



# The Austin Town News

1832

Vol. X No. IV



## Austin Town Historical Re-enactment

*Imagine the sound of a thunderous cannon boom as the militia is called to muster and seeing Stephen F. Austin, Jane Long, and other historical characters living life as it was in their time...*



Step back in time with the Brazoria County Historical Museum as it presents the Seventh Annual Austin Town. A living history re-enactment, Austin Town recalls and celebrates the lives of those pioneers who settled Colonial Texas from 1821 to 1832. Set just north of Angleton, the fictitious "Austin Town" typically features character interpreters, demonstrators, sutlers, militia drill units, and period games.

The Austin Town site is located approximately 3 miles off State Highway 288 on Business 288, just north of Angleton, Texas. Austin Town is open to school groups only on Friday, Oct. 24 for \$2 per child.

Austin Town is open to all visitors on Saturday, Oct. 25 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday, Oct. 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission prices are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children under 12 and senior citizens over 65.

Free parking at and shuttle busses available.

## The Austin Colony 1821 - 1836

Stephen F. Austin's colony, the first authorized Anglo-American settlement in Mexican Texas, centered on the Brazos River. The boundaries extended west to the Colo-

rado River watershed, east to the San Jacinto River watershed, south to the Gulf of Mexico, and north to the Old Spanish Road that ran from Nacogdoches to San Antonio.

The original Austin empresario grant had been awarded in 1821, to Moses Austin, by the declining Spanish government. Moses died that year, however, and in Febru-

ary, Mexico gained its independence from Spain. It would not be until 1823 that the elder Austin's contract would finally be recognized by the new government as having rightfully passed to his heir, Stephen. Nevertheless, the era of Anglo-American colonization in Texas began when Stephen F. Austin's first settlers arrived at the mouth of the Brazos River on December 23, 1821. It ended when the Texans declared themselves independent from Mexico in 1836.

Stephen chose the Brazos and Colorado watersheds below the Old Spanish Road for his colony, where there were no towns or residents. Only a few wandering bands of Karankawa and Coco Indians roamed the area, hunting and gathering food.

### Reasons for Anglo-American Immigration to Texas

Generous Mexican land grants were a major attraction to residents of the Mississippi River Valley, who were especially hard-hit by the banking panic of 1819.

Unregulated state banks had

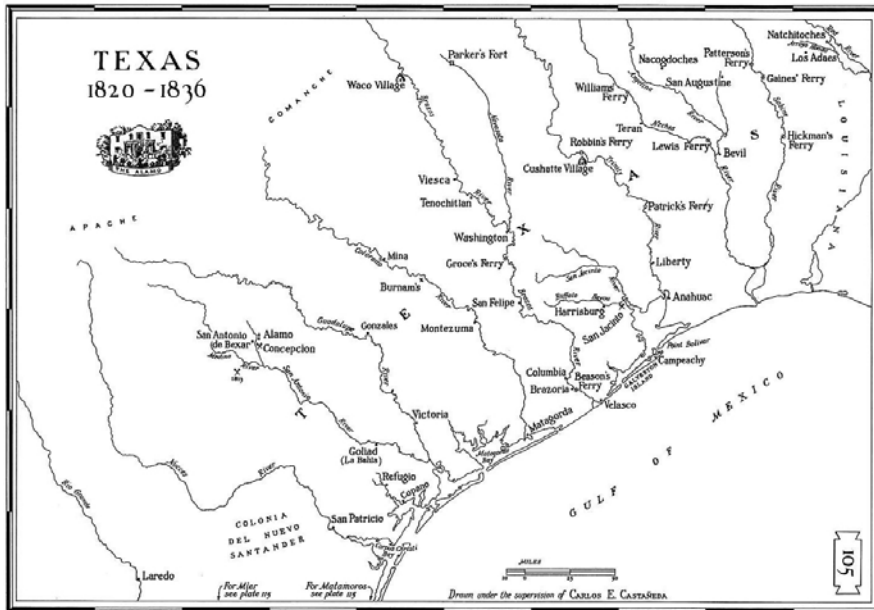
loaned large sums of money to frontier farmers to buy land when crop prices were high. When the market became glutted and agricultural prices fell, the farmers could not pay their debts and the banks foreclosed. At this time, most states jailed debtors. Texas, however, offered a refuge because U.S. creditors could not collect debts there. Additionally, Mexico did not tax land. Thus, it is not surprising that many families loaded their wagons and headed for the Sabine River.

