

San Jacinto News

JULY 2016

New Acquisitions

The San Jacinto Museum relies primarily on the donation of artifacts to expand and enhance collections, so it is always exciting when generous benefactors elect to share their family legacies with the museum. One recent acquisition is



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this officer's dress saber belt dating from the American Civil War era given by a donor living in nearby Seabrook whose family had ancestors who fought on each side of the conflict. Saber belts of this era typically have between one and four rows of embroidery. On this particular belt there are three rows of gold embroidery, indicating that it is the regulation saber belt for a general officer, and includes two

saber hangers. The gold washed buckle for this belt is the standard fastener, and it could have been worn by a soldier serving on either side of the conflict. The museum also was given two 20th century items: a small metal Texas Centennial charm that was found by a metal detector in Lake Park, Lowndes, Georgia, and a steel engraving plate



featuring the San Jacinto Monument in 1947. Thank you for sharing your treasures with the museum. Look forward to seeing these items in future exhibits.

Above: saber belt.
Left: Texas Centennial charm.
Below: detail, *Texas Baseball Team*, by an unknown photographer, 1896.

Lobby Exhibit Features Texas Artisans

When the Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, began a massive project to create a freely-searchable online database that documents "the lives, work, and products of Texas artisans and artists through 1900," one of the first institutions they looked to provide them with content was the San Jacinto Museum of History. The database includes census records, newspaper articles, and other primary source materials of the 19th century,

as well as other items related to Texas artisans and artists.

The William J. Hill Texas Artisans and Artists Archive facilitates understanding, research, and appreciation of Texas decorative arts, as well

as painting, photography, and other media. This summer, San Jacinto is excited to share several of these items, including a photograph of a baseball team from a school near Austin, an embroidered



laundry bag made by Texas historian Adele Lubbock Briscoe Looscan for her husband, and a quilt made by Martha Scott Russell in Bastrop around 1875, that are now a part of this online repository.

San Jacinto is proud to be an early partner in this monumental effort to document Texas's past. Please visit the archive at: <http://texasartisans.mfah.org/cdm/>

Letter from the President

Dear Supporter,

There is something magical and intriguing about recreating events of a period long since past. As a child I always appreciated and was fascinated when my parents took my siblings and I to destinations that recreated history, such as Silver Dollar City.

On Saturday, April 23, the San Jacinto Museum of History and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department hosted the largest historical reenactment in the state of Texas. The associated festival offered something for everyone, from cultural exhibits and entertainment including music and dancing on three stages to an animal petting zoo, weavers, story tellers, spinners, blacksmiths, wildlife encounters, children's crafts, flamenco dancers and a traditional Aztec ceremony, all free of charge. Excitement was very evident in the expressions and interactions of family members throughout the day.

Some of the events that I particularly enjoyed were the performances by the "All-star" Youth Banjo Band that had everyone tapping their toes in time with their music; the engagement of festival-goers with representatives from the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum; and the educational portrayal by Jack Edmondson, a living historian and author who appeared as the illustrious General Sam Houston. He won rave reviews from those attending his performance in the Jesse H. Jones Theatre for Texas Studies.

Families always enjoy walking through time by strolling into the Texian and Mexican camps and talking with reenactors who stay in

character and give thoughtful responses to the diverse questions posed by the public. Of course, the highlight of the day each year is the reenactment of the Battle of San Jacinto with its cannons and pyrotechnics.

None of this would be possible without the support of our generous sponsors which include H-E-B, Dow Chemical Company, the City of Deer Park, the City of La Porte Volunteer Fire Department, the San Jacinto Day Foundation, the San Jacinto Volunteers, LyondellBasell, Clean Harbors and literally hundreds of volunteers from San Jacinto College and the Boy Scouts.

Sometimes growth can provide new challenges; because the Festival and Battle Reenactment has expanded over the past few years, a year ago we determined that we needed more parking spaces and better transportation between the parking area and the festival. One large parking lot was selected this year to avoid confusion and improve efficiency, but there were unforeseen difficulties in the routing of shuttle busses and delays from construction and train crossings which we will work to eliminate next year. There are always ways to overcome challenges, and plans are underway to make next year's festival better organized. We thank everyone for their support and patience as we move forward.



