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**For Immediate Release:**

**Washington on the Brazos to mark 181st Anniversary of Texas Independence**

All Texans (natural born, and those that got here as soon as they could) are invited to a Texas-sized 181st anniversary celebration on the very spot “Where Texas Became Texas”— [Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org). It was March 2, 1836 when 59 delegates bravely met at Washington, Texas to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico. From 1836 until 1846, the Republic of Texas proudly existed as a separate nation.

To commemorate this anniversary of Texas Independence, the three entities that administer and support this site—Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept (TPWD), Blinn College and Washington on the Brazos State Park Association—are planning this Texas-sized celebration.

“[Texas Independence Day Celebration”](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/events/texas-independence-day-celebration-2/) **(TIDC)** is an annual two-day celebration from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 4 and Sunday, March 5, 2017 on the expansive 293-acre park grounds and its three incredible attractions: [Independence Hall](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/independence-hall/) (replica of the site where representatives wrote the Texas Declaration of Independence); [Star of the Republic Museum](http://www.starmuseum.org/) (collections and programs honoring history of early Texans, administered by Blinn College); and [Barrington Living History Farm](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/barrington-living-history-farm/) (where interpreters dress, work and farm as did the original residents of this homestead).

The birthday celebration features live music, food, traditional crafts, living history presentations, cannon and musket firing lines, historical encampments and commemorative programs so guests can experience life in Texas in 1836. Reenactors from across the state set up a bona fide 1836 Texas Army camp where visitors can wander freely Saturday and Sunday around the camp to learn how the soldiers and their families lived in 1836.

Admission fees are waived for the site’s attractions (Independence Hall, Star of the Republic Museum, and Barrington Living History Farm) during the TIDC weekend celebration. Admission to the grounds, on-site shuttles and parking are also free.

Special guests and entertainment throughout the weekend, including Texas A&M University Singing Cadets;

a historical play titled “The Birth of a Republic” about the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence; family reunions of the descendants of the 59 men who signed the Declaration; wreath laying ceremony at the Children’s Monument; demonstrators and musicians will bring old time music and crafts; and additional historical reenactments. A Kids History Zone will allow children to dress up in historical costumes; sign a large-scale copy of the Declaration; and take photos near the Declaration.

The Star of the Republic Museum at Washington on the Brazos will celebrate the 181th anniversary with its new exhibit, “Heirloom Genealogy: Tracing your Family Treasures,” beginning March 4, 2017, and continuing through February 15, 2018. Stories will come to light as artifacts are examined in-depth through lineage research. Documents reveal where the artifacts originated, who owned them, and how they got to Texas. Items in the exhibit include three year-old Edward Boylan’s buckskin suit; Pleasant B. Watson’s diary; Heinrich Tiemann’s clog-making tools; and Clara Lang’s grand piano, among others.

The Star of Texas Dulcimers will entertain visitors in the Museum’s theater with performances of American folk music. The Museum will also feature demonstrators showcasing period skills such as quilting, hand knitting and tatting.

Special performance: “Dr. Balthasar’s Medicine Show” by Interpretive Education Specialist, Mike Follin will be on Saturday and Sunday. Dr. Balthasar is a character based on research conducted on the medicine shows performed from late 1700s to late 1800s; Follin recreates a 19th century frontier patent medicine salesman to help audiences to understand this part of history and early day health care. Follin uses the rapid-fire patter and entertaining techniques that attracted early American country folk to attend a sales talk and purchase mostly useless tonics.

Keynote speaker Judge Ken Wise will speak on Sunday, March 5. A native Houstonian and fifth generation Texan, Judge Wise sits on the Texas 14th Court of Appeals, is an adjunct professor at the University of Houston Law Center, and writes/records a Texas history podcast called “[Wise About Texas](http://wiseabouttexas.com/).”

TIDC is made possible by Houston First, Washington on the Brazos State Park Association, ExxonMobil, Travis and Tim Bryan-The Bank & Trust of Bryan/College Station, Bluebonnet Electric Co-op, The Arts Council of the Brazos Valley, The City of Navasota, Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Blinn College, KTEX 106 Sounds Like Texas, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Ant Street Inn and Texas Tribune.

