

# Star of the Republic Museum

# NOTES

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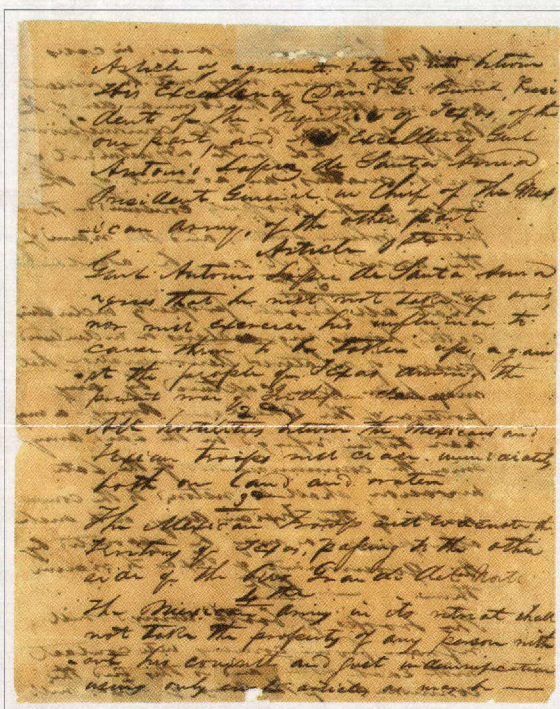
## Elections in the Republic of Texas:

### NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

*Mudslinging and personal attacks have long been associated with political campaigns, and those during the Republic of Texas (1836-1846) were no different. A closer look at the candidates and personalities involved will highlight how politics have not changed, just evolved over the years. There were four contentious presidential elections with candidates and their supporters lobbing verbal strikes at each other, with the first election setting the stage. The factors behind the attacks were varied, from the fate of Santa Anna to simply being allied with Sam Houston to the question of Texas annexation. Over the next few issues of Notes, the feature articles will be a study of the presidential elections of the Republic of Texas.*

**D**elegates at Washington on the Brazos selected David Burnet as ad interim President of the Republic of Texas, swearing him in on March 17, 1836. Burnet was given until the end of 1837 to organize the government for the newly born country, which included adopting the constitution and setting up the general election. Burnet completed his task by August of 1836, with Texians scheduled to cast ballots for president and other elected government offices in September.

The first presidential election dredged up some of the animosity between the leaders of the provisional government and the military. Initially, Houston did not throw his hat into the ring. He waited until just eleven days prior to the election to accept the nomination for president. There was speculation that Houston liked to keep people guessing on whether he would run or not. By



*This document is a copy of a public agreement between David G. Burnet, President of the Republic of Texas, and Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, General of the Mexican army. The agreement, negotiated by Sam Houston, calls for an end to hostilities between the Mexicans and Texans and orders the Mexican troops to leave Texas. It also requires the return of confiscated property and the release of prisoners. A secret treaty, recognizing Texas as an independent republic, never came to fruition because neither Mexico or Texas ratified the public treaty. Shown here is page one of four, which is in the Star of the Republic Museum's collection.*

doing this, Houston was able to keep voters talking about him, without suffering from the other candidates' verbal attacks.

Henry Smith, provisional governor in 1835, and Stephen F. Austin were the only other two candidates, but against Houston, they did not stand a chance. His opponents did not have time to bring up the criticism and speculation of the way he led the Texian Army, mainly retreating instead of fighting. There also were rumors circulating that Houston was indirectly responsible for the loss of life at the Alamo and Goliad because he took leave from the army at Refugio to solidify a treaty with the Cherokee. The very same day the treaty was finalized and signed, Santa Anna arrived in San Antonio. Had his opponents been given the time to bring these accusations to public

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view, Houston may not have been as competitive in the election.

In addition, Austin, the only real contender, had become unpopular due to his reluctance to support independence and his call to spare Santa Anna's life after he was captured. Not well known was the state of Austin's health, which was rapidly declining. In the end, Austin only received 587 votes to Smith's 743 and Houston's 5,110, making Houston the first elected president of the Republic of Texas. Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar won the vice presidency. Austin was appointed Secretary of State under Houston, but died only two months after taking office.



