Political activity in Texas was noticeably quiet in 1833 and 1834 due to the ravaging cholera epidemics that plagued the colony. It is not definitely known where the outbreaks originated, but it is believed that they came from the port of New Orleans, where the Texians carried on most of their trading. Nevertheless, the widespread fear of sudden death from the disease was at the forefront of the Texians' concerns.

Cholera, frequently called Asiatic cholera, is a severe diarrheal disease caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is transmitted to humans by contaminated water or food. Cholera is one of the most rapidly fatal illnesses known. A healthy person may become hypotensive (dangerously low blood pressure) within an hour of the onset of symptoms and could die within 2-3 hours. Little was known about proper treatments, which were as simple as replacing lost fluids.

Unsure of the cause of cholera, the citizens of Texas, during the 1833 epidemic, were urged to do everything in their power to prevent the spread of the disease, including a thorough cleaning of all buildings and streets. In some areas it was presumed that the disease was carried on fruit shipments. The consumption of pork was prohibited, and houses were to be fumigated with smoke. Drinking water in cisterns had to be filtered through burnt bread. In spite of these regulations, people still fled and business was crippled with only a few citizens remaining. Many families fled before the scourge; only a few families remained in Brazoria. Velasco was nearly depopulated, as well as Matagorda. Although the lower Brazos region was almost wiped out, the settlements of San Antonio, Nacogdoches, and Goliad were hardly affected in 1833. However, Asiatic cholera came back to these settlements in 1834. Once cholera developed in San Antonio, the citizens fled leaving the town desolate. Goliad was also hit hard. This epidemic lasted for about 3 weeks. At least 91 people died in Goliad and many more from nearby towns. Even the doctor who was sent to Goliad to help victims died soon after arrival.
For much of the 19th century, most European and American physicians believed cholera was a locally produced miasmatic disease—an illness brought about by direct exposure to the products of filth and decay, or “bad air;” therefore believing the disease was not contagious. Climate and geographic location were also factors in these beliefs. Many ineffective methods were used in Texas for the prevention and treatment of cholera. The characteristic treatments of that time period included bloodletting and opium. Other such “remedies” used to treat the sickness included: peyote (a cactus causing hallucination); laudanum (tincture of opium); and calomel (a white tasteless powder used as a purgative—also known as mercury chloride). A doctor in the lower Brazos Valley prescribed: “take 2 grams of jalap (a potent laxative) and a teaspoon of tarter combined and mixed with water twice a day until the fever leaves.” These irrational remedies seldom stopped the death-causing germ. On the rare occasion that someone did recover, the supposed “cure” provided a grand reason to celebrate.

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Night at the Star of the Republic Museum

Night at the Star of the Republic Museum was held on Saturday, November 2. From 7 - 9 p.m., the lights were turned off and the museum’s exhibits told the story of the Texas Republic. Visitors explored the museum by flashlight; never quite sure of what would be found around the corner! As in the movie “Night at the Museum,” the exhibits came to life after dark! Actually, live characters were stationed in the exhibits, and each had a story to tell. Visitors met such characters as Stephen F. Austin, a Mexican soldado, a Texas Ranger, a Spanish priest, a riverboat captain, and numerous early Texas settlers.

The Museum would like to thank the volunteers and cast who made the evening possible: Cheryl Dowdy, Keith Barker, Lauriano Pineda, Donna Barker, William Wright, Alain Holderer, Kellie McKenney, Jon Failor, Ketra Williams, Mark Sanders, Denise Campbell, Jeff Bolich, Sheri Finke, Debbie Gau, and Tom Scaggs.

Brass scarificator with twelve spring-loaded blades used for bloodletting.
Maker’s marks: J. Brown and Son, Newcastle.
-From the Museum collection
Museum Technology Shines Light on Texas History

Director Houston McGaugh recently presented at international museum administration conference

Blinn College’s Star of the Republic Museum at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site has utilized modern technology to shine a light on Texas history—and museum administrators around the world want to emulate its example.

Museum Director Houston McGaugh and his staff are at the forefront of an emerging trend in which museums utilize technology to revolutionize the way they connect with the public. Last year, the museum launched a one-of-a-kind mobile application, or app, that allows iPhone, iPad and Android phone users to see what the town of Washington looked like in the year Texas won the Battle of San Jacinto and declared its independence.