Larry Spasic, President, San Jacinto Museum of History

Today's Heroes of San Jacinto New and Renewing Members

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Reenactors' camps opened to visitors at 10:00 at the San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Reenactment.

Wet Weather Impacts April Events

Each April there are three annual events held by the San Jacinto Museum, and in 2016 the weather played a role in all three. Heavy rain in the greater Houston area kept some patrons from the annual San Jacinto Dinner on April 19, but many of those who did attend commented that speaker James Bevill gave one of the best dinner presentations they had ever heard, being both entertaining and educational. Although honoree John Nau was not able to attend, his wife Bobbie Nau was present.

For the first time in recent memory, the Commemorative Ceremony of the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21 had significant weather problems. Each year the backup plan is to hold the ceremony inside the Jesse H. Jones Theatre within the Monument, and this year when heavy rain began about an hour before the 11:00 start time, it was clear that under cover was the right option. The Deer Park Chamber Orchestra set up in the front lobby, Nina

Hendee presented an inspiring speech from the stage, and the Texas Army gave a vocal rather than percussive salute from the back of the theatre, with all seats filled.

For the San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Reenactment, the weather was beautiful, sunny, with a light breeze making it not too hot. Wet weather earlier in the week did make the ground too soft for the horses to have secure footing when moving at speed, so although the reenactment did proceed, the cavalry skirmish did not take place. Visitors noted that there were a good variety and number of vendors, performers, and demonstrators to make the festival portion of the day entertaining.

With luck, weather will not impact the next major annual event for the San Jacinto Museum, the Special Evening with Texas History, which is being planned for November 3; hopefully you will decide to attend.

Additional Options For Museum Visits

There are two ways that the San Jacinto Museum has made things easier for its friends and visitors this summer. The first is an added functionality on the museum website, where members can now complete the process to join or renew their membership online by making payment by credit card through Paypal. The old option remains; you can complete the required information and then mail in a check. Consider using the website to give a membership to friends or family members who are visiting this summer. Membership allows you to contribute to the museum's educational programs by funding activities such as the new exhibits, partnerships, and events presented elsewhere in this newsletter, while receiving the benefits of free admission to the Observation floor, special exhibit, and theatre. Make use of this option at http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/Support_Us/Membership/

Not a new option, but returning again this summer is the

Blue Star Museums program, which gives free admission to military families to over 2000 museums across the U.S. from Memorial Day through Labor Day. For many military families, including members of the National Guard, U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA Commissioned Corps, summer is the time when duty stations change and families move to a new home. If you have family or friends in the military who are traveling across Texas this summer, invite them to visit San Jacinto as our guests.

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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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Controversial End to a Conflict

With the defeat of its army and the fall of the capital in September 1847, the Mexican government surrendered to the United States and entered into negotiations to end the U.S. – Mexican War. The peace talks were negotiated by Nicholas Trist, who had accompanied General Winfield Scott as a diplomat and as President Polk’s representative. A former private secretary for Andrew Jackson and pro-slavery U.S. consul in Cuba, Trist was married to Thomas Jefferson’s granddaughter.

While waiting to begin the talks, Polk recalled Trist so that negotiations would be conducted with a Mexican delegation in Washington. In the six weeks it took to deliver Polk’s message, Trist had received word that the Mexican government had named its special commission to negotiate. Against the president’s recall, Trist determined that Washington did not understand the situation in Mexico and negotiated the

peace treaty in defiance of the president.

The result was the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that effectively ended the war and ceded a large portion of what is now the American Southwest to the U.S. Polk was furious over Trist’s insubordination, firing him and refusing to pay his wages beyond October 1847. Visit the exhibit *A Destined Conflict: the U.S. – Mexican War* to learn more about this pivotal moment, and inspect documents and artifacts that illuminate the political, economic and social issues that brought about this important dispute.



Genl. Scott's Entrance Into Mexico by Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot, 1851.



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**San Jacinto Museum of History
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