The Shape of Texas: Defining Her Borders

Over the past 500 years cartographers have recorded the shape of Texas on a host of maps. The first explorer to map Texas was the Spaniard Alonzo Álvarez de Piñeda. He was commissioned in 1519 by the governor of Jamaica to map the Gulf coast. Since then the shape of Texas has evolved to its present form. Conflict between competing powers resulted in many of these changes. Spain, France, Mexico, and the United States have all sought a piece of Texas at one time or another.

Spain’s first claim to the Americas was established by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Over the next 200 years Spain was constantly challenged by other European powers as she tried to maintain a hold on this huge expanse of land. But, by the 17th century, England, France and the Netherlands had made inroads into Spanish territory in the New World. When Frenchmen crossed the Sabine River from Louisiana in 1691, Spain became alarmed and established a series of missions to discourage such intrusions. In 1716, a community was established at Los Adaes, near present-day Robeline, Louisiana, to further guard against French expansion into Texas. At this time, Spain considered the Sabine River as its eastern border and it has remained so until the present time.

When Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803, disputes over the vaguely defined eastern and northern boundaries of Texas erupted. These were not resolved until 1819 when John Quincy Adams, the American secretary of state, and Don Luis de Oñís, the Spanish minister to the United States, reached an agreement with the Adams-Oñís Treaty. By creating a vertical boundary from the Sabine River to the Red River, the U.S. was able to continue commerce along the Red River and Texas had access to the Red River from its southern border. The treaty specified 100 degrees west longitude as the westernmost point of the northern boundary.

After Mexico gained its independence from Spain, the new Mexican Congress in 1824 decided to combine the states of Texas and Coahuila. Settlers were not happy with this decision, because the center of government at Saltillo was too far away. To appease them, the Congress created the Departments of Bexar, Nacogdoches and Brazos to provide more local government. In creating

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the Mexican government recognized the Nueces River as the southern and western boundary of Bexar.

In 1836, the Treaty of Velasco ended the Texas revolution and required the Mexican army to withdraw below the Rio Grande River, essentially recognizing the river as Texas’ southern boundary. Since both the Mexicans and Texans violated the treaty, Mexico did not recognize Texas as a republic, nor the Rio Grande as its border. When Texas joined the Union in 1846, the United States claimed the Rio Grande as its border, which resulted in the Mexican War. Two years later, at the conclusion of the war, the Rio Grande was established as the southern border of Texas.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo defines the western boundary of Texas as the Rio Grande, from its mouth to its source. The border was redefined two years later. Debts accumulated during Texas’ years as a republic made it necessary to sell its westernmost lands to the United States. The Compromise of 1850 determined its western border as 103 degrees longitude and its northern border equal to New Mexico’s southern border.

**New Map Exhibit Opening**

The Star of the Republic Museum will open a new exhibit entitled “Texas Transformed: Early Maps of Texas” in celebration of Texas Independence Day 2009. Included in the exhibit will be the largest map of Texas, on loan from the Texas General Land Office, and measuring approximately eight feet square. The map was drafted in 1879 by Charles W. Pressler, who worked for GLO for 50 years.

Also included in the exhibit will be Guillaume de Lisle’s “Carte de la Louisiana et du Cours du Missisippi” (1718)—the first map to identify “Tejas” as a place. On loan from the Center for American History at the University of Texas will be Fiorenzo Galli’s “Texas” (1826) which has the distinction of being the first printed map to show Texas separately from the rest of the continent. Maps by E.F. Lee (1836), J. Disturnell (1847) and J. DeCordova (1849)—all used extensively by immigrants to Texas—will be on display, as well.

“Texas Transformed” will be on exhibit from February 28 – August 31, 2009. However, Pressler’s 1879 Texas map will only be exhibited through March 22, 2009. Don’t miss it!

**The Spirit of Texas Independence Web Project**

Imagine walking down the street of the newly established town of Washington, Texas in 1836…the town is buzzing with excitement as some very important people have come to town! Fifty-nine delegates are meeting to determine the fate of Texas. You have the opportunity to converse with the people on the street, to see the story unfold before your eyes! You can enter the local buildings and interact with the citizens of Washington. You can become a player in this drama! Sound like fun? It will be possible with the completion of The Spirit of Texas Independence educational website! In addition to creating an interactive virtual town of Washington, the website will also contain teacher resources, timelines, games, primary sources, an analysis of grievances, and information about the delegates. It will bring to light the significance of what happened at Washington in 1836!

