April Events Celebrate Texas’s History

April brings a series of exciting traditional events to San Jacinto. The first of these for 2016 is the annual San Jacinto Dinner, which will be held at the Houston Country Club on April 19th. The guest speaker will be James P. Bevill; honorees for the event are Bobbie and John Nau, well known for their love of Texas history. For tickets, contact Mequet Werlin at 713-703-9993, or at sanjacevents@gmail.com.

On the actual anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, the official state ceremony honoring those who participated in the battle will take place at 11:00 a.m. on the steps of the San Jacinto Monument. Nina Hendee, a former member of the San Jacinto Historical Advisory Board, the body appointed by the governor to oversee the battleground, and a lover of Texas history, will be the principal speaker. She serves on the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo’s Speakers Committee, and shares tales of Texas ancestors with about 13,000 Houston-area students each year when they visit her Taste of Texas restaurant.

At the April 21 event, the Sons of the Republic of Texas and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas will be on hand to present scholarships to winners of their essay contests, and the Texas Army will salute the men who were on the battlefield 180 years ago.

A highlight of April’s events for many Texans is the San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Reenactment. The event runs from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with family-friendly fun including entertainment on three stages, vendors and craft demonstrators, visits to the reenactors’ camps, and the
Beautiful weather on Saturday, March 5, 2016, led to an increase in participation in the 5th annual San Jacinto Texas Independence Fun Run/Walk, with registration up to 450, several registering on the day of the event. With a new team event added to the 10K run, 5K run, 5K walk, and 1K kids’ run, there were opportunities for participation for all. Registered participants ranged in age from 2 to 82 years, with a few babies in strollers riding along for the walk, and there were several families with three generations taking part. The three routes were laid out so as not to conflict or be confusing. This event was successful not just due to the athletes and the weather, but also to volunteers from the Sam Rayburn High School ROTC, and to the sponsors and donors.

Intersection of the 10K run and 5K walk routes.


Right: The first runner to finish the 1K Kids’ event. Below: sponsor Office Systems of Texas’s George Peckham crosses the line.

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reenactment itself. Thanks to Presenting Sponsor H-E-B and major sponsors City of Deer Park, City of La Porte and Dow Chemical Company, the event remains admission-free for the festival’s 12,000-plus visitors.

For a list of performers, an entertainment schedule, and parking information, visit http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/About_Us/News_and_Events/Upcoming_Events/2016_Festival_Reenactment/.

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War Begins

Following Texas’s joining the United States as her 28th state at the close of 1845, President Polk sent an envoy, former Louisiana congressman John Slidell, to Mexico to try to resolve disputes over the Texas boundary and over damages that the Mexican government owed to the United States. Polk instructed Slidell to negotiate to acquire “Upper California and New Mexico” and would spend as much as $40 million to purchase the land. After Mexico refused the offer, the tensions between the two nations rose in 1846 over the border issue: Texas claimed the Rio Grande as its southern border, while Mexico claimed the Nueces River farther to the north as the border. As the situation worsened, both sides sent troops to the area.

On the evening of April 25, 1846, while leading seventy U.S. dragoons to investigate an incident in the territory between the rivers, Captain Seth Thornton came upon a force of 2,000 Mexican soldiers. A fierce firefight ensued and sixteen of Thornton’s men were killed before the remainder were forced to surrender. On May 11, 1846, Polk, citing the Thornton Affair, asked Congress to declare war on Mexico. After two days of debate Congress voted for war, not knowing that the conflict had already escalated. Visit the exhibit *A Destined Conflict: the U.S.-Mexican War* at the San Jacinto Museum of History to learn more about this pivotal moment in the western hemisphere, and inspect documents and artifacts that hint at the political, economic and social issues that brought about this important but often neglected dispute.

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**San Jacinto News**

April 2016
From This Day Forward

With this Ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow…

Halfway through the ceremony for the “Solemnization of Matrimony” found in the 1789 U.S. Book of Common Prayer, the groom swears the above statement to his bride in front of a celebrant, and oftentimes, their family and friends. The words may have evolved since then, but both the accumulation and outlay of money, goods and property have been an integral part of the rituals, ceremonies and legalities surrounding marriage for centuries. Presents given before marriage, items purchased for the ceremony itself and the gifts offered to the newlywed couple often become some of the most cherished items that a family will own. Many of these precious items that have made their way into the collections of the San Jacinto Museum and are currently on display in the lobby in an exhibit titled From this Day Forward. Featuring the green silk dress worn by Ernestine Friedericke Stahrenberg at her wedding to George Christian Giesecke in 1817 and a silver set given to a descendant of San Jacinto veteran Sidney Sherman upon the occasion of her wedding, this show is definitely one not to miss.

1864 Letters Donated to Archives

The library has been given four letters, dated from May to November, 1864, written by Emory Clapp from the towns of Houston, Navasota, and Alleyton, Texas. Emory Clapp was the director of the Louisiana Cotton Bureau, which traded cotton for supplies needed for the Confederate war effort. The letters are written to Louisiana governor Henry W. Allen, and give information about the availability of goods in Texas during 1864. Allen fought in the army of the Republic of Texas, was later a Confederate general, and then Louisiana governor; he died in Mexico in 1866. He was credited with setting up trade routes through Texas to Mexico during the Civil War. The donor is respected Louisiana genealogist Winston De Ville.