**STAR OF THE REPUBLIC MUSEUM**

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site

Open Daily  
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

936-878-2461 (fax) 936-878-2462

www.starmuseum.org  
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The newsletter also is available to download from our website at [www.starmuseum.org](http://www.starmuseum.org).

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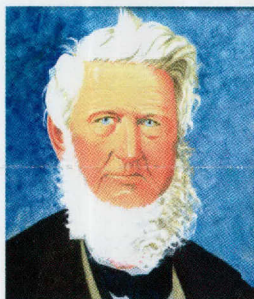
The premier two-year college in Texas, Blinn's transfer rate consistently ranks among the top 10 in the nation.

The fireworks really started after the votes had been tallied. Although, Houston was not officially to take office until the second Monday in December, there was considerable force by his supporters, as well as rumored behind-the-scenes pressure by Houston, for him to be sworn in early. Lamar wrote in his diary, "Houston was so anxious to enter upon the duties of his office that Burnet was forced by the threats of members of Congress that if he did not retire for the new President he would be pushed out." This not only was telling, as Lamar was Houston's vice president, but also hinted at the contentious political relationship between the two. Burnet evidently felt the heat and resigned on October 22, 1836, with the elected government being sworn in the next day.

Whether or not Houston was behind Burnet's early retirement is only supposition, what is known is that Houston disliked Burnet. Houston felt disrespected as a military commander when he led the Texian Army and Burnet

was one of his harshest critics. Ad Interim President Burnet sent a message taking him to task for retreating time after time and not engaging with the Mexican Army during the fight for independence. Burnet said Houston was a laughingstock and embarrassing Texas. This message was a large blow to Houston's pride and led Houston to readily agree to an early inauguration. In turn, Burnet resented Houston for ignoring orders and also partially held Houston responsible for the unrelenting insubordination by the Texian troops and their commanders. Finally, Burnet disliked him for the perceived power play and for pressuring him to resign early. An adversarial relationship continued to develop between them based on personal and professional slights that ultimately built the foundation for the 1841 electoral showdown.

*The feature article in the next Notes will be about the 1838 election, with Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar as the main candidate for President.*



*Portrait of David G. Burnet by Alexander Simon in 1868. Star of the Republic Museum*

**Republic of Texas Presidential Profile**

David G. Burnet, Ad Interim President from March 16 to October 22, 1836, came to Texas from New Jersey, where he was born in 1788. He lost his parents at an early age and was raised by his brothers, eventually moving to Cincinnati with them. Burnet was not a successful man back east and that combined with an illness, most likely tuberculosis, he moved first to Natchitoches, Louisiana and traded with the Comanches. His health did improve, but he was barely making a living, so he went back to Ohio and studied law.

On December 22, 1826 Burnet received an empresario grant from Mexico to settle 300 families north of the Old Spanish Road near Nacogdoches. However, he was unable to find colonizers and backers for his venture, so he sold his contract to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. He returned to Ohio, married and moved with his wife in 1831 to 279 acres near the San Jacinto River, building a house facing Burnet Bay. He also built a mill, but he had to sell it in 1835.

Burnet did not support independence from Mexico, but also did not agree with the direction toward dictatorship that the national government was heading. His neighbors backed separating from Mexico and did not feel Burnet should represent them at the Convention of 1836. Burnet still attended and the delegates elected him the Ad Interim President.



Visitors enjoyed a fun and educational evening when they toured the museum by flashlight and witnessed the Star of the Republic Museum exhibits come to life during the annual Night at the Museum on Saturday, Oct. 27. Combined with family activities at the Park Visitor Center's Fall Festival, Night at the Museum was enjoyed by all. The Museum would like to thank the cast and volunteers of Night at the Museum, Tavern Tales, and the Sundown Wagon Ride for making it another successful event!