### Settlements

Although San Felipe was the established headquarters of Austin's Colony, it never became the commercial center.

It was almost 80 miles from the mouth of Brazos with a torturous riverbed of horseshoe bends lined with trees, deterring sailboats dependent on the wind.

In 1828, Austin and his brother, James Austin, with a distant cousin, John Austin, founded the town of



(See Museum Page 4)

# Austin Town 1832

## CRAFT & LIFE SKILL DEMONSTRATIONS

### Blacksmithing

The blacksmith performed an important service for the early settlers.

His job was to work with heated iron and shape it on a heavy flat surface called an anvil. He was known as a blacksmith because the iron was black. The word "smith" comes from the verb "to smile" or "to hit". The blacksmith made kitchen utensils, tools, metal hoops used in making barrels and rims for wooden wheels. He also fashioned hardware items such as nails, latches, locks, and hinges. The blacksmith made and repaired farm implements and weapons. A blacksmith who specialized in making horseshoes is known as a "farrier." In later years, as more and more iron items were produced in factories, horseshoeing became the main job of the blacksmith.

### Carding, Spinning, Weaving and Dyeing

If cotton or wool fibers were available, pioneer women made their own fabric, a coarse, sturdy cloth called "homespun." First the fibers had to be cleaned.

Children picked seeds and trash from the cotton. Burrs, sticks and mud had to be washed from some sheep's wool. Carding was done with two flat wooden paddles covered with wire hooks. The carding combs were used to comb the fibers and form the cotton or wool into rolls. The cotton or fleece was then ready to be spun into long strands of yarn on a spinning wheel. Spinning stretches the fibers and twists them together so they do not come apart. Wool or cotton could be used in its natural color or dyed with dyes from plants. Berries, bark, roots, flowers, nutshells, and onion skins are some of the plants used to make dyes. Then the yarn was woven into cloth on a loom.

### Soap Making

Lye and tallow were the two main ingredients used for making soap in pioneer days.

Lye is created when water drips through wood ashes. Tallow comes from melted fat. Soap was made once or twice a year. It was a messy, smelly job, so it was done outdoors. The tallow and lye were

boiled together in an iron pot. The mixture had to be stirred constantly. It was poured into pans to harden, and then it was cut into bars.

### Quilting Bee

Pioneer women and girls would gather at someone's house and everyone would work on sewing on a quilt.

This was called a quilting bee. When they finished sewing the quilt, all the families would share a meal together and sometimes there would be dancing and games. Quilts were used for covers on beds. Some quilts were stored in chests for the young girls until they were old enough to get married. The pioneer women used scraps of old worn-out clothes or scraps from material they used to sew their clothes. All these scraps were sewn together. The patchwork was sewn on top of soft wool or cotton wadding. Then a bottom layer was sewn on. The girls had something in mind when they invited boys to the quilting bees. The girls had courting in mind.

## GAMES & TOYS

### Cornhusk Dolls

The lives of the early colonists revolved around corn.

They ate corn in many forms. They filled their mattresses with cornshucks. They made bottle stoppers, smoking pipes, and toys from corncocks. Cornhusk dolls were a by-product of the colonists' corn economy.

Corn dolls can be made from cornhusks or from corncocks, or from a combination of the two.

