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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Curriculum Guide Brings Texas History to Life**

New online media gallery an excellent source for students, teachers, genealogists and media

***"History teaches everything, including the future."*** Alphonse de Lamartine

The San Jacinto Museum of History Association wholeheartedly agrees, and—since its opening in 1939—has dedicated itself to collecting and preserving significant materials relating to the early history and culture of Texas and the region, as well as promoting the appreciation of the role played by Texas in American and world history through exhibits, publications and educational programs.

Educating the public about Texas's unique history is a primary mission of the Museum, and on January 15, 2013, the Museum released its in-depth "Curriculum Guide for Teaching Texas History" to accomplish this goal.

Written by educational consultant Yvonne Jackson Pittman, with contributions from San Jacinto Museum Curator Elizabeth Appleby and Library Director Lisa Struthers, the 400-page guide provides 90 complete lessons and over 40 student activities (including general activities and special extra credit/accelerated learning offerings); more than 500 related images in the associated online Image Gallery; and many special sections that go beyond the TEKS requirements with activities and enrichment materials that highlight some of the museum's diverse collections including chapters on Jesse Jones, the building of the San Jacinto Monument and the Texas Navy. The curriculum guide can be viewed and downloaded at [http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/Education/For\\_Teachers/Curriculum/](http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/Education/For_Teachers/Curriculum/).

The online Image Gallery is sure to be popular with history students of any age or expertise. It contains images of photos, documents, newspaper articles, artifacts and document transcriptions, and can be viewed at <http://sanjacinto-museum.smugmug.com/CurriculumGuide>.

Although the images were selected to correspond with lesson plans, the Image Gallery will also be an excellent resource for genealogists, the general public, publishers and journalists to identify media that they need for their work and interests. "The concept of the museum's online Image Gallery was developed to make it easy for teachers to present images of relevant artifacts in the classroom using the technology they have available," says Lisa A. Struthers, Library Director for the San Jacinto Museum. "We plan to expand the site to share images of events, of our surroundings in the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, and of interest to historians and genealogists, beginning with the men who fought at the Battle of San Jacinto. It is exciting to see how well the images are displayed."

Created in response to the recently revised Texas Education Agency objectives known as Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)—the state standards for what students should know and be able to do—the goal of the curriculum guide and Image Gallery is to enhance Texas history courses with primary and secondary documents, and many artifacts from the vast collections of the San Jacinto Museum.

"With severe budget cuts in educational funding for many states across our nation today, there is a real need for non-profit organizations to take an active role in providing relevant, detailed and state-mandated content free of charge to school districts, educators and parents," says Larry Spasic, San Jacinto Museum of History President. "The San Jacinto Museum of History funds, creates and shares in many types of teacher training seminars and in-services. Our newest and most comprehensive Texas history curriculum guide integrates well with our research facilities, exhibits and educational programs, at no charge to teachers or students. We are so proud that our staff and funding sponsors have taken on this project for the children of the State of Texas."

Funding for the curriculum guide was provided by the Fondren Foundation, LyondellBasell, Meadows Foundation, Houston Endowment Inc., The Gordon A. Cain Foundation, Elkins Foundation, Union Pacific Foundation, BNSF Railway Foundation, San Jacinto Day Foundation, The Dow Chemical Company and H-E-B Tournament of Champions.

Curriculum lessons feature:

- lesson plans identified with both a subject title and the associated TEKS number;
- archival documents (from the Image Gallery) linked to appropriate lessons;
- an “Essential Question” to help guide instruction for every lesson;
- “Critical Vocabulary” words vital to in-depth understanding;
- “The Hook” question or strategy to pique interest and prepare for new learning;
- “The Activity” cooperative learning or independent practice activities designed to process new ideas;
- “Be a Star Bonus” for students who need enrichment or additional challenges; and,
- “Strategy Descriptions and Graphic Organizers” section with printable research-based strategies and reoccurring lesson ideas.