The Spirit of Texas Independence project is currently under development by EduWeb, a nationally acclaimed company that creates digital learning games and interactives through role-playing, exploration, and imagination. If you would like to contribute to this exciting project, donations are being accepted at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association, P. O. Box 1, Washington, TX 77880. Please help us see the project to its completion!
Texas Independence Day Celebration

On Saturday and Sunday, February 28-March 1, 2009, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association will sponsor the 173rd anniversary of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Festivities at the Park will include historic craft demonstrations, guest speakers, music and entertainment. The event is also sponsored by ExxonMobil and Bluebonnet Electric Co-op. Admission to all sites in the Park will be free.

Texas Independence Day Celebration:

Schedule of Events at Star of the Republic Museum

(subject to change)

Saturday, February 28, 2009

11:00 am  Texas Heroes Living History……………………….…Museum Theater (William Barret Travis & Susanna Dickinson)
12:30 pm  Republic of Texas Art Contest Awards…………………Museum Theater
1:30 pm  Texas Heroes Living History…………………………Museum Theater (Stephen F. Austin & Mary Austin Holley)
3:30 pm  Texas Heroes Living History…………………………Museum Theater (Sam Houston)

Sunday, March 1, 2009

11:00 am  Texas Heroes Living History ………………………….Museum Theater (William Barret Travis & Susanna Dickinson)
12:30 pm  *Gone to Texas*………………………………………Museum Theater
2:00 pm  Texas Independence Day Program…………………..Amphitheater (featuring notable Texas historian Stephen Hardin; followed by Texas Army blackpowder gun salute and Texas-sized birthday cake)
3:30 pm  Texas Heroes Living History…………………………Museum Theater (Sam Houston)

*Gone to Texas* is a foot-stomping musical production about the life of Sam Houston, sponsored in part by Raven Rangers of the New Army of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston Memorial Museum and the Cast.

The following historic craft demonstrators will be in the park throughout the weekend:

- Bluebonnet Lacemakers
- Brazos Bluebonnet Quilt Guild
- Betty Wharton-Knitters
- Betty Thiel-Tatting
- Century House Chair Caning
- Star of Texas Dulcimers
- North Harris Co. Dulcimer Society
- Lawrence Hoff-Blacksmith
- Robert & Cathy Pulley-Woodcarving and Handquilting
- Lee Oates-Bearclaw Knives
- Front Porch Dulcimers
- Eddie Harrison-Buffalo Soldiers
- Texas Army
- Larry & Claudia Heidbreder-Texas Recollections
- Brazos Valley Stitchers
- Lane Gregson-Flintknapping
- James Hickman-Nature’s Warehouse
- Kenny Lewis-Cowboy Poet
- Sadie Allison-Tatting

Upon arrival, see Event Program for additional entertainment
Fourth Brazos Valley Regional History Fair is Now "History"

The fourth annual Brazos Valley Regional History Fair was held February 13 at Washington on the Brazos. One hundred seventy three students in grades 7-12, from Brenham, Navasota, Anderson-Shiro, College Station, and Bryan competed for advancement to Texas History Day in Austin, sponsored by the Texas State Historical Association. The winners at the state contest will advance to National History Day in June at the University of Maryland. The theme for this year’s contest was “The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies.” For a complete list of winners, go to www.starmuseum.org/bvrhf/bvrhf_info.htm, and click on “2009 Winners.” The Museum gratefully acknowledges the following history fair sponsors:

**FOUNDERS $400+**
- Washington on the Brazos State Park Association
- Brazos Heritage Society
- Blinn College
- Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site

**DELEGATES $250+**
- Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Dr. Richard Fox Brenham Chapter
- Washington County Genealogical Society
- Brazos County Historical Commission
- Chesapeake Energy
- Independence Historical Society

**TEXIANS $100+**
- Carol and Jared Patout
- African American National Heritage Society
- John Brieden State Farm Insurance
- Grimes County Historical Commission
- Lacina & Kenjura, Attorneys at Law
- United Daughters of the Confederacy, Minnie B. Williams Chapter #531
- Washington County Historical Commission

**FRIENDS up to $99**
- Blue Bell Creameries

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**STAR OF THE REPUBLIC MUSEUM**

Open Daily
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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