

# Connecting Past and Present: The Old Canaan Cemetery Bioarchaeology Project

## Introduction

The Old Canaan Cemetery Bioarchaeology Project began in 2018 at the request of the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church community located in Marshall, Texas. The community established a church and cemetery in approximately 1870. Due to Jim Crow-era violence and intimidation, the church was relocated about one mile from the cemetery in 1938. In 2018, the church community contacted the Texas Historical Commission to inquire about archaeological documentation of the cemetery and the THC connected them with Texas Tech. Our goal is to collaborate with the church community to provide answers to their questions about the cemetery size and who is buried there using archaeological, bioarchaeological, and historical data.

## Faculty Voice

"The Old Canaan Cemetery Bioarchaeology Project represents a transformational collaboration with the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church community, aiming to uncover the history of their cemetery and its occupants. Through archaeological and bioarchaeological research, we seek to provide answers that honor their legacy and strengthen community ties."

-- Dr. Anna Novotny



## Team

**Faculty:** Dr. Anna Novotny, Dr. Tamra Walter  
**Students:** Tenley Belshe, Nathaniel Asquith, Kaitlin Murphy

## Student Voice

"I sought experience in the formal practice of archaeology and bioarchaeology principles in the field to strengthen my skills and enhance my resume, recognizing that hands-on involvement is essential for my growth and future opportunities in this discipline."

-- Tenley Belshe



**Establish Timing of Coffin Hardware Styles**

**Complete Excavation of Previously Identified Grave**

**Explore Previously Unexplored Cemetery Areas**

Transformative Experiences

## Impacts/Results/Products/To Date Progress

To date, the Old Canaan Cemetery Bioarchaeology Project has successfully established a collaborative partnership with the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church community. We have conducted initial archaeological documentation of the cemetery and engaged students and volunteers in hands-on fieldwork to gain practical experience. Our ongoing data collection and analysis aim to uncover the historical context of those buried in the cemetery, ultimately enhancing the community's understanding of their heritage and honoring their legacy.

**TrUE**  
**Transformers**