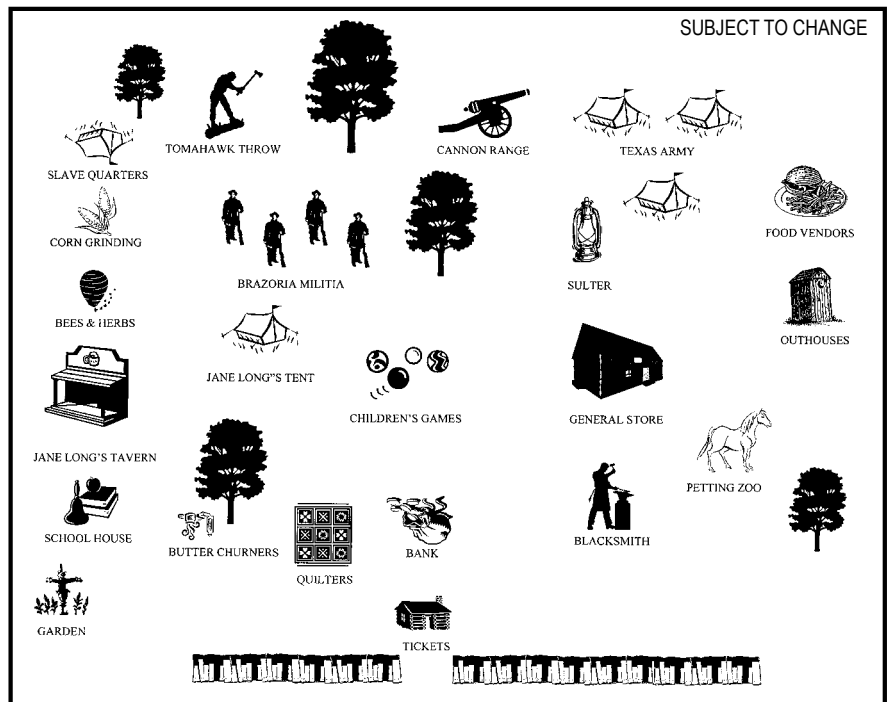
Dried husks have to be soaked in water to make them pliable. They can be dyed with fruit or vegetable dyes. All that is required is a bit of imagination and some cornshucks. A little string or thread made this job easier, but strips of shucks were used to tie the doll together when thread was not available. Dye or fabric scraps add color, and a little moss or cornsilk will do to create the doll's hair.

### Graces

Graces is a game that dates back to the 1830s.

It was originally intended as an indoor parlor game, but could be played outdoors as well, and due to its popularity, it often was. It was a two-player game which used two wooden throwing rings, (usually decorated with ribbons), and four

## How to get around Austin Town



catching wands. Each player held two catching wands, one in each hand.

The first player would place the rings over the wands, which he/she held, then would toss the rings, one at a time, to the other player.

The winner was the player who had caught the most tossed rings within a set amount of time. It was generally considered a girl's game as it was meant to encourage gracefulness - hence, the name, Graces. It was also one of the first games that girls and boys were allowed to play together!

### Hoops

One of the most common outdoor amusements for both boys and girls during the Victorian era, this particular game has been around for thousands of years.

It is known to have been played by children during the ancient Egyptian times. Simply stated, the child propelled a hoop of wood (about 2 feet in diameter) by hitting it with a stick to keep it rolling along as the child ran alongside.

### Tug-of-War

What child hasn't played some form of Tug-of-War?

In the 1800s, when toys and pastimes were limited, Tug-of-War was a popular game that required only

two things in order to play: willing children, and a rope.

Two teams were formed, and a line was drawn on the ground between them.

Children held onto a rope, pulled with all their strength, attempting to pull the opposing team over the line. Sometimes, to add more excitement to the game, children played with a mud puddle or a stream between the teams.

### Sack Races

Pioneer children on the frontier had to be resourceful in developing games and toys.

There was little money to purchase luxuries even when they were available. Children had to make do with whatever materials they could find to provide amusement. Some supplies came in gunnysacks, large bags made of coarse material. Children used the sacks for sack racing. Happy children lined up behind a starting point inside their bag, waiting for the start of the race and bouncing as fast as they could to the end.

### Stilts

Stilts build great motor skills, and are a simple, inexpensive way to have hours of enjoyment. Built using

wood these simple toys promote balance. The handles are held behind the back while the child balances and walks around. Once the child gets the hang of walking on these stilts, they can enjoy matching their skills against others in a race.

## Sponsors

Austin Town is proudly sponsored by:

**Stephen F. Austin Sponsor**

ConocoPhillips  
Dow Chemical Company

**Greenbury Logan Sponsor**

BASF Corporation

**Juan Seguin Sponsor**

Angleton Wal-Mart  
First State Bank, Clute  
Wells Fargo

**Jane Long Sponsor**

Angleton Chamber of Commerce

Windswept Seafood Restaurant and Catering

# Participating organizations

## Brazoria Militia

In 1823, the Mexican Legislature authorized the formation of militia units for service in Austin's Colony.

Stephen F. Austin organized civilian-soldiers into five companies, each of which was assigned to respond to emergencies within designated regions of the Colony.

The third company, the Brazoria Militia, was responsible for the area between the San Bernard River and Chocolate Bayou Mound to the Gulf of Mexico and worked out of the town of Brazoria. Militia units were called into service in the early 1820s to serve as coastal patrols in guarding against an anticipated Spanish re-conquest of Mexico. Frequently, militia units were called upon to handle problems with Indians and renegades and in time of unrest or supposed invasion. By 1836, Austin's Colony's militia companies had assimilated into what had become the Texas Army. None of the militia units were ever officially disbanded.

