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Star Of The Republic Museum

Government Publications
Texas State Documents

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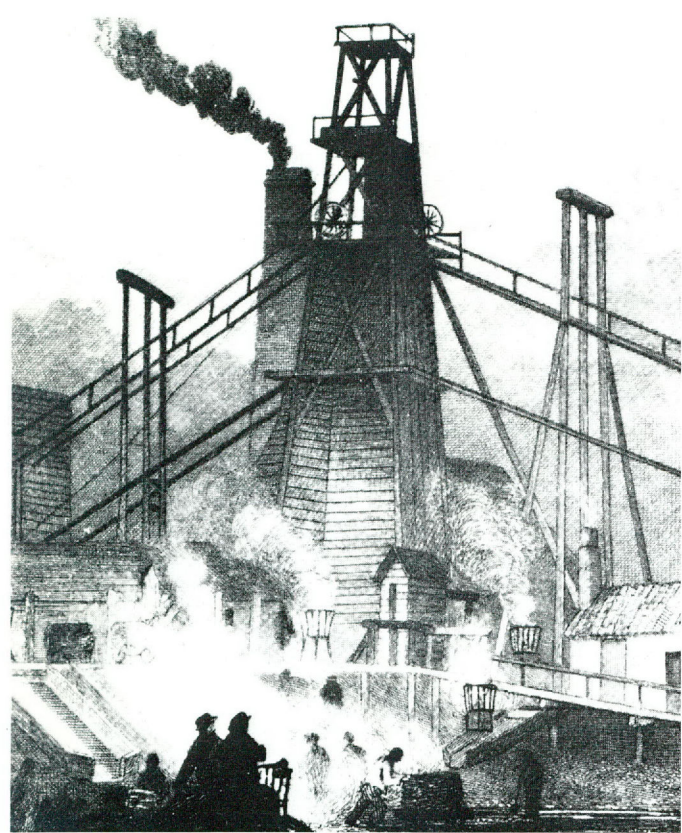
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COMETS TO CARBONIFEROUS CAPITALISM: The World of the Texas Republic



Coal mining, Great Britain, 1839

In 1836 Texas declared, fought, and, with the victory at San Jacinto, won her independence from Mexico. That same year Charles Darwin returned from a four-year scientific expedition upon the H.M.S. Beagle with information on flora and fauna which he would later use in his theory of evolution; the six-shooter revolver was patented by Samuel Colt, while a Massachusetts shoemaker, Alonzo D. Phillips, invented the phosphorus match; Ralph Waldo Emerson had just published Nature, which laid the foundation of the Transcendentalist movement; in South Africa some 10,000 Dutch (Boer) cattle-

men were making their "Great Trek" to the Transvaal in response to the British abolition of slavery; the Arc de Triomphe was completed in Paris; and at Union Course, Long Island, thirty thousand people gathered to witness a race with a \$1,000 purse for the man who could run ten miles in less than an hour. Henry Stannard won with a record time of 59:44.

The Texas Republic existed in a period of tremendous change. The individuals who were involved in the formation of Texas were very much interested in the world beyond the Republic's borders. Texas newspapers in this period were often criticized for their lack of local news coverage; instead they frequently reprinted whole columns from other newspapers: publishing philosophical essays, anecdotes about famous individuals (Washington and Napoleon were favorites), and observations on events in the rest of the world. It is interesting to examine the cultural milieu in which the Texas Republic existed, but this requires a change in perspective — the epicenter of the known world at this time was not Texas, or even the United States, but Europe.

England dominated this period of European ascendancy, as the focal point of the industrial revolution, which later spread to the rest of Europe and ultimately the United States. Iron and coal were the twin bases of a "carboniferous capitalism" exemplified by the use of steam power for transportation. Spurred by the industrial revolution, the years 1836-1846 reflected a kaleidoscope of knowledge and innovation.

In 1837 Samuel F. B. Morse filed for a patent on his telegraph which was granted in 1844; that same year he would transmit the first telegraph message from Washington to Baltimore: "What hath God wrought?" It was a prophetic statement. The speed of communication was being shortened daily. The first transatlantic crossing powered by steam created a sensation in 1838 when the Great Western arrived in New York only fifteen days out of Bristol, England. Both events were discussed in the Houston Telegraph and Texas Register, one of the most prominent and enduring newspapers in early Texas. The Morse invention or "The Electro Magneto

Telegraph” was the focus of several articles including one which went into elaborate detail explaining how the process worked.

