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“Surrounded by bravos and hired assassins”

The Regulator-Moderator War

The Regulator-Moderator War refers to a feud in Harrison and Shelby counties in the Redlands of East Texas between 1839 to 1844, an area that had become the environment of many undesirable and lawless characters. The roots of the conflict lay in the frauds and land swindling that had been prevalent in the Neutral Ground, the area created in 1806 in the provisions of Spanish and Mexican laws excluding settlement from within twenty leagues of the border of the United States. While Spanish and Mexican governments refused to recognize the inhabitants of the border leagues as citizens, it is most likely that prior to the Texas Revolution more people lived in that area than in the rest of Texas combined. Following independence, these “non-citizens” had become so accustomed to managing their own affairs and promptly administering punishment to criminals that they were unwilling to accept the delays of the regular Republic of Texas courts.

Open hostility escalated into deadly violence when Charles W. Jackson, a former Mississippi riverboat captain and an alleged fugitive from justice, killed Joseph Goodbread, a land speculator, at Shelbyville in 1840 after a quarrel over forged land certificates. Jackson promptly organized the Regulators, first called the Shelby Guard, for the intention of “suppressing crime.” In response, the Moderators were organized by Edward Merchant to “moderate” the Regulators. Leading the Regulators were Charles W. Jackson and Charles W. Moorman, whereas Edward Merchant, John M. Bradley, and Deputy Sheriff James J. Cravens led the Moderators.

The first major confrontation between the groups came on July 12, 1841, at Jackson’s trial before Judge John M. Hansford, a friend of the Moderators and Goodbread. Regulators intimidated the court so much that the trial could not proceed. Hansford, sensing trouble, laid down his gavel and fled, “unwilling,” he said, “to risk my person in the courthouse... where I see myself surrounded by bravos and hired assassins.” With the release of Jackson, the hostilities escalated with the burning of homes and general lawlessness by the Regulators reacting to perceived past injustices on the part of the Republic government. Sam Houston reportedly stated, “I think it advisable to declare Shelby County, Tenaha, and Terrapin Neck free and independent governments, and let them fight it out.” Jackson and an “innocent Dutchman named Lauer” were ambushed and killed by the Moderators, and Moorman replaced Jackson as leader of the Shelby County Regulators. Moorman, who may have been wanted for forgery in Mississippi, led a party to avenge Jackson and Lauer. The captured assassins, the McFaddens, were tried in Shelbyville in October 1841 for the Jackson-Lauer killing, and all were hanged with the exception of the youngest brother. Such open warfare caused wide-spread fear among citizens, who when venturing very far from home went well-armed and looked upon strange travelers with suspicion. A witness remarked, “A reign of terror and dread of impending evil spread themselves like a nightmare over the land. The farms were left untilled, growing in weeds.”

Quarrelling continued with a dispute between Runnells, a Regulator, Hall, an ex-Regulator, and Stanfield, a boarder

at the Runnells house. Stanfield accused Hall of hog theft and shot him dead in Shelbyville, prompting Hall's friends to call upon the Moderators for revenge. Although Stanfield escaped from the Shelbyville jail, he was pursued by the Halls, who also ambushed Runnells. John M. Bradley, Moorman's archenemy, had become leader of the Moderators. Bradley and Moorman went to court, where Regulator judge John Ingram negated charges against Moorman, and Moderator judge S. F. Lester dismissed the murder charges against Bradley and Hall. James Hall was afterward shot and killed while he was plowing. Moderators subsequently excluded Bradley and elected James J. Cravens as their leader, determined to occupy Shelbyville and plotted to extend their control throughout Texas.

Although the feuding groups signed a truce on July 24, 1844, which protected "good and unoffending citizens," peace was quickly dispelled. Bradley, presumably no longer under protection, was "regulated permanently" at a Baptist camp meeting near San Augustine on July 28, 1844. Moderators retaliated with the murder of Louis Watkins. In August 1844 about 225 Moderators attacked sixty-two Regulators near Shelbyville, but the Regulators were reinforced by prominent citizens from Harrison County. Moderators then occupied a log meeting-house four miles from Hilliard's Bridge, where Moorman and the Regulators launched a surprise attack. Few casualties ensued and the action was indecisive.

On August 15, 1844, President Houston ordered Travis G. Broocks and Alexander Horton to take the militia and make peace in East Texas. Ten leaders from both sides were arrested and brought to San Augustine. While the Regulators fled, Moderators stood firm and arrested Broocks, who was soon released. A committee comprised of Judge William B. Ochiltree, Isaac Van Zandt, and Senator David S. Kaufman, among others, drafted an agreement disbanding both factions, which was accepted by both parties. Moorman was later arrested and eventually shot by Dr. Robert Burns. Both Regulators and Moderators amicably joined Capt. L. H. Mabbitt's company to serve in the Mexican War, presumably much to the relief of Sam Houston and much to the chagrin of Gen. Zachary Taylor.

Living History Performances Scheduled for Farm Opening

Talking Back Living History Association presents "Sweet Bye and Bye," an original piece written for the opening of Barrington Living History Farm on March 4 and 5. The vignette uses an incident that took place at Barrington in the fall of 1850 to bring into focus the lives of African American slaves and the relationships between slaves and owners.

The group is an association for cultural and heritage interpretation. Founded in 1998, Talking Back Living History operates to stimulate an awareness of diversity and to include the interpretation of African Americans and other minorities in the presentation of American history.