As a part of the Nation's Bicentennial in 1976, a group of Brazoria County residents sent out the call for a militia muster, and the Brazoria Militia was re-instituted.

Currently, the Militia operates as a not-for-profit living history group that focuses on education. Militia members attend historical observances and festivals across the State promoting the history of colonial Texas

and the Republic. A woman's auxiliary unit accompanies the Militia and portrays the lives and activities of women and families of early Texas.

The Brazoria Militia and Women's Auxiliary meet the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the First Capitol Replica in West Columbia. Regular meetings are open to the public. Membership is open to men and women 18 years and older who have a genuine interest in preserving history and presenting it to the public.

## Chorus Sine Nomine

Chorus Sine Nomine is a unique community group, founded and directed by Elva Ulbrich of Friendswood, Texas.

It responds to a popular appeal of many years, for an intellectual, and historically correct musical outlet for skilled vocalists that goes beyond the typical choral experience offered by church choirs and other groups.

Taking its name from the Latin term "Chorus Without Name" Chorus Sine Nomine makes classical choral music, both secular and sacred, readily available to audiences throughout Texas. The members seek to preserve and uphold broad appreciation for excellence in choral music performance.

Chorus Sine Nomine is a 35-member registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of singers founded in

1991. It sets itself apart by keeping alive the musical heritage immigrants have brought to Texas and its links to the old country. The Chorus has experience singing in six original languages.

In addition to four performances throughout Texas, Chorus Sine Nomine annually opens the Dickens on the Strand Festival at Grace Church in Galveston with a Victorian atmosphere.

## St. Jerome's Ballet Folklorico

In 1992, with 10 young people, Ms. Juanita Lopez formed a small group at St. Jerome Catholic Church to celebrate the day of Our Lady of Guadalupe by performing dances.

In 1997 a dance group in the area and Ms. Juanita's group decided to combine their dances of pre-Hispanic and Folklorico. They formed a charter and Board of Directors and the new group was named St. Jerome Ballet Folklorico.

St. Jerome Ballet Folklorico is a nonprofit, cultural organization that teaches traditional, regional dances from Mexico to interested youth. They perform at various functions throughout the Brazosport and Houston areas.

Father Jim Lynes, Parish Priest of St. Jerome Catholic Church, has given the St. Jerome Ballet Folklorico

group his generosity by providing the ballet with a Christian facility for weekly practices, celebrations, and monthly meetings. Through his encouragement and generosity, they have had an opportunity to learn about and develop the richness of the Hispanic Culture, through dance.

## Texas Women and a Few Brave Men

The Texas Women, a group of about 15 women, was formed in 1997 with the birth of the Austin Town Historical Re-enactment.

Needing volunteers to grind corn, make soap, cook and display chores of everyday pioneer women, volunteers from the Varner-Hogg State Historical Park were called upon to assist with this event.

The Texas Women have attended many events around the state, including the Battle of San Jacinto, the Runaway Scrape, Washington-on-the-Brazos, and Bluecrossings. Along with the Brazoria County Historical Museum, the Texas Women also coordinate the Celebrate Texas ceremony in Washington-on-the-Brazos on March 2 of every year. Over the past two years, they have allowed a few brave men to join their group.

At the annual Austin Town festivities, the Texas Women recreate

the Brazoria Inn that was owned by Jane Long. The Texas Women are a group of volunteers and staff from Varner-Hogg that provides outreach.

## Texas Army

The Texas Army was organized in 1835 in an effort to secure independence for the Mexican province of Texas.

The Army was comprised of volunteers from Texas, the United States and a few foreign countries. Army members had no uniforms, but were provided with some weaponry and other military gear. Most, however, dressed in buckskins and brought their personal weapons. Although some of the Army members had seen action fighting Indians along the frontier, typically, the men lacked formal military training and discipline. General Sam Houston was appointed commander of this unique army.

On April 21, 1969, a new Texas Army was formed to honor its predecessor and to keep the memory of those gallant men alive.