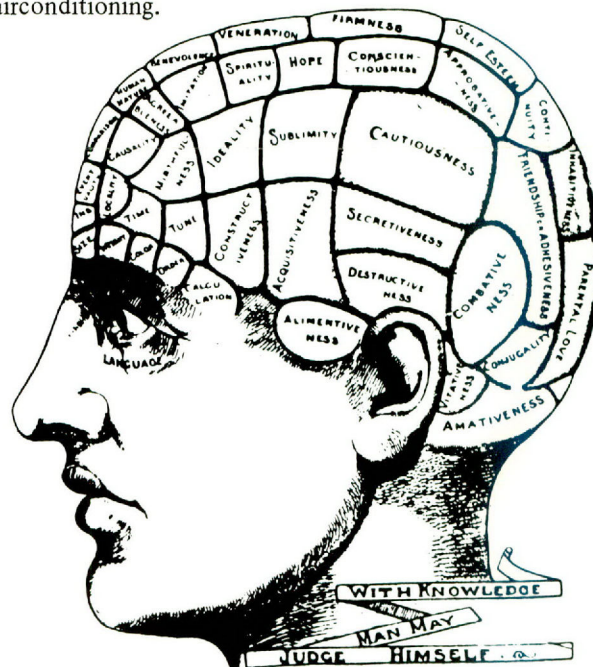
Samuel Morse also produced the first daguerrotype portraits in America (1839), after learning the process in Paris from its inventor, Louis Daguerre. The invention of photography was commented upon more than once in Texas papers. In 1845 Henry R. Allen set up the Houston Daguerrean Gallery, and after touring his studio the editors of the Telegraph noted: “It is a wonderful invention that enables the artist thus to fasten upon a metallic plate the exact image of a person, just as that image is reflected from a mirror. The opportunity that is now offered to our citizens to obtain accurate portraits of friends and relatives should not be lost; the sickly [malaria] season is approaching and it may be lost forever.”

In 1839 Philadelphia hardware merchant, Charles Goodyear, stumbled on a method to “vulcanize” rubber, and by 1844 had obtained a patent and formed a company which made vulcanized rubber overshoes. The first bicycle as we know it, which would make it possible for a person to travel under his own power faster than he could run, was also invented that same year by Kirkpatrick MacMillan. In England Augustus Siebe demonstrated a closed diving suit which received air from a surface vessel (1837).

This period represented tremendous advances in scientific exploration. The first U. S. Government sponsored scientific exploring expedition was initiated in 1838 under Captain Charles Wilkes, who would claim Antarctica for the United States. The progress of the expedition was monitored by Texas newspapers. One article noted that the Captain was “getting delirious” as “misfortune upon misfortune followed in the wake of the ill-starred expedition.” Scientific exploration also looked upward. With the appearance of Halley’s Comet in October of 1835, the Telegraph decided to inform its patrons of the nature of this phenomenon: “This is probably the comet predicted by Dr. Halley to make its appearance this year, and approach very near the earth.” The Great Comet of 1843 was also visible in Texas, and a detailed article in the Telegraph discussed the historical and latest scientific facts concerning this “Celestial Phenomenon” and comets in general.

Agricultural production would be forever changed with the introduction of John Deere’s self-polishing steel plow (1837) and the manufacture of the McCormick reaper (1840). Home life was influenced by the invention of the Howe sewing machine (1843), and a new condiment, Lea and Perrins Worcestershire Sauce, was patented by two English chemists in 1837. That same year, candlemaker William Proctor and his soap-making brother-in-law James Gamble formed a company which grossed \$50,000 its first year selling candles throughout the Ohio River region. Benjamin Babbitt introduced the first soap powder, “Babbitt’s Best Soap” in 1844, and it quickly gained acceptance.

Medicine was in a period of transition. Crawford Long, a Georgia physician, used sulphuric ether as an anesthesia in surgery in 1843 while removing a cyst from a patient’s neck. The word “protein” was coined by Dutch chemist Gerard Mulder in 1838 who adopted it from the Greek word meaning “of the first importance,” and Scottish surgeon James Baird discovered hypnosis in 1841. In Apalachicola, Florida, Dr. John Gorrie pioneered mechanical refrigeration (1842) in an attempt to lower the temperature in the sick rooms of people suffering from malaria. He set a pan of ammonia on a step ladder, and let it drip; the principle would later be applied in airconditioning.



