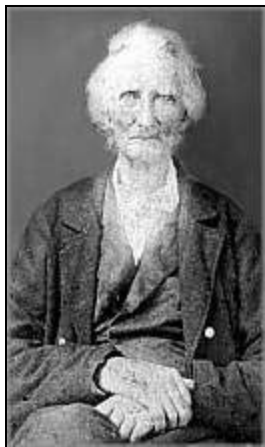


## LEVI JORDAN PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE

By Neal McLain

Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site is located in southern Brazoria County, on present-day FM 521 road, between Brazoria and Sweeny.



*Historic photograph of Levi Jordan*

Photo: Public domain.

Levi Jordan (1793-1873) was born in Georgia and migrated to Texas in the 1840s. In the years before the Civil War he built one of the largest sugar and cotton plantations in Texas. Using slave labor he constructed a sugar mill, support facilities for the production of sugar and cotton, slave quarters, and a two-story frame house for himself and his family.

After the Civil War,

he employed many of his former slaves and their descendants as sharecroppers to work the fields. During the 1870s sugar production declined and cotton production grew.

After Jordan's death the property was subdivided among his descendents. In 2001 the property was acquired by the State of Texas and placed under the jurisdiction of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Under TPWD the property was designated a State Historic Site

The Cradle of Texas Chapter established a partnership agreement with TPWD. In 2006 and 2007, members of the chapter conducted a series of five species surveys at the site. The final report of these surveys is available on the Chapter website at

<http://tinyurl.com/LJP-Survey>

In 2008 the Texas Legislature transferred several State Historic Sites, including Levi Jordan, to the Texas Historical Commission. At that point our partnership agreement terminated.

The Texas Historical Commission has invested heavily in the preservation and restoration of the site. In 2009-2010, a team of archaeologists from the University of Houston conducted a comprehensive archaeological survey of the main house. This effort was led by Dr. Kenneth L. Brown of the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies.

To facilitate the archaeological work the entire building was raised several feet above its original foundation. At the same time new



*Levi Jordan Plantation Home, November 2006*

Photo: Neal McLain



*Levi Jordan Plantation Home, November 2015*

Photo: Neal McLain

### **Kenneth L. Brown, Principal Investigator**

Dr. Brown holds the rank of Professor in the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Houston. He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include Archaeological Method and Theory, Historical Archaeological Method and Theory, African American Archaeology, Mesoamerican Archaeology and Ethnohistory, and Urban Archaeology.

Source: University of Houston

<http://www.uh.edu/class/ccs/people/kenneth-brown/>





## LEVI JORDAN PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE *continued*

foundations were constructed for the building and for the two fireplace chimneys.

After the completion of the archaeological work the main house was lowered onto its new foundation, and restored to its original appearance. The site is now open to the public on Saturdays.

THC continues to invest in the restoration of the site. Archaeological investigations of the slave quarters are still in progress. Plans are now under way for the construction of a visitor center and an associated museum to display the thousands of artifacts recovered during the archaeological surveys.

Much of the capital funding for this work comes from the proceeds of a series of bond issues. As THC notes,

*The Seventy-Ninth (2005) and Eightieth (2007) Legislatures appropriated a combined \$43.8 million (\$43.0 million in General Obligation and Revenue Bond Proceeds and \$0.8 million in General Revenue Funds) to THC for capital projects at the historic sites. [1]*

THC has augmented the Levi Jordan staff by creating two full-time professional staff positions.

### Ashley Carter, Site Manager



Photo: THC

Carter joined the THC Historic Sites Division in March 2015. Prior to joining TCH worked at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in North Canton, Ohio where he was a Collections Specialist. He has also worked for the National Park Service Museum Resource Center the George Washington Memorial Park.

Carter notes that he “looks forward to working with the dedicated staff at the THC, This property is currently under development but it has a remarkable story to tell. I plan on working hand-in-hand with the community on enhancing the site and bringing its history to life for the enrichment of our visitors.”

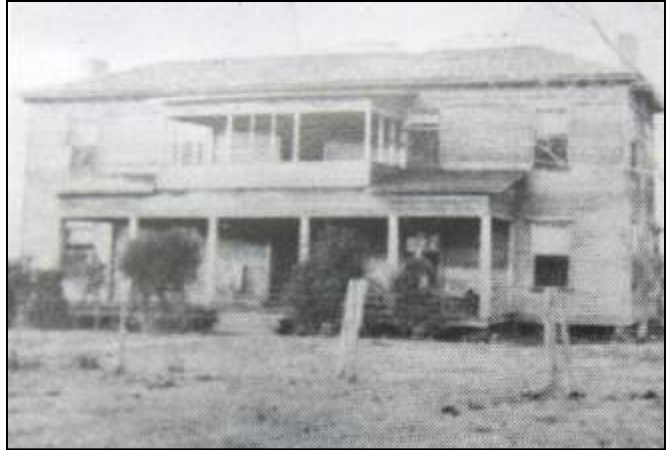
### Ben Pfeiffer, Education Specialist



Photo: McLain

Pfeiffer joined the THC Historic Sites Division in October 2015. Prior to joining THC he taught Social Studies to 6th-through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students. He has served as Assistant Director at the Houston Maritime Museum and as a program assistant at the Brazoria County Historical Museum. He notes that “it is an exciting time to be on ground floor of the site’s development, especially with the construction of our new visitor center on the horizon.”

Ben’s wife Angela is the Curator at Varner Hogg Plantation State Historic Site.



*Undated photos of the plantation house from A Window to the Past: Brazoria County, Texas [2]*



*Undated photo of the plantation house. Original source unknown; public Domain photo courtesy of JQ+Tsen, Austin, Texas,*

[1] Overview of Historic Sites at the Texas Historical Commission: An Issue Brief From Legislative Budget Board Staff. ID:1349 June 2014. <http://tinyurl.com/THC-ID1349>

[2] *A Window to the Past: Brazoria County, Texas* Brazoria County Historical Museum and Brazoria County Historical Commission, 1986.