The Texas Army participates as the special honor guard in the Gubernatorial Inauguration Parade. In addition, members host State functions and official ceremonial events, re-enactment events of 1835-1836 and travel internationally representing Texas and the Texas mystique. Like its predecessor, the modern-day Texas Army is comprised of volunteers who provide their own authentic uniforms, weapons, and camping equipment. The Texas Army is dedicated to perpetuate the memory of those early patriots who fought as the first Army of the Republic of Texas and to educating the public about Texas History.

## Yellow Rose

The group Yellow Rose, formerly known as the Clef Dwellers, was organized seven years ago and consists of four local musicians.

Margaret Gaspard, Helen Johnson, Penny Noack, Laura Schiller, and Cindy Speer are the members of the group and they play a variety of period instruments and music. In the past, Yellow Rose has performed for historic societies, at historic events and for churches and community organizations.

The group, Yellow Rose, can be seen performing at Austin Town on Saturday, Oct. 25.

For more information about Yellow Rose please contact Helen Johnson by telephone at 979-297-7015 or via e-mail at azalea@computron.net.

N M R E V A I T I L I M A I R O Z A R B  
 O U E E X I G R A N T E X A O R N V E A  
 I S E X L E R U I R O Z A R B G O E V R  
 R T R U I T A N A E S V E O A R L N O R  
 A E L A G C U K R I O D N K L A F E L E  
 M R A C N E O S H O O R E M I C I L U D  
 C A N N O N C R B P N L R E U E H C T L  
 B R I T L B S A N I S E E P S S O W I T  
 A I T E E X A S N O G A W D E R E V O C  
 L I S E N A L R U N O G N U O Y E R N Y  
 L G U B A R E R L E P U W T I L E C I A  
 I S A E J R V R A E B E L C Y M N B A W  
 R R F L A X A L T R U N C H O O K S K A  
 A E N T I N W H I S T L E O H T R U A K  
 P T E I R H A L F C A M P V S C H O R N  
 A L H O O P S E E V N P O E R V Y W A A  
 A I P R T U R R O E V J K N R U H C O R  
 R U E M B O A R H T I M S K C A L B N A  
 A Q T E X A S A R M Y J P A O S E Y L K  
 S G S P O A E B R I T B A I L E Y B K A

## Austin Town Word Search

From the word list below, find and circle the words in the puzzle. The words can be found forward, backward, or diagonally

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| BARREL           | LEAGUE            |
| BLACKSMITH       | LIVELY            |
| BRAZORIA MILITIA | LYE SOAP          |
| BRIT BAILEY      | MARION            |
| CANNON           | MEXICO            |
| CHURN            | MUSTER            |
| CORN             | PECOS             |
| COVERED WAGON    | PIONEERS          |
| DULCIMER         | QUILTERS          |
| DUTCH OVEN       | REVOLUTION        |
| FLAX             | SARSAPARILLA      |
| GRACES           | SEEDS             |
| GRANT            | STEPHEN F. AUSTIN |
| HALF CAMP        | SULTER            |
| HOOPS            | TEXAS ARMY        |
| JANE LONG        | TIN WHISTLE       |
| KARANKAWA        | TRUNK             |
| KIAN             | VELASCO           |
| LABOR            |                   |

# Austin Town 1832 ~ At home activities

## Silhouette Portrait

In the early 1800s, only people who were fairly wealthy could afford to have their portraits painted.

Silhouettes were a popular substitute for true portraits. Viewers could easily identify the person, and the cost was very low.

A silhouette is a portrait cut from dark material and mounted on a light background. To create a silhouette, you'll need a partner and a bright direct light. A floodlight or spotlight is

ideal, but you can use any light that has a direct beam, such as a desk lamp or even a powerful flashlight.

- Materials:
- straight-back chair
  - blank wall for backdrop
  - bright light (spot light, desk lamp, or flashlight)
  - 2 sheets of white typing paper
  - masking tape
  - pencil
  - scissors
  - sheet of black construction paper
  - white glue

helper

1. Place the chair close to the wall. Have your partner sit in a comfortable position, with his/her side next to the wall.

2. Position the light to shine on your partner. Darken the room and adjust the light so that the shadow cast by the light makes a sharp profile on the wall.

3. Position the sheet of paper on the wall so that the profile is now on the paper. Tape the paper in place. Experiment a little until the light is right and the profile is the size you want.

4. Have your partner remain perfectly still. With pencil, carefully trace the outline of his/her shadow on the white paper.