"Sweet Bye and Bye" will be performed on Texas Independence Day Celebration Weekend at the following times:

	Saturday	Sunday
Act 1, "From Dust to Dust"	10:00, 1:00, 3:00	11:00, 1:30, 3:30
Act 2, "Runaway Love"	10:30, 1:30, 3:30	11:30, 2:00, 4:00
Act 3, "Long Live Texas"	11:00, 2:00, 4:00	12:00, 2:30, 4:30



Costumed interpretation by Talking Back Living History

This presentation is generously sponsored by the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association and the Texas Commission on the Arts.



Members of Talking Back Living History

Barrington Farm Grand Opening

The Barrington Living History Farm dedication and opening to the public takes place during the annual Texas Independence Day Celebration. Farm staff and volunteers will present the seasonal activities of the farm, such as preparing a noon meal, laying out and planting the kitchen garden, planting the corn field, and preparing the cotton field, as well as finishing construction on the chicken coop. In addition to the normal daily chores of Barrington Farm, a number of demonstrators illustrate some of the skills common to Barrington's time, but rarely seen today. The art of the spinner, weaver, basket maker, and blacksmith will all be highlighted. A special presentation at the Farm by Talking Back Living History will be presented throughout the weekend. Sunday's activities begin with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 11:00 am, hosted by Andy Sansom, Executive Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and former Governor Preston Smith.

Texas Independence Day Celebration

On Saturday and Sunday, March 4 and 5, 2000, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park will commemorate the 164th anniversary of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836. Highlighting the festivities this year will be the grand-opening of Barrington Living History Farm, the recreated antebellum homestead of Dr. Anson Jones, the last president of the Texas Republic.

Former Governor Preston Smith and Texas Parks and Wildlife Executive Director Andy Sansom will preside over the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Barrington Farm opening, and the main program on Sunday, March 5. Smith, who served as Texas governor from 1969 to 1973, oversaw the passage of a 1-cent cigarette tax in 1971 to buy land for state parks. As a result, more than thirty new state parks were created in the 1970's, including the Texas State Railroad, Brazos Bend, Lost Maples, and Caprock Canyons. Sansom, who was appointed in 1990 to lead the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, has seen the state parks roster grow to more than 120 state parks, natural areas, and historical sites. His leadership in revenue identification generates \$32 million a year for state and local parks. In 1997, Sansom led a successful effort to get the Legislature to authorize \$60 million in revenue bonds for state park repairs. Jane Barnhill, secretary of the Texas Historical Commission will serve as emcee for the Sunday program, which begins at 1:30 pm in the Park Amphitheater.

A variety of activities, sponsored by the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association, will take place throughout the weekend. Events this year emphasize Republic folkways, presented through music, demonstrations, and crafts. Artisans demonstrating nineteenth-century skills and crafts provide the opportunity for the public to purchase their unique creations. Young and old will enjoy traditional 1830's music from a number of dulcimer and string groups performing throughout the Park and Museum. Reenactment groups, dressed in period costume, will be on hand to demonstrate military skills and early firearm techniques during their portrayal of historical events. In addition to the cutting and sharing of a "Texas size" birthday cake on Sunday, food and beverages will be available for purchase both days.

As part of the Texas Independence Day Celebration, "The Fathers of Texas" will perform a concert of original music depicting the colorful saga of the founding of Texas, from settlement, to revolution and Republic. Songs of the period, such as the "Brazos River Song" and "Will You Come to the Bower" enrich the historical message of the music. The concert will showcase this significant story of Texas, as well as the country and folk favorites of the musicians performing. The concert begins at 3:30 pm on Sunday, March 5 in the Park Amphitheater.

P. O. Box 317 Washington, Texas 77880

April Folk Weekends

During every weekend in April, the Museum will host its annual "April Folk Weekends," with demonstrations of traditional folk arts, crafts, and music. Activities will offer visitors a chance to observe and participate in folk demonstrations and presentations representing various aspects of everyday life during the Texas Republic period. The weekends will highlight such activities as: lace making, quilting, dulcimer music, and chair caning. On Saturday, April 1, visitors will be treated to the annual appearance of the Sacred Harp Singers, who perform an "a cappella" singing tradition that dates back to the 18th-century and includes an unusual four part harmony. Another performance of traditional 19th-century music is planned for April 22, when the Star of Texas Dulcimers bring their superb sound to the museum. For more details and information, please contact the Museum at 936-878-2461, ext. 237, or e-mail at star@acmail.blinncol.edu.

April Wildflower Walks

Forget the chill of Old Man Winter and enjoy the spectacular beauty and color of Texas' wildflowers! Learn the myths and legends that surround these harbingers of spring. Offered on weekends in April. For details, contact the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park at 936-878-2461, ext. 227.

Children's Fishing Derby – May 13 and 20

Children ages 4-12 will learn and practice the skills required to become great tellers of tall fishing tales! Hosted by Inland Fisheries staff and the Park rangers, children are introduced to a wide variety of fish species. Prizes are awarded in numerous classes. This is a "catch and release" event. For **reservations** call the Park at: 936-878-2214, ext. 227.

EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

The Showers-Brown Discovery Center

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

Open Daily

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

409-878-2461 (fax) 409-878-2462

Administered by Blinn College, Brenham, Texas

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