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**Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site**

**Fact Sheet**

It was March 2, 1836 when 59 delegates bravely met at Washington, Texas, while the Battle of Alamo raged on, to do something few have ever done: found a nation and make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico in just 17 days. They also penned a new constitution and organized an interim government, giving birth to a new nation: the Republic of Texas. At great personal risk, the delegates finished their work as Santa Anna and his army marched eastward from the Alamo, hell-bent on capturing the political leaders of the rebellion.

From 1836 until 1846, the Republic of Texas proudly existed as a separate nation. The spirit of those early freedom-seeking Texans pervades the park and its programs, allowing visitors to experience life before and during the Republic era. Washington on the Brazos is, indeed, “Where Texas Became Texas.”

[Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](http://www.wheretexasbecametexas.org) has many onsite amenities open daily, as well as a steady schedule of events and programs allowing visits to walk in the footsteps of Texas’ fore fathers. On the grounds of this 293-acre, TPWD-run state park, stories of this tumultuous time in Texas history live on and can be experienced at [Independence Hall](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/independence-hall/), the [Star of the Republic Museum](http://www.starmuseum.org/) (administered by Blinn College) and [Barrington Living History Farm](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/barrington-living-history-farm/). [Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/fanthorp-inn/) is located nearby in Anderson, TX. The entrance to the park grounds, Visitor Center and parking is always free; fees apply for access to Barrington Farm and Star of the Republic Museum, and for tours of Independence Hall. All attractions are accessible for the mobility impaired. Leashed pets are allowed in the park, but not allowed onto farm site or in the buildings.

**The Park:** The expansive park grounds of this state park 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 and Education Center, which is available for rent for meetings, weddings and reunions. An outdoor amphitheater and two pavilions are also available to rent. Leashed pets are allowed in the park, but not allowed onto farm site or in the buildings.

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).

**Independence Hall**

Independence Hall is one of Texas’ most significant historic sites. In the raw frontier town of Washington in 1836, 59 men elected from municipalities across the territory met in an unfinished frame building to determine the fate of this vast land called Texas. Meanwhile, the forces of General Santa Anna laid siege to the Alamo. Even as the settlers fled ahead of Santa Anna’s army, the convention labored for 17 days. The actual Independence Hall was destroyed; this is a historically authentic replica. Tours for the general public are offered hourly; check website for times. Special monthly events include Living History Saturday which allows visitors to travel back in time to where a nation was born in 1836.

**Star of the Republic Museum**

The Star of the Republic Museum was created in 1972 to collect and preserve the material culture of the Texas Republic (1836-1846) and to interpret the history, cultures, diversity and values of early Texans. The museum strives to inspire interest, understanding and appreciation of Texas heritage for students, teachers, scholars and the general public through exhibits, tours, programs, web activities and outreach. The museum’s 10,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space includes its permanent and special exhibits. The Pioneer Playroom, simulates an early Texas frontier homestead that allows participants to immerse themselves in the role of pioneers through role-playing, interactive experiences and a variety of learning styles. Self-guided tours or hand-held audio tour devices available. Programs include History Fair, Blue Star Museums and guided tours for groups.

**Barrington Living History Farm**

The original home of Dr. Anson Jones, the last president of the Republic of Texas, is the centerpiece of Barrington Living History Farm. The Jones family and their slaves lived and worked on the homestead for over a decade, building a successful cotton farm after Texas joined the Union. Today, using Anson’s daybooks and accounts as their guides, costumed interpreters use 1850s methods and materials for planting, cultivating and harvesting the fields and working with livestock. The scene is complete with heritage breeds of livestock. Interpreters, dressed in period style clothing, help visitors better understand what life was like. Chores are plentiful on a working farm, so guests are invited to lend a hand. Self-guided tours and a continuous schedule of weekend activities are offered.

**Visitor Center**

The [Visitor Center](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/visitors-center/) provides a free interpretive center complete with interactive exhibits and original artifacts highlight key events and Washington’s role in the birth of the Republic of Texas. The rotunda in the center pays homage and recognition to the 59 men who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. The Washington Emporium Gift Shop is the largest gift shop within the TWPD park system and provides visitors with the opportunity to take home wonderful Texas-centric souvenirs.

**Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site**

Considered part of the Washington on the Brazos Complex even though it’s located in Anderson, Texas, Fanthorp Inn stands as a wonderfully preserved example of a 19th century stagecoach inn. The 18-room inn began 1834 as the simple dogtrot log cabin home of English immigrant Henry Fanthorp and his wife Rachel. Over time, the Fanthorp home evolved into a well-known country inn with notable guests including Sam Houston, Zachary Taylor, and Generals Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis. Fanthorp Inn functioned as a family home for Fanthorp descendants. Purchased by Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. in 1977, the inn underwent extensive archaeological, architectural and historical investigations. Restored to its 1850s glory, Fanthorp Inn is open for guided tours, school programs, adult group tours, and special events. Fanthorp Inn is only open to the public on Saturday and Sundays; adult group and school program tours available Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, by appointment. During Stagecoach Days, visitors can experience what it was like to travel cross country via mule-driven stagecoach.

**Recurring Special Events – 2018**

* **Texas Independence Day Celebration** – March 3 and 4, 2018, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Annual two-day living history celebration commemorates the brave 59 delegates who make a formal declaration of independence with two stages of non-stop live music and entertainment, food trucks, Texian Village of arts and crafts and other family-friendly programs.
* ***So Others Could Follow: Four Centuries of Maps That Define Texas* – special exhibit at Star of the Republic Museum,** now through February 2019**:** This special museum exhibit illustrates the evolution of Texas’s distinct shape, recognized around the world, with 20 maps spanning three centuries from the most famous cartographers in the world. These maps from the Museum’s collection illustrate the evolution of the state, both topographically and politically.
* **Sundown Social** – April 21, 2018, 6 p.m.: Washington on the Brazos’s annual Texas-sized fundraising event at Rockin’ Star Ranch will include concert by Texas legend Dale Watson, gourmet chuck wagon steak dinner, cocktails and auctions filled with Texian Treasures.
* **Juneteenth Heritage Celebration** – June 23, 2018, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Celebrate the rich African American heritage and culture of the Brazos Valley with exhibits, art displays, guest speakers, living history, music, food and more.
* **Christmas on the Brazos** – December 8, 2018 – Celebrate historic frontier traditions of Texas in the 1800s with this popular Christmas event. Meet St. Nick; fall in with some noisy, rowdy revelers; experience the Jones family lighting the Christmas tree; attend an evening service with a traveling minister; and discover how the enslaved people celebrated Christmas during the park’s Candlelight Christmas with its candlelit tours of Texian frontier festivities of music, musket firing and dancing at Barrington Living History Farm.
* **March through April is wildflower season** at Washington on the Brazos. This photo-op paradise offers a safe alternative to pulling off the highway. The bountiful wildflower display includes bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush and pink evening primrose.

**Descendants of the Signers**

The Washington on the Brazos State Park Association and the Star of Republic Museum celebrate “The Fearless 59” who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence by finding and honoring their descendants with a multitude of programs and events. Many descendants are now recorded in the Descendants Registry—the official register of the documented lineal descendants of the Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Once a person’s lineage has been documented, that information is maintained by the Star of the Republic Museum in perpetuity. Descendants only have to prove their relationship to the person registered to have their names listed.

The Signers’ [family trees](http://www.starmuseum.org/descendant/family_tree.html) and biographies are accessible on the Star of the Republic Museum website. To register, descendants can visit <http://www.starmuseum.org/descendant/>.

**Washington on the Brazos State Park Association**

The oldest support group for any TPWD park, [Washington on the Brazos State Park Association](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/about/park-association/) was created in 1955 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to initiate and fund preservation projects, celebrations and educational programming at this historic site, its four attractions and Fanthorp Inn. Besides playing an integral part in the creation and subsequent expansion of the Star of the Republic Museum, it also has supplied funding for park and museum personnel; spearheaded funding for the Visitor Center and its educational displays; assisted in the reconstruction of Independence Hall; spearheaded funding for the “real-life” exhibits and programs of the Barrington Living History Farm; assisted in purchasing, relocating and restoring the home of Dr. Anson Jones; assisted in construction of Six Flags Over Texas monument; and provided research to have the park’s La Bahia Pecan Tree designated a “Famous Tree of Texas.” The Park Association funds the genealogical research which traces the lineage of the 59 signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence, and continually supports the Descendants of the Signers by assisting with organization and outreach of this integral group. Additionally, the volunteer organization has underwritten a mobile phone app; a new website for the complex; playground equipment; animals for the farm; bluebonnet and other wildflower seeds; and an important collection of historical papers and documents for the museum.

There are many reasons to join the Washington on the Brazos State 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. Individual and corporate memberships are [available](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/support-us/association-member-benefits/).

For lodging information, please contact the Brenham Visitor Center at [www.visitbrenhamtexas.com/](http://www.visitbrenhamtexas.com/) or 1-888-BRENHAM, or the city of Navasota at [www.navasotagrimeschamber.com](http://www.navasotagrimeschamber.com).

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