“In 2010, Texas revised the objectives that teachers are expected to teach in every social studies course. In addition to new student objectives, a new more rigorous series of end-of-course exams was put into place. However, teachers were not provided new textbooks and resources,” Pittman adds. “The San Jacinto Museum curriculum guide is an important project because it provides meaningful primary and secondary sources for teachers and students through an image gallery of beautiful photographs. The searchable image gallery will give teachers artifacts and documents to pique student interest and enhance instruction. The curriculum document also gives teachers more than 40 instructional strategies and 90 complete lessons for Texas History. It has been an exciting endeavor for me and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to fulfill my greatest passion: helping teachers and students.” Pittman spent 25 years teaching history and political science in Katy ISD before retiring recently as Secondary Social Studies Curriculum Specialist. She was one of twelve teachers selected nationally to participate in the House Fellows Program where she studied with the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The new TEKS/STARS requirements for Texas history are divided into 20 sections, only eight of which directly speak to Texas history. These new sections were released to teachers with no new textbooks, teaching materials or teacher training to assist them on their instruction. The San Jacinto Museum guide includes enrichment materials, teaching tips and activities for these units. Teachers that have seen a preview of the curriculum guide say it will be “invaluable” to their ability to instruct students on the content of these new requirements.

“Last year was the first year the revised TEKS/STARS testing took place,” says Appleby, the Museum’s curator. “Teachers and districts are eager for assistance in providing useful and interesting materials that can help them teach this material more effectively. We are thrilled to offer that assistance.”

“With fewer schools able to afford field trips due to budget cuts and higher gas prices, this outreach tool that includes pre- on-site and post-visit materials will help to reinforce in teachers’ minds that San Jacinto is still the premiere venue to bring a class to for the study of Texas history,” Spasic adds. “We hope to offer teacher training seminars in late spring or early summer.”

“In an era of increasing financial restraints placed on educators, the San Jacinto Museum of History’s free Curriculum Guide for Teaching Texas History makes for an invaluable resource for all interested in the state’s history,” says Marcus S. Turner, Department of History, San Jacinto College Central.

Each lesson from the guide is generally designed to be completed within one or two class periods. However, teachers are encouraged to modify lessons to meet the needs of the students in their unique classroom situations, use documents and artifacts interchangeably from lesson to lesson, use “Be a Star” extra credit activities to expand lessons for all learners, or combine multiple lessons into one.

It is critical in the teaching of history to provide students with many opportunities for analysis and evaluation, therefore the curriculum guide uses the “SDA Discussion Strategy for Document Analysis” with the following

components:

- **S**tructure of the document i.e. what the students can tell about the document before getting into the detail content. Is it inherently biased (editorials, editorial cartoons)? Who created the document, when and for whom? What do they know about the time when the document was created?
- **D**etails of the document i.e. what the students know without drawing any conclusions. It is very difficult for students not to inference as they look at the details; however, if they draw conclusions too soon, they misinterpret the document.
- **A**nalysis of the document i.e. the students can begin drawing conclusions. What is the subject of the document? What is the main idea of the document? What inferences can they make? Can they trust this document to be accurate?

The curriculum also includes many creative components that will relate to school-age students such as the “Amazing Chase to Revolution” which begins with these instructions to the students: “Your television production team is in charge of planning the next season of The Amazing Chase. This year’s television series will be unique in because the race is restricted solely to Texas and is a spinoff series similar to the Amazing Race on CBS. Your crew is to develop the most challenging and unique expedition of Texas to highlight the state’s large variety of geographic regions and historical locations. The team that comes up with the best draft for the upcoming season may have the honor of watching your team’s plan televised and also get the opportunity to star in three episodes.”

“Teachers tell us that some students grumble that there is way too much Texas history, but as they learn more and become a little older, they become more and more proud of what being a Texan means, not only in the nation but in the world,” says Spasic, a former educator. “Author John Steinbeck said it best: ‘Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in every sense of the word.’”

**More on the San Jacinto Museum of History:** The San Jacinto Museum of History Association is a non-profit organization which owns all the artifacts, library and museum items and manages/operates all aspects of the San Jacinto Museum, which is housed in the San Jacinto Monument on the grounds of the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site in La Porte, Texas. Attractions and events run by the Museum include the special and permanent museum exhibits; the famous 489-foot elevator ride to the top of the Monument; the digital presentation *Texas Forever!! The Battle of San Jacinto*; the second annual “San Jacinto Texas Independence Fun Run/Walk” on Saturday, March 9, 2013 on a 5K-certified course on the monument grounds; and the annual daylong San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Reenactment which will be held on April 20 in 2013.

More than 30,000 students visit the Museum each year on field trips. The San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site attracts more than 1,500,000 people to the park annually, making it the largest, most visited historic park in Texas.

For more information about the curriculum guide, the San Jacinto Museum of History or the San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Reenactment, please call 281.479.2421 or visit [www.sanjacinto-museum.org](http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org).