Phrenological diagram

This was also a period of “pseudo-science,” one of the better examples being phrenology, or the study of the human skull as an indication of mental faculties and traits of character. In 1838 two Houston doctors dug up and examined the heads of two convicted murders. Supposedly the examination established the validity of phrenology; one skull had “a very bad head – all moral powers very deficient – the bumps of distinctiveness and firmness remarkably large – no reverence, veneration, and but little perception with no comparison or ideality – his animal organs well developed.”

The decade of the Texas Republic was a period of social experimentation involving people, ideas, and events. In 1836 William Miller predicted, based on Biblical calculations, that the Second Coming of Christ would take place in 1843. The Telegraph gave prominent attention to the “End of the World Delusion” detailing both the method involved in his calculation of the exact date and eye-witnesses accounts of the “non-event” as thousands of his followers waited for the moment of redemption. As the “Millerites” resigned themselves to an extended existence on earth and the establishment of the Adventist Church, in Cologne, Germany,

Karl Marx was calling religion the “sigh of the oppressed creature . . . the opium of the people” (1844), before exiling himself to Paris where he would meet Friedrich Engels.

In 1839 Col. Abner Doubleday of Cooperstown, New York, called for a diamond-shaped field and two teams of nine players each in an attempt to define the rules of the already popular sport – baseball. That same year, Sylvester Graham encouraged people to eat unsifted whole wheat flour as a slightly stale bread, graham crackers, for good digestion, preventing alcoholism, and diminishing the sex urge. The year 1840 saw the first use of the term O.K., an allusion to “Old Kinderhook,” Martin Van Buren’s birthplace, and also the name of a Democratic club in New York City.

Romanticism dominated the arts, whether literature, music, or painting, in the world of the Texas Republic. Difficult to define, it stressed imagination and the freely individualized expression of emotions. Romanticism was often associated with exaltation of the primitive and a worship of nature.

This period was characterized by the works of romantic literary greats – Nathaniel Hawthorne with his Twice Told Tales (1837) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “The Wreck of the Hesperus” (1841). Edgar Allan Poe produced the first detective mystery with The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841), while James Fenimore Cooper published The Pathfinder (1840) and later The Deerslayer (1841). Both Richard Henry Dana with Two Years Before the Mast (1840) and Charles Dickens in works such as Oliver Twist (1837), used their literature to promote social reform. By the 1840’s books were being published in cheap popular editions like The Three Musketeers (1844) by Alexandre Dumas which sold 1,000,000 copies in America and was followed by the equally popular The Count of Monte Cristo.

In music, Romanticism was expressed through the works of Felix Mendelssohn, Hector Berlioz, and Robert Schumann; but it was Franz Liszt who was perhaps the greatest virtuoso pianist and composer. The legacy would pass to his son-in-law, Richard Wagner, with his operas “The

Flying Dutchman” (1843) and “Tannhauser” (1845).

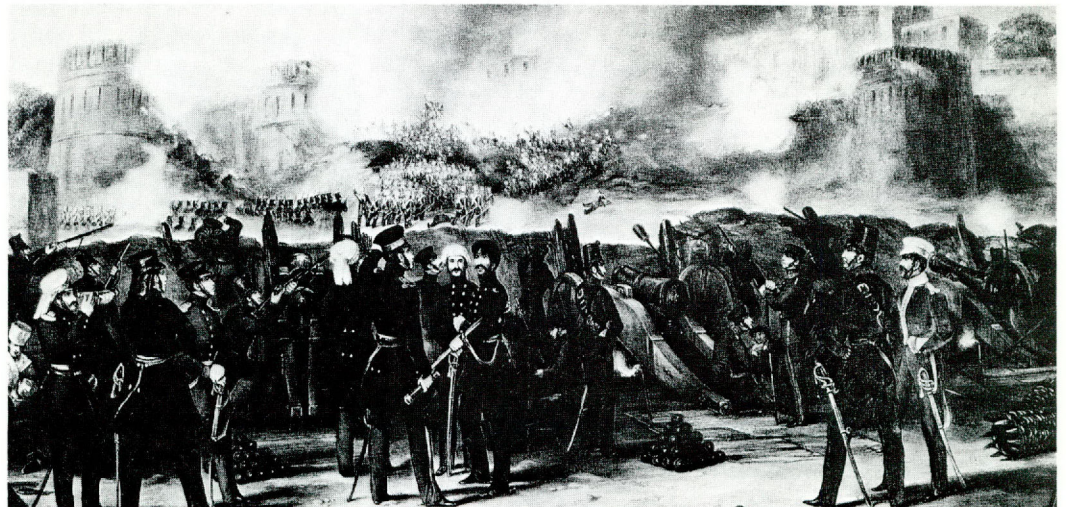
In 1840 the saxophone was invented by Belgian Antoine Sax, and a scandalous new dance, the polka, was introduced to America by Viennese ballet dancer Fanny Elssler. In 1843 American composer Dan Emmett’s minstrel troupe performed “Dixie” in several Bowery theaters around the country.

