

Largest Cache of French Colonial Artifacts on Display for the First Time

The Bullock Museum reunites La Belle with the bulk of its cargo in exhibition opening this fall.

AUGUST 16, 2018 (AUSTIN, TX) — For the first time since they were excavated in the mid-1990s, thousands of artifacts found aboard the wrecked ship *La Belle* will be on view to the public as part of a new exhibition opening this fall at the Bullock Museum. The exhibition, *Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here*, covers more than 16,000 years of history, with *La Belle* and its cargo located in the heart of the gallery.

"*La Belle* had been loaded with many of the items needed to establish a colony in the Americas, such as trade goods, weaponry for protection and things needed for daily survival," said the exhibition's curator Franck Cordes. "Basically it was a 'colony kit' with thousands of items, including cannons, axe heads, glass beads, and tools for farming and carpentry."

The ship was grounded in the midst of a violent storm in Matagorda Bay in 1686, taking its cargo with it, and effectively putting an end to French explorer Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle's ambitions to establish a French colony in North America. Located in 1995 by the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the cargo and remaining hull were painstakingly excavated and underwent extensive preservation by the THC and The Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation at Texas A&M University. Although the hull and a sampling of artifacts have been on view at the Museum since 2014, the vast majority of items have been in storage.

The story of *La Belle* and its role in changing Texas history will be just one of many explored in *Becoming Texas*. Beginning with a 16,000-year-old stone projectile point, the exhibition will explore the cultures of the American Indian peoples that lived in the regions of Texas, with immersive audiovisual environments, hands-on interactives and stunning artifacts. Visitors will experience the immense diversity of the cultures found throughout Texas, exploring daily lives, trade, craft, and languages found across the many different Texas landscapes prior to 1821.

The exhibition also examines the arrival of Europeans from Spain and France, their attempts at colonization and relationships with the tribes and nations they encountered. Rarely seen artifacts such as a St. Francis *santo* demonstrate attempts at religious conversion, while heavy mission gates built for protection speak to the conflicts that arose over control of the land.

"The richness of artifacts assembled from around the nation, new multimedia experiences, and contemporary research tell this story in a new and exciting way that lays the groundwork for how we became who we are," said Margaret Koch, Museum Director.



*Frenchen Juglette never before on view will be part of the 'colony kit' display in the **Becoming Texas** exhibition*

"Visitors will understand not just what happened in Texas, but the global ramifications resulting from those events," said Cordes. "As they explore the exhibition, they will see how the cultures which were established so long ago are the deep roots of the culture of Texas that continues to exist today."

Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here, will open in November 2018. For more information and updates, visit TheStoryofTexas.com and follow the Bullock Museum on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

###

Support for *Becoming Texas* provided by the Texas State History Museum Foundation and the State of Texas through the State Preservation Board.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM:

The Bullock Texas State History Museum includes three floors of exhibitions, IMAX® and special-effects theaters, a café and museum store. The Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals to display original historical artifacts and host exhibitions that illuminate and celebrate Texas history and culture. For more information, visit www.TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

The Bullock Texas State History Museum is owned and operated by the State of Texas through the State Preservation Board. Additional support of exhibitions and programs is provided by the Texas State History Museum Foundation.

1800 N. CONGRESS AVE. | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701 | (512) 936-8746 | THESTORYOFTEXAS.COM