THE STORY
At the end of the 19th century, oil prospectors, called wildcatters, drilled exploratory oil wells in a large salt dome known as Spindletop Hill. On January 10, 1901, they struck oil with the Lucas Gusher, yielding 100,000 barrels of oil per day. The history of Texas, and the United States, changed after the Spindletop discovery. Before Spindletop, petroleum had limited uses such as in lamps and lubrication. After the discovery, which led to the first large-scale petroleum extraction in the world, petroleum became a major energy source, fueling ships and trains previously powered by coal, leading the way for new engine inventions for airplanes and automobiles. From early on, Spindletop and surrounding communities accommodated diverse and energetic groups of land and oil speculators, investors, settlers, shopkeepers, and common citizens flocking to the oil field to make their fortunes in “black gold.” In 1979, the Lucas Gusher and the Spindletop Oil Field, comprising industrial and residential structural and archaeological remains dating to the Oil Boom periods of 1901-1908 and 1925-1936, were listed as a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

THE PROJECT
Once a byproduct of oil production, natural gas has become an increasingly versatile and sought after energy resource. Storing natural gas helps manage changes in market demand, stabilize natural gas prices and protect against supply disruptions. Underground storage is considered the safest means of storing natural gas, and in 2007 Golden Triangle Storage, Inc. (GTS), a wholly owned subsidiary of AGL Resources Inc. (AGL), proposed building the Golden Triangle Storage Project (GTS Project), a 90-acre storage facility approximately a half-mile to a mile deep hollowed out of the Spindletop salt dome near the original Lucas Gusher.

THE 106 PROCESS
The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the federal agency permitting the GTS Project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires federal agencies to identify...
For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov

Consulting Parties:
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Texas State Historic Preservation Office
Golden Triangle Storage, Inc.

THE SUCCESS
GTS has been an unsurpassed steward of the remaining Spindletop cultural resources, which consist of both standing structures and archaeological resources. Through Section 106 consultation on the GTS Project, GTS made a significant contribution to the documentation and understanding of an important industrial landscape. The research and archaeological surveys increased understanding of evolving petroleum technology and everyday activities of the people living and working on the Lucas Gusher/Spindletop Oil Field NHL. GTS has consistently promoted public involvement in the project, from talks and lectures to safety training of volunteers, and production of publications and brochures. In the face of expanding development, the Section 106 process provided new insights into this changing historic oil field settlement where the modern petroleum industry and many of the major oil companies operating today had their origins.