

Star of the Republic Museum

NOTES

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Early Texas Surgeons:

LEADING AND BLEEDING FOR THE CAUSE

The history of Texas was shaped by many courageous individuals who came from different walks of life. Their reasons for coming were varied, but they all were seeking land and a better way of life. Among those in search of opportunity were a surprising number of doctors. Some were highly skilled and well educated, and others were mere pretenders or opportunists. Whatever their reason for coming to Texas, most doctors became leaders in their communities and served in other capacities as well, such as politicians, preachers, soldiers

or rangers. Of the fifty-nine signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence, seven were physicians.

In the early 1800s there were few laws regulating the medical practice in America. Considering the emergence of surgery as a viable medical option, it is not surprising that many doctors were also called “surgeons.” To cure by means of bodily invasion was a desperate measure used to try to save a patient’s life when all else failed. However, surgery was a limited option. Unbridled

pain and the ever-present risk of infection severely limited a surgeon’s capabilities. For the most part, surgery was for managing external conditions, rather than internal ones. Cutting into the chest, abdomen or joint was rarely considered.

Conditions on the frontier were far from sterile. Equipment such as mallets, probes, gouges, hooks, and knives were rarely cleaned after use. Surgeons often had to improvise, making instruments from turkey quills, hairpins, twigs or other sharp objects. Whiskey was the anesthesia, and lye soap and water was the antiseptic. Patients were often tied down during surgery to prevent sudden jerking or thrashing during an operation.

There were no hospitals of any kind in early Texas. Surgeries were performed wherever the patient happened to be. Many surgeons



Frontier Surgery, by Randy Steele

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— Continued from page 1 —

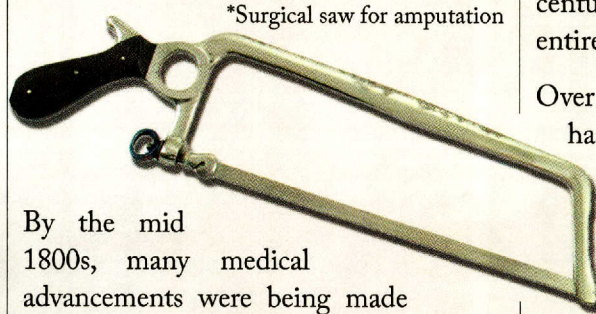
preferred to operate outside, rather than inside a patient's home—the light was much better outside and it was believed to be cleaner. A country doctor in Gonzales was reported to have amputated a woman's leg above the knee. He removed the sideboards from a wagon bed and used them for the operating table. He placed them on two carpenter sawhorses. He then placed a mattress upon the sideboards for the patient's comfort and brought the kitchen table out in to the yard for an instrument table.

Since physicians had to travel to their patients, it was important that they take

their supplies with them. A well-prepared doctor would carry in his saddlebags: a whetstone for sharpening lances, scissors, probes, forceps, needles, bone curettes or scraping tools, and a pestle. Since there were no pharmacies, a doctor also had to carry any ingredients to use for medicine. Large amounts of quinine powder, opium, calomel, senna leaves, flour and sugar were key ingredients.



*Traveling apothecary set

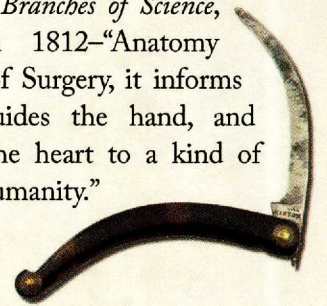


*Surgical saw for amputation

By the mid 1800s, many medical advancements were being made in the care of a patient. Up until that point, surgery often killed the patients rather than their ailments. But the advent of the use of anesthesia had a big impact on patient care. Not only did anesthesia make surgery more tolerable and less traumatic, it also allowed surgeons to slow down and make careful decisions during the procedures. Rather than hurrying to amputate a leg in less than a minute to prevent the patient from going into shock, a surgeon could take the time to be more precise and meticulous. As doctors gained confidence with the use of anesthesia, more complex and invasive maneuvers became possible. Ether was one of the early substances used for a more painless operation, although its flammability and explosive qualities could not be overlooked. A surgeon certainly could not burn an oil lamp nearby for a better look! The use of chloroform and nitrous oxide became more widespread as the

century progressed, although neither was entirely safe.