5. Cut out the profile, then tape it to the sheet of black construction paper.

6. Trace around the profile with pencil and cut out the black silhouette.

7. Center the black silhouette on the second sheet of white paper, then glue the silhouette to the paper.

## Beanbag Target Game

American kids began playing with beanbags in the 1820s. They filled

the bags with whatever was available, like dry beans, sand, or small pebbles. You can do the same to create your own target game to play indoors or out. The game is designed for two players, or two teams of two.

Materials:

- 2 old socks for each player or team
- dry beans, gravel, or sand
- scissors
- string
- 2-foot square piece of cardboard or poster board
- marker or crayon
- yardstick
- 1 or more players

1. Make each beanbag by filling an old sock with dry beans. Pack the stuffing tightly.

2. Tie a piece of string around the top of each sock. You may have to experiment a little to get the right amount of filler in each sock. You should be able to toss the beanbags with pretty good accuracy. If a beanbag seems lopsided, try tying the knot further down from the top of the sock.

3. On the cardboard or poster board, use a marker to draw three circles one inside the other like a target.

4. Write the number 1 in the outside circle, the number 3 in the middle circle, and the number 5 in the inner circle. These numbers indicate the number of points a player can score. If a beanbag lands on the outside circle, the player scores 1 point; if it lands on the next circle, he/she scores 3 points; and if it lands in the center circle, he/she scores 5 points. More than half the beanbag must be inside the circle to score points.

5. Use the yardstick to measure 10 feet from the card board target. Lay the yardstick down at the 10-foot mark. This will be your starting line.

6. Player 1 stands on the starting line and tosses 2 beanbags underhand. Don't count the scores yet.

7. Player 2 then tosses 2 beanbags, trying to score or knock player 1's beanbags off the target.

8. After all 4 beanbags have been tossed, count the scores. If a beanbag lands on top of another, both scores count, as long as both are more than half inside a circle. Players take turns going first. The first player or team to reach 21 points wins.

## The Austin Colony 1821 - 1836

(Continued from Museum Page 1)

Brazoria.

It was intended to serve as a port on the lower Brazos. Fifteen miles from the Gulf, the town prospered. It continued to prosper after the Revolution as an important pioneer trade center. It served as the County Seat until 1896, and by 1840 boasted of six newspapers. In 1833, a major flood eroded the riverbank fronting Brazoria, destroying buildings, and causing a lethal cholera epidemic.

Josiah H. Bell, an old friend of Austin who had established a town up river (intermittently called "Bell's Landing," "Marion," or later, "East Columbia,") moved his family two miles inland and established the new town of Columbia. Known today as West Columbia, it became a small commercial center.

When Texans won independence, Columbia was the only centrally located town with enough buildings to house the government of the new Republic. It served as the capital until March 1837, when the offices moved to the adjacent town of Houston on Buffalo Bayou.


## Epilogue

The Austin Colony, geographically speaking, was the birthplace of the Republic of Texas. When Mexican politics threatened Anglo Texan perceptions of good government, the men living in Austin's old colonial grants took active roles in organizing public meetings and managing the war effort. Centrally located, all of the significant meetings leading to the Declaration of Independence were held along the Brazos River, the heart of Austin's Colony.



Living.  
Improved daily.

**Commercial**  
**State Bank**



Your Hometown Bank

Since 1921  
Member FDIC  
2904 N. Velasco, Angleton, TX  
(979) 848-1717  
401 N. Mechanic, El Campo, TX  
(979) 543-6441

**NEAL Insurance**



Providing Quality Insurance for a Long, Long Time

(979) 849-5779  
1-800-566-6383

101 West Mulberry  
Angleton

Intersection: Hwy. 288B & Hwy. 35  
(Downtown in the Bank Building)


*At Sweeny refinery, being environmentally responsible is not an option ...*

*It's a way of life.*

**ConocoPhillips**  
Sweeny Refinery

*We don't make a lot of products you buy, we make a lot of products you buy better.*

BASF Corporation  
Freeport, Texas



**Museum Staff**

**Jackie Haynes**  
Executive Director

**Joyce McHam**  
Business Manager

**Ace Filipp**  
Program Coordinator

**Michael Bailey**  
Curator

**Jamie Murray**  
Information Services Coordinator

**Rose Olivares**  
Secretary

**Rosemary Duke**  
Store Manager

**Bettye Snell**  
Curatorial/Library Assistant

**How to reach The Museum**

**(979) 864-1208**  
**(281) 756-1208**  
**(979) 388-1208**

**Local County Courthouse**  
number, ext. 1208