Consulates of the Republic of Texas

*The conviction is gaining ground that Texas is destined to be the richest and most forward nation on this continent and she is positioned so as to command the most eligible foreign treaties.*

John Woodward, Consul General to President Sam Houston, January 16, 1837

Like other independent countries, the Republic of Texas established consulates in foreign cities as official representatives for the government. The main responsibilities of the consul were: to provide potential immigrants with information regarding Texas, to conduct commercial endeavors on behalf of the Republic, and to send information back to Texas regarding foreign attitudes towards the Republic. Consuls were originally called agents, but the title was changed in an effort to gain respect and recognition from foreign countries.

The first consulates were established in cities in the United States, a foreign country at that time. Appointments were made for consular service in New York, New Orleans, Mobile, Baltimore, Natchitoches, Philadelphia, Charleston, Vicksburg, Key West, Natchez, Cincinnati, Detroit, Bangor, Norfolk, St. Louis, and Richmond.

Appointment to the position of consul proved to be desirous. Some of the privileges associated with the position included exemption from military service, public service, personal taxation, and import duties; as well as immunity from civil arrest. However, as the new Republic struggled to get organized, copies of the laws were difficult to obtain. Requests for information regarding the laws often went unheeded, resulting in freewheeling representatives who soon found themselves deeply in debt with little chance of reimbursement from the impoverished treasury.

An additional advantage to having a consul in the port of New York was the ability to discreetly observe the activities at the shipyard and to monitor the actions of the Mexican navy. On at least one occasion, Consul John H. Brower alerted Texas authorities of two brigs under construction for the Mexican government, a violation of the law of April 20, 1818 which prohibited the fitting and arming of vessels in the United States with the intent of employing them in hostilities towards a nation with whom the United States was at peace.

*Official correspondence from the Consul of the Republic of Texas for the port of New York, signed by John H. Brower -from the Museum collection*
Consular service in Europe began in 1838 with the appointment of a consul to France in Marseilles. The establishment of additional French consulates in Havre, Paris, Bordeaux, Cette, Rouen, and Bayonne soon followed. Likewise, in 1840, a French Legation was opened in Austin, the only foreign government to establish an office in the Republic.

James Pinckney Henderson was appointed to secure Britain’s recognition of Texas’ independence. The British were interested in strengthening their trade options in the Gulf of Mexico, therefore did not want Texas to be annexed to the United States. They also were interested in the Texas cotton industry, hoping that competition for the United States would keep the prices down. Furthermore, Britain was opposed to any expansion of slavery, and assumed that if Texas was annexed, it would be as a slave state. These factors influenced Britain’s desire for Texas to remain an independent republic, and resulted in the initiation of service in Great Britain in 1841. Dr. Ashbel Smith served as the chargé d’affaires of Texas to both France and England from 1842-1844, before being called back to Texas as Secretary of State under President Anson Jones.

Consulates were also established in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, but as the annexation of Texas to the United States became more of a certainty, interest in establishing new consulates abruptly declined.

Republic of Texas Art Contest Winners

During the recent Texas Independence Day Celebration at Washington-on-the-Brazos, Star of the Republic Museum announced the winners of the annual Republic of Texas Art Contest. All fourth graders in Grimes and Washington Counties had been invited to create artwork depicting some aspect of Texas history through the Republic Period.

The overall Grand Prize winner was Cora Paiyou from Navasota Intermediate School. The Grimes County awards were: First Place, Nicki Feist; Second Place, Julio Castillo; and Third Place, Payton Hagan. Honorable Mention awards went to John Salaiz, Irma Paramo, Kyle Ramsey, Marco Tovar, Maria Tovar, Devyn Falkenbury, Kelton Goudeau, Malcolm Meekins, Seth Kehlenbeck, and Jasmine Maldonado.

The winners from Washington County were: First Place, Shelby Thiel; Second Place, Claire Reue; and Third Place, Jayden Besch. Honorable Mention awards went to Domonique Schiefen, Cole Kenjura, Ashlyn Korth, Ryan Blum, Oneisha Baker, Vanya Taylor, Colin Decuir, Mitchell Meier, Kullen Krause, and Tristan Gonzales.

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, REPUBLIC OF TEXAS ART CONTEST

*The Alamo*, by Cora Paiyou
Navasota Intermediate School
-Tissue paper mosaic
Museum Staff leads Digitization Workshop

Museum Director, Houston McGaugh, and Curator of Collections and Exhibits, Shawn Carlson, recently led a pre-conference workshop on digital photography basics at the annual conference of the Texas Association of Museums in Austin. Co-sponsored by the TAM Collection Managers Committee, the workshop provided participants with hands-on experience in various aspects of digitization including: choosing the right equipment for digital projects, understanding resolution/pixels and color management, editing techniques and software for digital photos, and choosing the best file formats and sizes. Upon completion of the workshop, participants had learned how to produce catalogue quality photos for the preservation of the collections of their own institutions.

Other presenters included: Danielle Cunniff Plumer, Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative Coordinator, Texas State Library And Archives Commission, Austin; Dreanna Belden, Coordinator of Grants and Development, University of North Texas Libraries Digital Projects Unit, Denton; Mary O’Connor, Archetype Digital Imaging Alliance, Denton; and Maria Van Vreede, Registrar, Academy of Model Aeronautics, Muncie, Indiana.

School Tour Season Comes to a Close

As the month of May comes to a close, so does our museum school tour season. After heaving a giant sigh of relief, our dedicated education department can look back at the school year with pride. Since September, over 100 schools have visited Washington on the Brazos with 6,380 students. The education staff has strived to make the history of the Republic of Texas come to life with engaging stories, fun activities, and interesting artifacts. They know they have succeeded when a student leaves the museum saying, “Wow! This is the coolest place!”

Thank you card from a second-grade student in Ms. Higgins class at Milam Elementary in Bryan ISD. Note the detail in the drawing of our riverboat exhibit about the Yellow Stone steamboat, including the ship’s wheel, the smokestack, the captain’s jacket, the video screen, and the water under the boat.
Schedule of Upcoming Events

June 6  Teacher Workshop

A teacher workshop entitled “Bringing History to Life in the Classroom” will be held at Washington-on-the-Brazos on Wednesday, June 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It is open to all teachers who want to learn how to enhance their students’ understanding of this crucial time in Texas history.

The workshop will include a session entitled “Using Primary Sources in the Classroom” to correlate with TEKS objectives 4.22.A, 5.25.A, 6.21.A, 7.21.A, and 8.30.A. After visiting all sites within the Park, participants will receive a packet of useful educational materials and suggestions for hands-on classroom activities.

The cost of the workshop is $35, which must be paid at the time of registration. Lunch will be available for an additional $5, if orders are placed in advance. Participants will receive certificates for six contact hours of Continuing Professional Education credits from the Department of Workforce Education at Blinn College.

For more information or to register, please contact Anne McGaugh, Curator of Education, at (936) 878-2461, ext. 237 or amcgaugh@blinn.edu. Registration forms are also available at www.starmuseum.org/Registration.pdf. Deadline for registration is Wednesday, May 30. Space is limited!