NEW THIS YEAR: TIDC weekend has expanded to a three-day celebration across Washington County with additional events and evening entertainment.

Friday, March 3

**Sam Houston Day Proclamation Ceremony**—4 p.m., Texas Baptist Historical Museum, Independence, TX (hometown of Sam Houston); hosted by the Museum and The Sam Houston Heritage Trail. Proclamations will be read from Texas and Tennessee Governor offices and Supreme Court Justice of the Cherokee Nation. The museum will be open before and after the ceremony; additional historical tours begin at 2 p.m. Texas Baptist Historical Museum is located at the intersection of FM 50 and FM 390. For more information, visit SamTrail.net; TexasBaptistHistoricalMuseum.weebly.com; and IndependenceTX.com.

**Eve of Texas Independence events—**6 p.m., Alamo Alley, downtown Brenham. This event will emulate the days immediately before the 1836 Constitutional Convention with authentic foods of the era catered by Funky Art Café, period music, entertainment, historical characters, and the feature movie *Houston*: *The Legend Of Texas* starring Sam Elliott*­­*—a portrayal of Sam Houston and Texas’ fight for independence showing at 8 p.m. at Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre, 111 W. Main Street. Reservations for the Eve of Texas Independence event are required by Friday, February 24 and cost $75 per person or $140 per couple. Movie-only tickets will be $10/adult and $5/children under 12 and can be made in advance or purchased at the door. Proceeds benefit Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre. For reservations or more information, visit [www.downtownbrenham.com/eveoftexas](http://www.downtownbrenham.com/eveoftexas).

Saturday, March 4

Feature movie Two for Texas starring Kris Kristofferson, Tom Skerritt and Peter Coyote will show at 7 p.m. at Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre. This is an action-packed story of Texas Independence, focusing on the Battle of San Jacinto. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. For reservations or more information, visit [www.downtownbrenham.com/eveoftexas](http://www.downtownbrenham.com/eveoftexas). Tickets can also be purchased at the door.

[Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org):

This TPWD-run state park has many onsite amenities open daily, as well as an incredible schedule of events and programs. On-site attractions include [Independence Hall](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/independence-hall/); the [Star of the Republic Museum](http://www.starmuseum.org/) and [Barrington Living History Farm](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/barrington-living-history-farm/). The site’s Visitor Center features interactive exhibits which present a timeline of the Texas Revolution and highlight the historic attractions located within the park; it also houses the spacious Washington Emporium Gift Shop, which offers snacks and a wide range of Texas-themed items and keepsakes. The [Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/fanthorp-inn/) is an authentically preserved example of a 19th century stagecoach inn, located nearby in Anderson, TX. Entrance to the park grounds, Visitor Center and parking is always free.

**The Park:** The expansive park grounds along the Brazos River also provide a beautiful setting for picnicking, sightseeing and bird watching, as well as four geocaching sites—two each from TPWD and the Brenham/Washington County Chamber and CVB. It also features a Conference Center for meetings, weddings and reunions. The Education Center with two classroom-style spaces are perfect for smaller groups. An outdoor amphitheater and two pavilions are also available for rent.

There are many reasons to join the [Washington on the Brazos State Park Association](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/park-association/) as a member and explore this Texas treasure. Besides the irreplaceable satisfaction of helping to uphold Texas history through the Association’s preservation projects, celebrations and programming, spending time at the park is an easy, inexpensive, educational and fun way to entertain families and visitors. Park Association membership levels are available for individuals, families and businesses and include free admission to the Site’s attractions for a year, and—for some levels—private parties during the park’s special celebrations.

Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site is located on the Brazos River at the original townsite of Washington, Texas, a major political and commercial center in early Texas.  It is located at 23400 Park Road 12, Washington, TX, 77880—approximately halfway between Brenham and Navasota, off of State Hwy. 105. From Hwy. 105, follow either FM 912 or FM 1155 to Park Road 12.

Updates on all WOB festivities, including TIDC, are continually posted at [www.wheretexasbecametexas.org](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org); the public can contact [office@wheretexasbecametexas.org](mailto:office@wheretexasbecametexas.org) or

(936) 878-2214 for more information.

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