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(Please email or call for photos, videos, advance interviews, etc.)

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**For Immediate Release:**

**Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site – January through April 2016**

*Site's attractions and parkland open year-round with special activities*

2016 will be an important year for [Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](#). Not only is it the 180th anniversary of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico in 1836 at the park site, but it will also be the state park's 100th birthday. 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. Washington on the Brazos is, indeed, "Where Texas Became Texas."

[Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](#) has many onsite amenities open daily, as well as an incredible schedule of events and programs. On the grounds of this 283-acre, TPWD-run state park is [Independence Hall](#) (the site in 1836 where the representatives met to write the declaration of independence); the [Star of the Republic Museum](#) (collections honoring the history, cultures, diversity and values of early Texans; administered by Blinn College); and [Barrington Living History Farm](#) (where interpreters dress, talk, work and farm as the earliest residents of the original farmstead did). 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](#) is a wonderfully preserved example of a 19th century stagecoach inn, located nearby in Anderson, TX. The entrance to the park grounds, Visitor Center and parking is always free.

Two very special events occur in the next six months:

- **Saturday, December 12, 2015 – *Christmas on the Brazos featuring Candlelight Christmas***  
Start the holiday season by spending the afternoon and evening at Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site with modern and historic holiday activities for all ages, staggered throughout the park. The Star of the Republic Museum will be open regular museum hours with Christmas crafts available from 11 am until 3 pm. In the afternoon, the Visitor Center and Washington Emporium will feature merchandise from Texas artisans, with tastings and samplings of some local fare; family friendly activities, and; a self-serve photo opportunity with Santa and miniature horses standing in for his reindeer. Independence Hall will offer historic Christmas readings at 1pm, 2pm and 3pm. At 4:30 p.m., activities will shift to Barrington Farm for Candlelight Christmas, the evening event. This special program features timed vignettes, offering glimpses into 1850s festivities through a candlelit tour of Barrington Farm--with tours leaving every 15 minutes starting at 4:30 p.m.; the last tour leaves at 8 p.m. The event will include live 19th century music, dancing, bonfires, Christmas readings, 1850s Santa Claus, musket firings, cookies and hot cider. Please allow at least one hour to enjoy the full experience. Groups will enter the site at timed intervals; reservations are highly recommended and will be accepted starting November 1. Walk-ins are welcome if space permits. Standard site admission fees apply. Visitors should dress appropriately for the weather and uneven walking surfaces since the event will take place throughout the farm. Washington on the Brazos site, Star of the Republic Museum, Independence Hall, Visitor Center and Barrington Farm; for more information or to make reservations, contact (936) 878-2214 ext. 246 or [barrington.farm@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:barrington.farm@tpwd.texas.gov).

- Saturday, March 5 and Sunday, March 6, 2016: “Texas Independence Day Celebration” (TIDC)** is an annual two-day celebration from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 5 and Sunday, March 6, 2016. The birthday celebration always features live music, food, traditional crafts, living history presentations, historical encampments and commemorative programs as guests step back into history to experience life in Texas in 1836, but to commemorate its 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 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 a Texas-size celebration. In 2016, **TIDC** will be expanded to include some special guests and entertainment – including but not limited to – the Texas A&M University Singing Cadets; a historical play called “Birth of The Republic” about the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence; unveiling and book signing of “Washington on the Brazos: Cradle of the Texas Republic” by author Richard B. McCaslin (fellow of the TSHA and professor of history at the University of North Texas); family reunions of the descendants of the 59 men who signed the Declaration; special events at Independence Hall, the Star of Republic Museum and the Barrington Living History Farm; and additional historical reenactments. Admission fees are waived for the site’s attractions during the TIDC weekend celebration. Admission to the grounds, on-site shuttles and parking are also free. Updates on the all festivities, including TIDC and the 180th celebrations, are continually posted at [wheretexasbecametexas.org](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org); the public can contact [office@wheretexasbecametexas.org](mailto:office@wheretexasbecametexas.org) or (936) 878-2214 for more information.

### **SCHEDULE OF OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS:**

Unless noted otherwise, programs are open to all ages, but an adult must accompany any children. Visitors should dress appropriately for the season and be prepared for the weather as the events take place in 1850s period settings, with some portions outdoors.

