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Star of the Republic Museum

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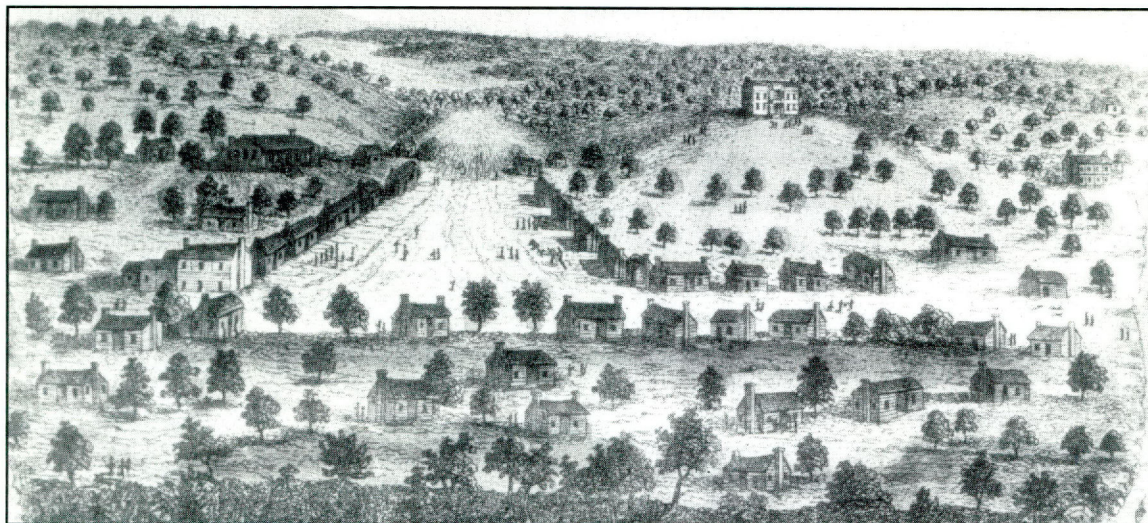
Notes

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Fight for the Capital The "Archives War"



Lithograph by J. Lowe from *Texas in 1840, or the Emigrant's Guide to the New Republic; Being the Result of Observation, Enquiry and Travel in that Beautiful Country*. Published in 1840 by William W. Allen, New York. Collection, Star of the Republic Museum.

Austin held the enviable position of developing as the planned capital of the Republic of Texas, however, if not for the tenacity of its populace, Austin might well have been a forgotten Texas town. In January of 1839, M. B. Lamar, as president of the Republic, asked the commission appointed to select a permanent site for the capital to inspect a site on the Colorado River near the settlement of Waterloo. Within a few months the commission had approved this site and construction began by May. Dedication of the new seat of government took place on October 17, 1839. The formal entry of President Lamar, the executive council, and many members of Congress had been preceded a few days earlier by a caravan of forty to fifty wagons bearing the archives of the government.

When Congress assembled in November of 1839, it met in a one-story frame capitol building, surrounded by an eight-foot stockade constructed as a precaution against Indian attacks. One of the first items that came up for consideration was a discussion of the propriety of the location of Austin. Enemies of the selection, including Sam Houston, noted that the site had never received official Congressional approval. Although Lamar magnificently defended the new site, a bill to hold a public election over the location received substantial support before it was decisively defeated. Austin held its ground as the new capital, through the Fourth and Fifth Congresses of the Republic, until faced with a new threat in the fall of 1841.

Sam Houston was elected in the fall elections, casting a shadow of gloom over Austin, particularly since he had been a consistent and outspoken opponent of the location of the seat of government there. "This is the most unfortunate site on

earth for a Seat of Government,” he wrote. While in Congress, he and his supporters constantly made fun of the site, pretending to stand on guard at the capitol windows on the alert for expected Indian attacks. Of Lamar and the presidential residence, he satirically commented, “I do not visit ‘court’ [but] it is said to be rather fine.” Understandably Austinites were leery of the new president. Houston gave every impression that his presence in Austin was only temporary; he refused to move into the presidential residence, and his wife remained in at home in East Texas. After his bill to remove the seat of government to Houston was defeated, he bided his time and waited for a crisis. The crisis came in March 1842, when a Mexican army, estimated from eight to fourteen thousand soldiers, led by Rafael Vasquez, dashed into Texas and captured San Antonio, Goliad, and Victoria, but quickly withdrew.

On March 10, 1842, upon hearing the news of the Vasquez invasion, Houston wrote to his Secretary of War in Austin, ordering the archives of the government to be taken at once to Houston for safety, thus began the comic-serious Archives War between President Sam Houston and the beleaguered citizens of Austin. If Austin lost the archives it might never recover the seat of government. Secretary of War, George W. Hockley, although a close personal friend of Houston, deferred to the angry Austinites, and suspended the order.

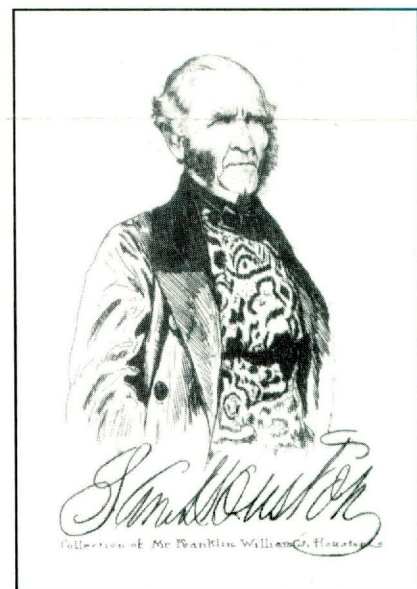
At a special session of Congress assembled in Houston in June, Houston again pleaded Congress to select a new seat of government, but vetoed Congress’ declaration of war, declaring the Vasquez raid as merely “a demonstration by Mexico.” After Congress adjourned on July 23, Houston set about calming the panicky Republic, only to have fears exacerbated by a second Mexican invasion! San Antonio was captured on September 11 by Adrian Woll, with about 1400 troops prepared to stay and defend it. Volunteers were soon able to push Woll out of Texas, but the damage had already been done. Austin began to suffer from the spreading fear of a war with Mexico and the serious threat of invasion. Many citizens and nearby settlers gathered their belongings and moved east, initiating the “Little Runaway Scrape.”