McGaugh presented a session at a webinar titled “Getting it Right: Designing for Mobile,” at the Museum & Mobile Online Conference Oct. 17. He shared his experience in developing the app with museum administrators from across the United States and London and offered advice on how museums can develop an online and mobile presence.

McGaugh was the only Texas-based museum director to present a session at the conference.

The app, which was developed by EduWeb, debuted last year. It reveals Washington as it looked in 1836: a rugged frontier town of log cabins and dogtrot houses, witnessing an influx of people from throughout the region who came to create a new nation. Using their mobile devices, park visitors can toggle between the full virtual world and the augmented-reality view that superimposes buildings and people against the modern environment. The app not only recreates the town, but also allows users to interact with some of its citizens.

The app is free and available to download in the Apple Store by searching “Texas 1836.” Users can also learn more about Washington-on-the-Brazos and the 1836 era by visiting www.txindependence.org.

Since its July 4, 2012 launch date, the app has been downloaded more than 5,000 times. The project was funded by a grant from the Texas Pioneer Foundation with support from the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association.

“A lot more museums are using these apps for added content,” he said. “It makes for a much more interesting experience for visitors.”

Descendants Luncheon Planned

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 1, 2014, for the first luncheon of descendants of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence! An Ad Hoc committee of descendants has been meeting with the Museum’s Curator of Collections, Dr. Shawn B. Carlson, to plan a luncheon at Washington-on-the-Brazos during the annual Texas Independence Day celebration. The luncheon will be held in the Park’s Conference Center at noon on March 1 and will offer barbeque plates for adults ($10) and children ($5). Watch for more information about this event!

YEAR-END GIFTS

The Star of the Republic Museum relies upon the generosity of its friends for the continued preservation and teaching of history. Tax-deductible donations to the Museum can be made through a designated gift in the form of cash, stocks, real estate, securities, life insurance, or other assets to the Blinn College Foundation at 902 College Avenue, Brenham, Texas 77833. The Blinn College Foundation is a 501(c) (3) corporation. For more information, contact Susan Myers, Executive Director of Blinn College Foundation at 979-830-4147.
UPCOMING EVENTS

December 14

CHRISTMAS ON THE BRAZOS
Make an old-fashioned Christmas craft at the Museum from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.! Visit Independence Hall for readings from Charles Dickens Christmas Collection throughout the day. Enjoy a candlelit tour of Barrington Farm from 5 - 8 p.m.

December 24 - January 1, 2014
Museum closed
Happy Holidays!

January 10
Registration deadline for Brazos Valley Regional History Fair.

January 11, February 8, March 8
TEXAS PIONEERS: GIRL SCOUT DAY
On the second Saturday of each month, Girl Scouts can earn a “Texas Pioneer” patch during this three-hour interactive event. Call 936-878-2461, ext. 236 for details.

February 7

BRAZOS VALLEY REGIONAL HISTORY FAIR
Plans are underway for the ninth annual Brazos Valley Regional History Fair, hosted by the Star of the Republic Museum on February 7, 2014. The regional fair is one step on the road to National History Day, a year-long, non-profit education program dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of history.

Students in grades 6-12 choose their own topics of study related to an annual theme, conduct extensive research, and choose the best method for displaying their findings.

The theme for 2014 is “Rights and Responsibilities in History.” Students can choose to enter historical papers, documentaries, exhibits, performances or websites. Projects can be done individually or as a group with up to five members. Students compete for the privilege of advancing to the state contest and for special monetary prizes from our sponsors.

Last year, a total of $900 was handed out at the regional fair. The top two winners in each category at the state contest advance to National History Day.

Volunteers, sponsors and judges are still needed. If you or your organization would like to help, please contact Anne McGaugh, Regional Coordinator, at 936-878-2461, ext. 237 or amcgaugh@blinn.edu.

March 1

EXHIBIT OPENING
“Weather Wisdom: Forecasting in the Texas Republic.” Included in the exhibit will be an assortment of 19th century scientific instruments used to measure wind velocity, atmospheric pressure, temperature and humidity.

March 1-2
TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY WEEKEND
Join us for a giant party celebrating Texas’ 178th birthday, to recognize the adoption of the Texas Declaration of Independence. All admission fees waived.