**Present through Feb. 15, 2016 - *Enduring Spirit: African Americans in 19th Century Texas*, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.:** Star of the Republic Museum is celebrating Black History in Texas with a yearlong exhibit that captures the spirit of 19th-century black Texans and the challenges they faced before, during and after the Civil War. While the first African Americans in Texas were free men and women seeking opportunity and advancement, the laws of the newly formed Republic of Texas forced them out and opened the door to thousands of enslaved people who served as the backbone of the labor force for almost 30 years. Finally gaining their freedom after the Civil War, they discovered their struggle was far from over. Artifacts on display include slave records, freedmen contracts and an oath of allegiance. Stoneware pottery made at Wilson Pottery near Seguin, the first African American business in Texas, is exhibited, as well as an example of the intricate Pine Burr pattern quilt. Contact: 936-878-2461, ext. 237.

**Saturday, Jan. 9 through Sunday, Jan. 10, 2016 - *Butchering and Curing*, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.:** Join the Barrington Farm personnel on Saturday, January 9, to help them butcher a hog, then return on Sunday, January 10, to help cure the meat. Butchering livestock was a very necessary part of life in the mid-19th century, because the animals were raised for that purpose. Pork has been preserved by drying, salting and smoking for centuries, so the meat could be eaten later. If you want to see every step, you should attend the entire event; steps will not be repeated once the resources have been used up. This program is cold weather dependent and may be postponed until conditions are right, so please confirm program scheduling closer to event date. Contact: Bruce Wardlow, (936) 878-2214 x246 or [bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturdays, January 16, February 20, March 19 and April 16, 2016 - *Living History Saturday at Independence Hall and the Old Washington Townsite*, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.:** Travel back in time to where a nation was born in 1836. On the third Saturday of each month, staff and volunteers dressed in period clothing bring to life the people and events of Old Washington providing a unique opportunity to discover various aspects of life surrounding the birth of the Republic of Texas. The program features activities suited for the entire family, activities include, writing with a quill pen; signing a copy of the Texas Declaration of Independence; visiting with militia soldiers travelling through town; and playing some early Texas games. Step-back in time and discover the spot where Texas became Texas! (Activities will vary and some are weather dependent). Traditional guided tours of Independence Hall will not be offered these days; free to park visitors. Contact: Jon Failor, (936) 878-2214 ext. 224 or [jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016 - *Light in the Dark, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.*:** How do you see at night without electricity? If you lived more than 150 years ago what would you have to gather, and make yourself, to be able to have light at night? Seeing in the dark is something we take for granted today, but making your own light is frugal and satisfying. On Barrington Farm, the home of the last president of Texas, Anson Jones, they would have been using purchased and homemade candles. The slaves might have used grease lamps, rush lights, or started their fires with flint and steel. Try your hand at candle dipping, for those six and older, as long as supplies last. Additional farm chores will be ongoing depending on the weather conditions, but you can tour the house, kitchen, barn, and slave quarters in addition to this program. Contact: Barb King, (936) 878-2214 ext. 246 or [barb.king@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:barb.king@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturdays, February 27, March 26 and April 23, 2016 - *Music Makes a Celebration, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.*:** Discover the music that inspired celebration and recreation in 19th century Texas with the program “Music Makes a Celebration,” presented by **Homestead Strings** at Fanthorp Inn. As one of early Texas’ most occupied stagecoach inns, Fanthorp often found itself as the focal point for parties, celebrations and great balls which brought delight to significant holidays such as New Years, Christmas and Texas Independence Day. Relive the joy that weary travelers and local citizens experienced as the Inn provided the largest accommodations in the area to host celebrations, parties and the occasional escape from the rugged Texas frontier. Presentations will be ongoing throughout the day and will last approximately 35-40 minutes. Contact: Jon Failor, (936) 878-2214 ext. 224 or [jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturday, March 12, 2016 - *Stagecoach Days, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.*:** Fanthorp Inn’s Stagecoach Days allows visitors to experience what it was like to travel cross-country via stagecoach and learn about the Inn’s history and connection with early stage lines. There is no admission fee to visit the inn, with a suggested donation of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children for stagecoach rides. Rides last approximately 15 minutes and Inn tours for 30-45 minutes. Contact: Jon Failor, (936) 878-2214 ext. 224 or [jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Special Focus: *The Whipster!***

You will be introduced to the famous role of the **Whipster** or stagecoach driver. No man in early Texas had more esteem with the exception of a riverboat captain than the stagecoach driver or “Whipster!” Come experience the crack of the whip and the swagger of a true Texas Whipster. It’s a unique event the whole family will remember and enjoy. Presentation times are 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. and the program will last approximately 35 to 40 minutes.