Houston called for the Seventh Congress to meet in Washington-on-the-Brazos, ordering the heads of departments in Austin to pack their offices, equipment, supplies, and records, and head to Washington. Based on the constitutional provision that the capital might be moved in time of war, he proclaimed Washington the new capital. Angered Austinites pledged to defend the archives. Department heads and government employees were approached and

warned that they could leave themselves, but would have to fight to take any records. Still unsatisfied, Houston ordered Colonel Thomas Smith and Captain Eli Chandler to go to Austin to get the archives.

On the morning of December 30, 1842 Smith and Chandler slipped into Austin with three wagons and twenty men. They almost finished loading the wagons at the land office before they were spotted. Mrs. Angelina Eberly, one of the “Old Three Hundred,” in whose boarding house President Houston had resided, saw the situation. “She repaired to Congress Avenue where a six pound gun had been kept loaded with grape since the days of the Lamar Indian wars. Turning the muzzle toward the land office, she blazed away. The shot perforated the land office and aroused the town.” Smith quickly rushed the wagons out of Austin, with twenty to thirty Austinites after them, initiating a chase into a wet, cold, rainy night. After camping for the night, Smith found himself surrounded by morning. Given the choice of fighting or surrendering, with the little cannon pointed directly at his camp, Smith surrendered and ordered his men to drive the wagons back to Austin. To their surprise, Smith and his men were hospitably received in town, and as it was December 31, they were guests at the New Year’s Eve party and dinner.

The Archives War was over. Congress voted to censure President Houston for his attempt to remove the archives, and thereafter he had to content himself with keeping Congress and the executive departments in Washington, where they remained until Texas became a state.



Etching of Sam Houston from *Following General Sam Houston 1793-1863*. Etched and Published by Bernhardt Wall in Connecticut, 1935. Collection, Star of the Republic Museum.

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association

Planning and construction are almost complete. Washington-on-the-Brazos is ready to take its rightful place as one of the three key sites in the history of Texas: the Alamo, where Texian patriots gave their lives for the idea of freedom; San Jacinto, where the Mexican army was defeated by the Texian element of surprise; and Washington, where the framers of Texas independence bore witness to the birth of a nation.

Visitors will soon be enjoying the new Washington-on-the-Brazos, but there is still much that needs to be done. The Park Association, in partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Blinn College, plays a vital role in ensuring that Washington-on-the-Brazos retains its position in the hearts and minds of all Texans.

Join at the Patriot, Signer, or Life Member level and experience all of these new developments first-hand, as honored guests, at the annual Park Association Luncheon. The Luncheon coincides with the Grand Opening Celebration, Sunday, March 1, 1998.

1998 Texas Independence Day Celebration

Keynote Speaker: Lt. Governor Bob Bullock

Master of Ceremonies: Ron Stone



Membership in Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association supports one of the most historically important sites in Texas and provides our young people with the opportunity to learn about Texas history, culture, and environment. We invite you to become a member today!

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Patriot, Signer, and Life members receive complimentary ticket(s) to the Independence Day Celebration Luncheon, preferred parking, and reserved seating at the Celebration Ceremonies and special events.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Student	\$5
Adult	\$25
Delegate	\$50
Single Patriot	\$150
Joint Patriot	\$200
Signer	\$500

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Individual	\$800
Joint	\$1,250

YES, I WANT TO BE A _____ MEMBER! ENCLOSED IS MY TAX DEDUCTIBLE CHECK FOR \$ _____

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Washington-on-the-Brazos
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Star of the Republic Museum

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Notes

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Gift of Eleanor Glenn Hanover Nance

In March of this year the Museum received an extensive collection of fifty-one pieces compiled by a longtime friend of the Museum, Mrs. Eleanor Glenn Hanover Nance. Over the years, Mrs. Nance had collected children's items including dolls, toys, furniture, clothing, and numerous other objects, many from the nineteenth century. Included in the collection is a peddler doll, probably European, and dating from about 1830. She carries a basket of items to sell, from stockings and pins to teapots made of ivory, and has her own glass dome for a cover. There is an 1804 child's sampler, which has already been sent for conservation, and an adult-size lusterware tea set. There are doll quilts, children's shoes, a hand-carved dough bowl, horse pull toys, a butter mold and paddles, and many other items. We plan to place these artifacts on exhibit in the near future, and are very grateful to have been the recipient of these wonderful representations of the past.

Included in the donation are 195 Texas history and related topic books from the collection of the late Dr. Joseph Milton Nance, for which we are also most grateful. These books will be added to the Museum's reference library to be utilized by staff and researchers.

A Nineteenth-Century Christmas Planned

On Saturday, December 6, join us in celebrating an old-fashioned holiday at the Star of the Republic Museum and Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park. Enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of Christmas past! Highlights of the day at the Museum will include crafts for all ages, including making pomanders and ornaments reminiscent of the nineteenth century, along with the opportunity to play with and make toys of the Republic. For further information on the Museum or its programs, please call (409) 878-2461, or e-mail us at: starm@phoenix.net. For information about activities that the Park has planned, please call (409) 878-2214.

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

Open Daily
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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