Over time, man's ability to heal the sick has made great progress. Thankfully, gone are the days of brutal bodily invasion. But the basic principles of surgery have not changed, as stated by Joseph Collins Warren in the first volume of the *New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery, and the Collateral Branches of Science*, published in 1812—"Anatomy is the Basis of Surgery, it informs the head, guides the hand, and familiarizes the heart to a kind of necessary inhumanity."



*Bistoury—a long, narrow surgical knife



*Trocar—hollow cylinder with sharp point to drain fluids



*Surgical saw used on metacarpals (bones in hand)

*Medical instruments
—Items from the museum collection



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

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The newsletter is also available to download from our website at www.starmuseum.org.

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Walking in the Footsteps

Andie Krumrey, a junior at Navasota High School, recently competed in the Brazos Valley Regional History Fair at Washington on the Brazos. Her project was a historical paper entitled "Breaking Through the Barriers: Jacqueline Cochran and the WASPs." After winning first place at the regional fair, Andie now advances to Texas History Day in Austin, and if successful, on to National History Day in June.



But there is more to Andie's story. She is the fifth great granddaughter of Benjamin Briggs Goodrich, one of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Goodrich attended the Convention of 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos as one of the elected delegates from Washington County. Now, 179 years later, his descendant, Andie, walks in his footsteps.

When asked what it meant to her to be at Washington-on-the-Brazos, she replied, "It is a great honor to be able to follow in my ancestor's footsteps at Washington-on-the-Brazos. Being a part of his bloodline gives me an even larger pride for being a Texan." She continued, "If I could talk to him today, I would ask him so much more about his life and the lives of the people he worked with. I would love to know more about the personal lives and personalities of all these great men and women of his time that helped shape our history. Also, I think it would be quite interesting to talk 'politics' with him. With my particular interest in politics, and obviously his as well, I would love to see what he would say about our government and country today."

We wish Andie the best of luck in Austin and share her appreciation for the actions of her ancestor who stood up for what he believed in and helped Texas become what it is today.



Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and State Senator Lois Kolkhorst admire the work of Jane Richmond, as she demonstrates bobbin lace making.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick Visits Museum

Sporting a jacket that once belonged to John Wayne, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick visited the "Birthplace of Texas" during the annual

Texas Independence Day Celebration on March 1. In true Texas fashion, Patrick greeted visitors and shook hands with museum patrons as he toured the exhibits. Later as he addressed the crowd gathered to commemorate Texas' 179th birthday, he pledged to increase funds to our state parks and historic sites, and to "invest in the story of Texas."



Patrick poses with the Star of Texas Dulcimer players.



Free Admission to Active Military


Star of the Republic Museum is pleased to join the Blue Star Museums program, a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2015.

The free admission program is available to any bearer of a Geneva Convention common access card (CAC), a DD Form 1173 ID card, or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card, which includes active duty U.S. military – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, as well as members of the National Guard and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps – and up to five family members.

Star of the Republic Museum is proud to be part of Blue Star Museums, a national appreciation program to thank our military families for their service and share with them America's cultural treasures.

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[unclear] acres of land
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H-E-B Presents Fireworks on the Brazos

Celebrate national
Independence Day at
the place Where Texas
Became Texas.

Sponsored by H-E-B, the annual 4th of July celebration at Washington on the Brazos includes a fun-filled day of family activities. Highlights of the celebration are the free concert from 7 to 9 p.m. in the park's amphitheater, featuring Cody Bryan. Following the concert

will be a fireworks extravaganza at approximately 9:30 p.m. Blue Bell Creameries will give out free ice cream at 5:30 p.m.; H-E-B will give away sodas. Food vendors will offer a variety of festival food choices; arts and crafts vendors will offer items for sale. Visitors can bring picnics, blankets, lawn chairs and flashlights. State park rules apply; alcohol prohibited.

STAFF NEWS

We are pleased to announce that Donna Barker has taken over the position of Visitor Services Coordinator for the museum. She is replacing Elaine Platt, who has taken another position. We want to thank Mrs. Platt for all of her hard work and wish her well in her new endeavor. Martha Lee has been hired as a part-time tour guide.