**Saturday, March 19 and Sunday, March 20, 2016 - *Beasts of Burden; Draft Animals at Work, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.*:** Whether it was pulling plows, harrowing fields, hauling cotton or cultivating corn, beasts of burden made light work of the farm’s sometimes daunting tasks. Join Barrington Living History Farm and the **Texas Draft Horse and Mule Association** in a unique opportunity to experience draft animals at work. Various aspects of field preparation using horses, mules and oxen will be demonstrated, with some hands-on opportunities. Activities are dependent on weather and soil conditions. Contact: Barrington Farm, (936) 878-2214 x246; or [bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturday, April 9, 2016 - *Bloodletting, Leeches and Laudanum: Medicine in the 1850s, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.*:** Find new appreciation for modern medicine and your doctor! Medicine in the 1850s utilized strange and painful treatments, which were more likely to harm you than help you. Learn what techniques and treatments Dr. Anson Jones and his colleagues would perform. This presentation will involve plenty of hands-on activities for visitors of all ages. This program will begin at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the porch of the Anson Jones home at Barrington Living History Farm. The program is approximately one hour long. Contact: Mick Haven, (936) 878-2214 x246 or [mick.haven@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:mick.haven@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturday, April 9, 2016 - *Stagecoach Days, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.*:** Fanthorp Inn Stagecoach Days allows visitors to experience what it was like to travel cross-country via stagecoach and learn about the Inn’s history and connection with early stage lines. There is no admission fee to visit the inn, with a suggested donation of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children for stagecoach rides. Rides last approximately 15 minutes and Inn tours for 30-45 minutes. Contact: Jon Failor, (936) 878-2214 ext. 224 or [jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Special Focus: “*Children’s Pastimes and Playthings*”** – This children’s day will focus on hands-on activities for kids. There will be several stations with fun, engaging activities including period games, toys and interactive historical demonstrations. In the days before cell phones, TVs and computer

games, early Texas children found delight in activities such as Button Whizzers, Corn Shuck Dolls and Hoop Races.

**Saturday, April 16, 2016 - *The Final Days of Anson Jones, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.*:** No one knows exactly why Dr. Anson Jones decided to take his own life in January 1858. However, his own writings and interactions with family and friends paint a picture of a man haunted by his own past and facing a grim future. Join us for this presentation about the last weeks of the life of Texas's last president. This program contains mature subject matter and is not recommended for small children. This program will begin at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the porch of the Anson Jones home at Barrington Living History Farm. The program is approximately one hour long. Contact: Mick Haven, (936) 878-2214 x246 or [mick.haven@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:mick.haven@tpwd.texas.gov).

**Saturday, April 23, 2016 - *Basketry-on-the-Brazos, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.*:** In 1850s Texas, it was a quite common sight to see people harvesting green sap-laden trees to turn into baskets. Baskets were the most convenient way to carry things, be it a small basket to carry a lunch or a large bushel basket to carry the cotton that was picked. Join Barrington Farm personnel as they go through the process of pounding a green log into baskets splits, and help them weave those splits into baskets that will be used on the farm throughout the year. Contact: Bruce Wardlow, (936) 878-2214 x246 or [bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:bruce.wardlow@tpwd.texas.gov).

### **Washington on the Brazos**

**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, which is perfect for meetings, weddings and reunions. The Education Center with a main auditorium and two classroom style spaces are perfect for smaller groups. An outdoor amphitheater and two pavilions are also available to rent.

There are many reasons to join the [Washington on the Brazos State Park Association](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org) 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, including—for some levels—private parties during the park's special celebrations. The Park Association has underwritten its new website at [www.wheretexasbecametexas.org](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org).

Visitors should call the park at (936) 878-2214 to confirm all of these dates and times; events subject to change based on weather, etc. Leashed pets allowed in park, but NOT ALLOWED onto farm site or in the buildings. Accessible for the mobility impaired. For lodging information, please contact the Brenham Visitor Center at [www.visitbrenhamtexas.com/](http://www.visitbrenhamtexas.com/) or 1-888-BREHAM, or the city of Navasota at [www.navasotagrimeschamber.com](http://www.navasotagrimeschamber.com).

Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site is found 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. For additional information, call (936) 878-2214 or visit the site's website at [www.wheretexasbecametexas.org](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org).