

San Jacinto News

JULY 2015

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This summer, the San Jacinto Museum of History is again participating in the Blue Star Museums program, a collaboration between the Department of Defense, Blue Star Families, the National Endowment for the Arts, and over 2,000 museums to provide free admission to all active duty military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA Commissioned Corps, and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day. If you have family or friends in the military who are traveling across Texas this summer, invite them to visit San Jacinto.

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Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums.

Exhibit *A Destined Conflict* Opens July 4



Detail, *Battle at the Plains of Buena Vista, February 23, 1847*, by Samuel Chamberlain.

On May 13, 1846, the United States of America declared war on the United Mexican States. In response to this declaration, thousands of men across America mustered in volunteer regiments to join the Regular Army to fight for the Stars and Stripes. The official cause of the war was both the American annexation of the Republic of Texas and the border dispute between Mexico and the new state over whether the national border was the Rio Grande or the Nueces River; Texas claimed the Rio Grande, Mexico the Nueces. After the Mexican Army fired on and killed several American soldiers sent provocatively into the disputed area along the border by President James K. Polk, the President asked for and received a declaration of war from Congress. The two years of

fighting that followed was a valiant but ineffective defensive war for Mexico, after which a huge portion of that nation became American territory.

The full reasons for this war are not that easy to discern and interpret even with hindsight as a guide. In *A Destined Conflict: The U.S.—Mexican War*, a new exhibit opening July 4th at the San Jacinto Museum of History, a wide array of contemporary artifacts—from newspapers and prints, to documents and artifacts written and owned by some of the key players in the conflict—will be on display. Understanding the messages conveyed by these artifacts grants some insight into how the politicians and military officers in charge, the men in the field, and the press back home viewed the series of

engagements of a conflict where more soldiers died from disease than in battle.

From the first engagement at Palo Alto, Texas, to the Halls of Montezuma in Mexico City, the exhibit chronicles this decisive and divisive conflict. Often overshadowed by the Civil War, it is important not to forget this major conflict that saw the first use of new technologies and provided key experience for men whose fame would only increase twelve years later. In the aftermath, problems that were drowned out by patriotic fervor and the cries of Manifest Destiny became even more pronounced and would soon lead to a fracture within the United States itself.



Letter from the President

Dear Supporter,

In the ebb and flow of the tide of human events, exploring our nation's history is essential and necessary to guide us in making informed decisions as responsible citizens. Our nation was formed on the bedrock that legal rights may be given to citizens by the laws of their governments, but natural rights which are universal and inalienable cannot be impinged upon by government. Natural rights are by definition beyond the power of any authority to bestow or remove. This principal thought was the central point in the thinking of the founders of this nation, but to move from the philosophical to the creation of an independent nation based on those principles required help.

The thirteen British colonies on the eastern shore of North America were not alone in the world in their fight for independence. As early as 1776, the fathers and grandfathers of Tejanos, in land that would eventually become Texas, drove cattle from their ranches to Louisiana to furnish beef for the colonists in their war for independence from Great Britain.

Bernado de Galv  z, governor of Louisiana, sent gun powder, muskets, medicine and money to the rebelling colonists. In a pivotal engagement of the American Revolution, he captured the British fort at Pensacola in 1781. Although Galv  z' ultimate goal was to promote the interests of Spain against her enemy Great Britain, other supporters of the American Revolution had less self-interested motives. Spanish-born Jorge Farragut fought as a member of both the Continental navy and army. Many French officers came to America to fight because they favored the ideals of the Revolution; the best known was the Marquis de Lafayette, only 19. Eventually, Lafayette was the first person granted honorary citizenship by the United States of America.

What united the colonists, Spain, and France in the American Revolution and five decades later inspired Mexico and Texas were the common aspirations, hopes, and ideals which move people to declare their independence and risk all to secure these rights and to form a new

nation.

The most brilliant committee ever formed was gathered by the Second Continental Congress who asked Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Robert Livingston and Roger Sherman to write a declaration of independence for a new nation. On July 4, 1776, this committee presented a stirring announcement to the world: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..." Similarly, on September 28, 1821, the Declaration of Independence of the Mexican Empire "Restored ... all the rights given by the Author of Nature and recognized as unalienable and sacred by the civilized nations of the Earth," and on March 2, 1836, at Washington-on-the-Brazos, the people of Texas referred to the inherent and inalienable rights of the people. Texas declared to all governments its status as an independent nation.

