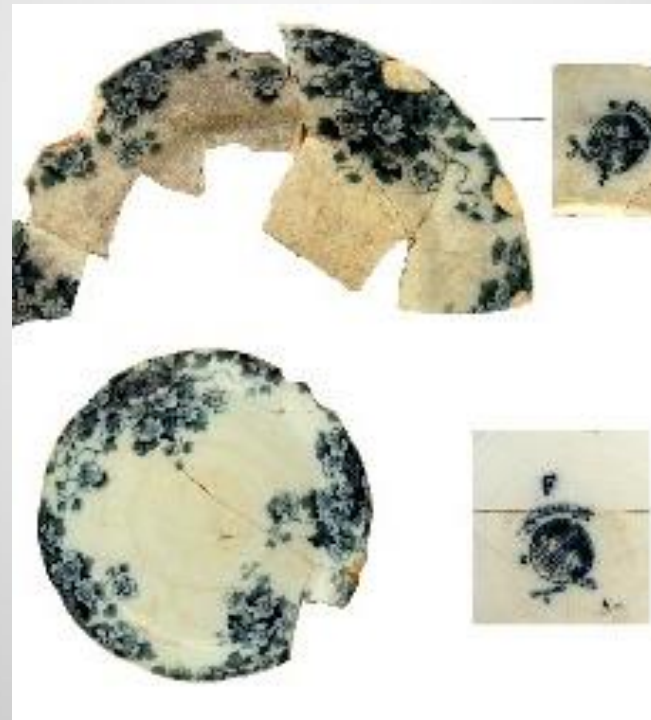
# HISTORICAL INQUIRY

PLACE THE STUDENT IN THE RESEARCH POSITION

## DOCUMENTATION



## ARTIFACTS



## ORAL HISTORY



# I ASKED MY STUDENTS TO FOLLOW IN THE RESEARCHERS FOOTSTEPS

- Analyze 12 important documents (Primary Sources)
  - Ask at least 2 questions on each document analysis sheet that are left unanswered.
- Make observations about 8 artifacts presented
  - Conduct table discussions regarding the possible significance of each artifact and record your conclusions.
- View oral history clips
  - How do the clips of Lee Dell Bunton, Sr., Winnie Harper Moyer, and Samuel Harper inform your understanding of the story of Ransom and Sarah Williams?

**Write the Williams's story based on your conclusions**

# WHAT DID THE STUDENTS GAIN?

- Through the Williams documents, artifacts, and oral histories, we can teach students the transferable skills of research to arrive at truths and generate hypotheses.
- Once students finished their papers, we watched the video that tells the story of Sarah and Ransom, two former slaves who went on to become owners of a farm. They had previously learned that the Williams's had no debt, livestock assets, and discretionary income to purchase English china, decorative jewelry, and lovely candlesticks. Paired with their previous understanding of the cycle of poverty, created by sharecropping and tenant farming, they were able to understand and appreciate the value of opportunity and the dramatic effect it could have had in the Jim Crow South.

# STUDENT LEARNING AND METACOGNITION



When the information is challenging –  
Students carry their learning forward



# INTERNET RESOURCES

Molly Walberg, 2010. *Life and Letters: College of Liberal Arts Magazine* (Fall 2010). Published by the University of Texas, College of Liberal Arts.

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/credits.html>

*Juneteenth Jamboree 2010* KLRU-TV | Austin .

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/credits.html>

From Slave to Landowner: Historic Archeology at the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead. Douglas K. Boyd, Maria Franklin, and Terri Myers, 2011. *Current Archeology in Texas* 13(1):8–15 (April 2011). Published by the Texas Historical Commission.

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/credits.htm>

! Research Site is One of Texas' Best-Preserved African American Farmsteads. *The Medallion* 50(4):4–5 (Fall 2012). Published by the Texas Historical Commission.

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/credits.html>

2 volumes of *I'm Proud to Know What I Know: Oral Narratives of Travis and Hays Counties, Texas, ca. 1920s–1960s*. Maria Franklin, 2012. Reports of Investigations No. 165, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin.

<http://www.paiarch.com/whatsnew.htm>

2 volumes of *The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Post-Emancipation Transitions of an African American Family in Central Texas*. Douglas K. Boyd, Aaron R. Norment, Terri Myers, Maria Franklin, Nedra Lee, Leslie L. Bush, and Brian S. Shaffer, 2014.

Reports of Investigations No. 173. Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin.

<http://www.paiarch.com/whatsnew.htm>