Texas newspapers reflected a remarkable interest in international affairs, or perhaps more correctly, European affairs. The late 1830’s and 1840’s reflected European expansionism in the third world for predominantly economic reasons, i.e. securing markets, as opposed to acquiring territory. The British invasion of Afghanistan in 1839 was only the initial campaign of a policy which continued for years to subdue the tribes along India’s northern borders and halt perceived Russian influence. That same year China initiated a war with England by destroying six million dollars worth of illegal Indian opium which the British East India Company had been selling throughout the Far East. After a series of decisive British victories, the Treaty of Nanking (1842) ended the Opium War, providing special status to foreigners and opening China to wholesale exploitation by the western powers, including the United States. Texas newspapers followed these excursions with interest, and the Telegraph commented quite favorably on the Nanking Treaty which brought the “Celestials to terms.”

In 1845 a potato fungus hit Europe and famine killed two and one-half million people from Ireland to Moscow. It was especially devastating to Ireland, and half of its population left the country for America.

With the end of the Texas Republic in 1845, the term “manifest destiny” was employed for the first time by John O’Sullivan in an article for the United States Magazine and Democratic Review: “Our manifest destiny is to over-spread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” Following Europe, the United States began its own ascendance, and the state of Texas would play a major role.

The British invasion of the Punjab, Northern India, 1840’s



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NOTES

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The Ninth Annual Oktoberfest sponsored by the Washington Civic Club will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 1985. In conjunction with the activities taking place in the town, we plan to host traditional craft demonstrations from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days in the Museum. The Brazos Spinners and Weavers Guild will demonstrate spinning, weaving, and lace-making, while Minnie Belle's Quilting Bee group from Independence will be quilting. Ben Olive of Bryan and Bruce Hartman of Austin will be entertaining folks with traditional 19th century music. While you are here, you may wish to check out a small but unique exhibit we recently produced on bathing and bathrooms. Based on the "Johnnies and Epicurean Innovations" issue of the *Notes*, we think that it is informative and delightful. Sesquicentennial calendars produced by the Texas Artisans are available in the Museum Gift Shop. The paintings reproduced in the calendars will be on view Saturday and Sunday, and the artists will be present to sign calendars for purchasers.

The town of Washington will host the Rathkamp Dancers, the Houston Liederkrantz Singers, the Wild One-Man Band - Wayne Weldon, and a street dance with "Junction," 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturday night. There will also be crafts, games for children, and a variety of ethnic food and drink. Do come and join us!

A portion of the Museum's general operating funds has been provided through a grant from the Institute of Museum Services.



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Star Of The Republic Museum

We would like to recognize those individuals who have donated artifacts in recent months to the Museum. Once again, Lois Cooper Mayer of San Francisco, California, has given additional artifacts and documents belonging to the Wallace family (her grandparents) of Washington County and Gay Hill, Texas. The Terrell Jethro Jackson family papers, concerning Chappell Hill and Washington County, Texas, were donated to the Museum by Carolyn Wallace of Laferia, Texas. In the 1970's, Gerald Humphreys of Navasota, Texas, excavated the kitchen of the Stagecoach Inn at Chappell Hill, Texas. We are pleased to announce that Harvin and Elizabeth Moore of Chappell Hill, owners of the Stagecoach Inn, have given the archeological collection of artifacts from the excavation to the Museum. We wish to express our appreciation to these individuals for their willingness to preserve and share our cultural heritage.

EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

The Code of Honor: Dueling in America
Through November 2, 1985

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

Wednesday through Sunday
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Closed Thanksgiving Day
November 28, 1985

Administered by Blinn College, Brenham, Texas
Director D. Ryan Smith
Curator of Exhibits Sherry B. Humphreys
Curator of Education Ellen N. Murry

Editor: Ellen N. Murry

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