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Star of the Republic Museum

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Notes

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Leatherstockings



Child's buckskin suit. Donation of Rebecca A. and Robert W. Blackshear. Collection, Star of the Republic Museum.

Rebecca A. and Robert W. Blackshear of Elgin, Texas, have given to the Museum a complete buckskin suit which belonged to Edward Clark Boylan, who was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on June 21, 1840, and died at age 3, at San Leon, Texas, in 1843. The suit and moccasins were donated in memory of Mrs. T.R. Blackshear. A portrait of Davy Crockett wearing a similar suit was painted by William Huddle. Such clothing was worn by numerous other frontiersmen, sometimes called "Leatherstockings."

In 1836, Mary Austin Holley wrote in her book, *Texas*, that "the character of Leather Stocking is not uncommon in Texas. Many persons employ an individual in the business of hunting...and thus are constantly supplied with provisions of every description...The dress of these hunters is usually deer-skin. Hence the appropriate name, *Leather Stocking*. Their generic name, for they form a distinct class, is *Frontiers-men*."

To create buckskin, the raw hide of the buck deer must be made soft and supple by many hours of rubbing and scraping. The process involves scraping off the hair and also the flesh, and paring down the skin to a uniform thickness. Using traditional Native American methods, the skin was cleaned and then tanned with a paste made from the brains of the deer. Finally it was smoked over a small fire to make it soft and weather proof, giving it a slight yellow or brown color. Highly durable, buckskin stood up to rough wear, snags, and brambles. Another reason for

the use of buckskin included its low cost. Dry goods were often very expensive, and sometimes impossible to purchase; the only expenditure for the skin was powder, shot, and a great deal of work.

German immigrant, Gustav Dresel, found that he should have worn a buckskin suit, after he joined a group of hunters during the days of the Republic. "I joined the seven huntsmen, who, clad in buckskin from head to foot...looked like robbers of the wilderness. My trousers were partially trimmed with buckskin, it is true and my coat was made of beaverteen [twilled cotton] but they prophesied that even after only a week I should not be able to recognize my exterior because the briars, the thicket, and the wet high grass would harass me so hard. I had traversed the region on the Navasota athwart forest and prairie for four days when rags of my inexpressibles [underwear] were already suspended from my legs."

Sometimes the Indians made clothing and traded it to the settlers, although often the settlers made their own. Jesse Burnam came to Texas in 1815; he killed a doe and a fawn, and his wife dressed the doe skin "and made William [a son] a shirt, but it lacked one sleeve, so she dressed the fawn skin that day and made the other sleeve." On other occasions, a buckskin suit might be

presented to someone to honor him, such as the jacket given to Indian agent Robert Neighbors by a Delaware Indian.

However waterproof the clothing was supposed to be, sometimes it did not stand up to washing. Francis Lubbock wrote that he was out in a heavy rainstorm, and his buckskin pants were saturated with water. He lay next to a "fire to dry and warm us. Before discovering it, my pants had crawled up to my knees, and I had to ride in that plight a day or two. They got tighter and tighter all the time until we reached the main camp. Then I had in a manner to cut them off my limbs. I have never owned a pair of buckskin pants since. They are more entertaining in a picture or a romance than on one's shanks."

The suit that belonged to Edward Boylan, consists of fringed leather overalls with wooden buttons to hold up the seat of the pants and to enclose the trunk portion of the back. The coat has a wide fringed collar and a fringe trimmed center back, with small brass buttons. Fringed around the ankle portion, the moccasins lace up on top. Interestingly, the seat of the pants is lined with what appears to be handspun and woven cotton or linen.

This little suit offers a special glimpse into both clothing and the lives of children of the period.

Texas History Internet Consortium Receives Grant

The Texas History Internet Consortium, of which the Star of the Republic Museum is a member, has received a \$100,000 grant from the Houston Endowment to support the implementation project of the consortium. This follows an earlier grant of \$50,000 that covered the cost of studying the needs of consortium members and developing implementation plans.

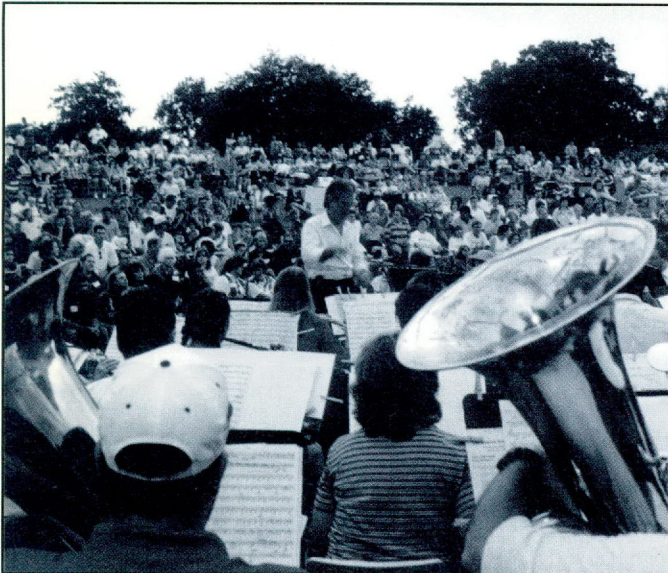
Along with other consortium members; the Brazoria County Historical Museum, Matagorda, Fort Bend County, and Rosenberg Library, the Star of the Republic Museum plans to digitize its collections data and put it onto the Internet in such a manner that a search for information at one institution's Internet site will result in a simultaneous search of all sites. Members of the consortium hold the majority of documents and three-dimensional artifacts of the early Anglo-colonial period of Texas history (1821-1836). When this landmark project is complete, researchers around the world will be able to find materials at any of these locations.