It was not just mutual philosophy that bound these nations to declare their independence, but the loss of established precepts that respected basic human rights in posterity for their citizens.

Understanding the concept of natural laws and their implications for the rights and responsibilities of citizens is not easy. Personal rights have been debated endlessly in the past, sometimes violently, as in the Civil War of 150 years ago, and they continue to be an issue today, in places like the Ukraine, Iraq, Libya, Egypt and even here in America.

Understanding and appreciating the history of our nation is essential to understand why these issues are significant today, both within our state and nation, as well as throughout the world.

Through your support, the San Jacinto Museum of History helps share our history, and allows lifelong learners to reflect on the implications of history on our world today.



Larry Spasic, President, San Jacinto Museum of History

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Recent Events

Right:: Carter Smith, Executive Director of TPWD, speaks at the San Jacinto Day Dinner on April 21.



Left: crowds gathered at 11:00 for the annual Official State of Texas Ceremony earlier that day.

Below: The San Jacinto Day Festival occurred as scheduled. Although the full reenactment was adjusted due to flooding, reenactors interpreted the period throughout the day. Thanks to Festival sponsors H-E-B, The Dow Chemical Company, Vopak, Pasadena Strawberry Festival, Spirit of Texas Bank, LyondellBasell, KHOU, the City of La Porte,



TPWD, volunteers from San Jacinto College and Deer Park ISD, San Jacinto Volunteers, Clean Harbors, CenterPoint Energy, La Porte EMS, and Hampton Inn Deer Park.

Right: Raquel Espinoza presents a check from the Union Pacific Foundation.



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The San Jacinto Museum of History
Association was chartered in 1938 to preserve
and revisualize the early history of Texas.

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“Remember...” the San Jacinto Battle Cry

A common question received by staff at the museum concerns what was the battle cry on the field of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The answer is not simple, as veterans of the battle left different accounts of what they heard that day. Sidney Sherman is usually given credit for being the first to shout “Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!” in the battle. Thomas Jefferson Rusk wrote David G. Burnet on April 22, 1836 that he heard “Remember the Alamo! Remember La Bahia!” Sion R. Bostick said that his company was yelling “Remember the Alamo! Remember Fannin!” in his reminiscences, published in the *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* in 1901. General Houston’s report to David G. Burnet on April 25, 1836, quotes Sherman and his regiment crying “Remember the Alamo!” Some of Sherman’s descendants say they were told the cry was “Remember the Alamo! Goliad and the Alamo!” James Tarleton wrote a letter the day after the battle that was printed in the *Daily Commercial Republican and Commercial Register* of Cincinnati, Ohio, June 3, 1836, that said the cry was “Remember the Alamo, Laborde [La Bahia] and Tampico.” Jesse Billingsley’s account of the battle was published in the *Galveston News* on September 19, 1857; he recalled cries of “Remember the Alamo!” and “Remember Fannin and Goliad!” Robert Hancock Hunter’s reminiscences include the following: “General

Houston gave orders not to kill any more, but to take prisoners. Capt. Eastland said, ‘Boys, take prisoners; you know how to take prisoners—take them with the butt of your guns, club guns,’ and said, ‘Remember the Alamo, remember Laberde,’ and clubbed guns right and left and knocked their brains out. The Mexicans would fall down on their knees and say, ‘Me no Alamo, me no Laberde.’”

Thomas Menefee wrote down Captain Moseley Baker’s speech to his company before the battle, which ended with “Then nerve yourselves for the battle, knowing that our cause is just and we are in the hands of an Allwise Creator and as you strike the murderous blows let our watchwords be ‘Remember Goliad’; ‘Remember the Alamo.’” John Harvey, a veteran of the battle, wrote “Genl (Houston) formed us in solid colm - rode into our midst, and delivered to us one of the best speeches - told us that when we got into battle to make the Mexicans remember the Alamo - Genl Rusk followed him, telling us to also make the Mexicans remember the massacre of Fannins men.” Isaac L. Hill remembered Houston and Rusk saying that “Remember the Alamo” and “The Alamo and La Bahia” should be the battle cries, in their speeches just before the battle.

Whatever the exact words of the cry, it is clear that the memory of the men who had fallen in the war was an inspiration to the soldiers on the field of San Jacinto.



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