*Photo on left (left to right)*

Night at the Museum Cast and Volunteers

*Back Row: Jay Robinson, David Lewis, Tom Pease, Jace Wood, Cheryl Dowdy, Denise Campbell, Jeff Bolich, Kevin Ermis, Laura Fisher  
Front Row: Sharon Brass, Eliu Santos, Debbie Gau, Kelton Wood, Miale Wood, Mark Sanders, Keith Barker, Pete Lampley*



Tavern Tales and Sundown Wagon Ride Cast and Volunteers

*Back Row: Jim Carpenter, Jolene Armstrong, Barry Brass, Jon Failor  
Front Row: Jon Wellman, Cyndee Smith, Linda Carpenter, Barb King, Jordan Anderson*

# NIGHT AT THE Star of the Republic Museum MUSEUM

**Night at the Museum Featuring Tavern  
Tales and Sundown Wagon Ride**



## Brazos Valley Regional History Fair

Star of the Republic Museum is hosting the 14th annual Brazos Valley Regional History Fair on Friday, February 8, 2019. After the local contests, the regional competition is the next step, with regional winners advance to the state level in Austin. The top two winners from each category at the state level will then compete at the National History Day.

National History Day is a nonprofit educational program, dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of history. Each year a new theme is selected, with this year's being, "Triumph and Tragedy in History."

Students choose their own projects (paper, exhibit, documentary, performance or website) and research a topic based on the National History Day theme. Projects can be done individually or as a group, consisting of up to five members. Students will compete within their division in order to advance, but will also compete for special awards from our sponsors. Last year, \$1,700 in prize money was available for the special awards.

**Volunteers, sponsors, and judges** are still needed. If you or your organization would like to help, please contact Lisa Berg, Regional Coordinator, at 936-878-2461, ext. 237, or [lisa.berg@blinn.edu](mailto:lisa.berg@blinn.edu).



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## UPCOMING EVENTS

[starmuseum.org](http://starmuseum.org)

### "So Others Could Follow: Four Centuries of Maps that Define Texas" Visit Now!

This exhibit explores how, without maps, we would not be able to envision the shape of Texas, something which has now become so distinct. Maps from the Museum's collection tell the story of how early explorers created maps, what features these individuals thought were important to show, and how that changed over time. The exhibit features a 1561 map by Girolamo Ruscelli and John Senex's 1721 map, as well as others.

March 2018 - Feb. 2019

### Hands-on History

On the third Saturday of the month through May and then every Saturday from June-August, the museum will offer a hands-on craft activity for children, free of charge. The craft will be available throughout the day, as long as supplies last.

Dec. 15: Buzz Saws

Jan. 19: Embroidery

Feb. 16: "Tin" Punching

Mar. 16: Quilting

Apr. 20: Wendt Eggs

May 18: Mom Cutouts

### Runaway Scrape Escape

Guests, **ages 10 and up**, must use teamwork and problem-solving skills to decipher puzzles and riddles in order to get out of the room in the 45-minute time limit or be captured by Santa Anna and his army.

Advance registration is recommended, although walk-ups are accepted based on availability. For more information or to make a reservation, visit [www.starmuseum.org/calendar](http://www.starmuseum.org/calendar) or call 936-878-2461.

Admission: \$15/adults, \$13/students and children,  
\$10/Blinn employees and students

Dec. 15 • 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### Brazos Valley Regional History Fair

Students from across the Brazos Valley Region will present projects (papers, exhibits, websites, documentaries, performances) based on a national theme, "Triumph and Tragedy in History." The top two placing individual and group winners from each category and division will qualify to compete at Texas History Day in Austin in April. Visitors are invited to watch the performance category and view the exhibits after judging.

Feb. 8, 2019 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### Texas Independence Day

A living history celebration on Saturday and Sunday, March 2 and 3, 2019, on the 293-acre Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site to commemorate when 59 delegates bravely met in 1836 to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico.

March 2-3 • 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.