More funding is needed to complete the project, but consortium members are confident that the grant from the Houston Endowment is a great first-step toward that goal. An example of how this information will be available to the public is already accessible from the Brazoria County Historical Museum at: <http://www.bchm.org>. Consortium members will receive equipment and assistance in transferring their collections information to the Internet. An added benefit of digitalization is a more complete and accurate record of each site's collections. A consortium member noted, "We are convinced that the technologies to be installed through this project are essential as we prepare for the next millennium of museum and library service, and we are gratified to have the opportunity to be among the pioneers in installation of such technology."

July 4th Celebration

Attended by over 6,000 visitors who enjoyed free ice cream and soft drinks, music from the Houston Symphonic Band, and a spectacular fireworks display, the first July 4th Celebration at Washington-on-the-Brazos was a huge success! HEB, Blue Bell Creameries, Brenham Coca-Cola, Bank One, Germania Insurance Co., Texas Commission on the Arts, Washington County Chamber of Commerce, and Texas Commercial Waste all graciously contributed to make the event possible.

This celebration also provided the opportunity for the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association to sponsor a fundraiser dinner/auction, which garnered over \$6,500, to benefit the Park and Museum. To the



following sponsors and donors, the Park Association extends its appreciation and thanks: Del Sol Food Co., Inc.—Briannas; Jim & Lois Kolkhorst; Steve & Kathy Pawlowski; James & Vivian Kolkhorst; Mike Hopkins Distributing; Antique Rose Emporium; Ellison's Greenhouses; First American Bank; Brenham National Bank; Bank One Brenham; Best Western Inn of Brenham; Joyce & Gene Daniel; Kathleen Terrell; J Youens & Co.; Turner, Pierce & Fultz, Inc.; John Grace; Lois & Shorty Trostle; Bank of Navasota; W. H. Burnap; Bluebonnet Motors; and Henny Penny's Crafts & Collectibles.

We hope that this inaugural July 4th Celebration will be the first of many more to come!

Park Hosts Plant Seminar

Fall is the time to plant many wildflower varieties! Please join us for a full day of activities on Saturday, October 2, at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park and learn how to use wildflowers and other Texas native plants in your home or country landscape.

The program will start at 10:00 am and end at 3:00 pm in the new Conference Center at the park. Mr. John Thomas, owner of Wildseed Farms of Fredericksburg, Texas, will be the keynote speaker. Other featured speakers include Mr. Mike Shoup of the Antique Rose Emporium, Mr. Maurice Jacob, Landscape Architect with the Texas Department of Transportation, and Mr. Tim Kiphart of FaunaFlora. Presentations will include topics on the use of native plants, plant selection, care, and landscaping.

Wildflowers are becoming an increasingly popular landscape alternative, adding color and natural beauty to any area. Bring a friend and come enjoy a day learning about techniques for planting wildflowers and other native plants. Advance registration is \$5.00, or \$7.00 at the door. Lunch is included in the registration. Please call for reservations soon, since seating is limited. For reservations and more information, call Diana Evans at 409-878-2214, ext. 225.

P. O. Box 317 Washington, Texas 77880

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**Donor list for
September 1, 1998, through August 31, 1999**

**Institutional transfers include the following items
from the Houston Museum of Natural History:**

24 clay pipe bowls, a powder horn and measures, a leather pouch, a broad axe, knitting needles, and an English sugar bowl.

Robert and Rebecca Blackshear of Elgin presented the Museum with a child's fringed buckskin suit and pair of buckskin moccasins, documented to a date of 1843, originally made for Edward Clark Boylan.

Caroline Burch of College Station gave the Museum a photograph of Sam Houston. This was presented in the name of her children, April Kramer, Will Kramer, and Donald Burch.

Marie Brady Hunter of Waco contributed a 19th century handmade wooden church pew from the Presbyterian church in the Gay Hill area.

Ellice Hall Pugsley of Fort Worth gave an 1825 linen sampler made by Catherine Wright Brown to the Museum.

An anonymous donor gave a quilt, a drawing, flatirons, a cream pitcher, a rolling pin, and a dough bowl.

Bids Awarded on Museum Work

Three contracts for renovation and construction work at the Museum were awarded. The first is for renovation construction, awarded to Marek Brothers Construction Inc. of College Station. Next is for new exhibit construction by the International Museum Corp. of Houston. Finally the contract for waterproofing the deck and rails on the second floor went to Chamberlain Waterproofing & Roofing Inc. Scheduled to begin this fall, construction will necessitate closure of the Museum from the end of September through October. We hope that the closure will not cause much inconvenience, and eagerly anticipate the results of the project. For further information, please contact the Museum.

EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

The Showers-Brown Discovery Center

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

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

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Administered by Blinn College, Brenham, Texas

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