



THE WINDOW PANE

Brazoria County Historical Museum

DISCOVER WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

Sea of Mud in the Museum

Join the Brazoria County Historical Museum on Thursday, March 10th at 6:30 p.m. for a book review and signing by Dr. Gregg J. Dimmick for his book Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army After San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation. Dimmick's book recalls two forgotten weeks in 1836 and one of the most consequential events of the Texas Revolution—the tale of the Mexican Army's misfortunes in the aptly named “Sea of Mud,” where more than 2,500 Mexican soldiers and 1,500 female camp followers floundered in muddy fields in what is now Wharton County. Sea of Mud will be available for sale that evening in the Museum's Book & Gift Shoppe. Admission to the program is free.

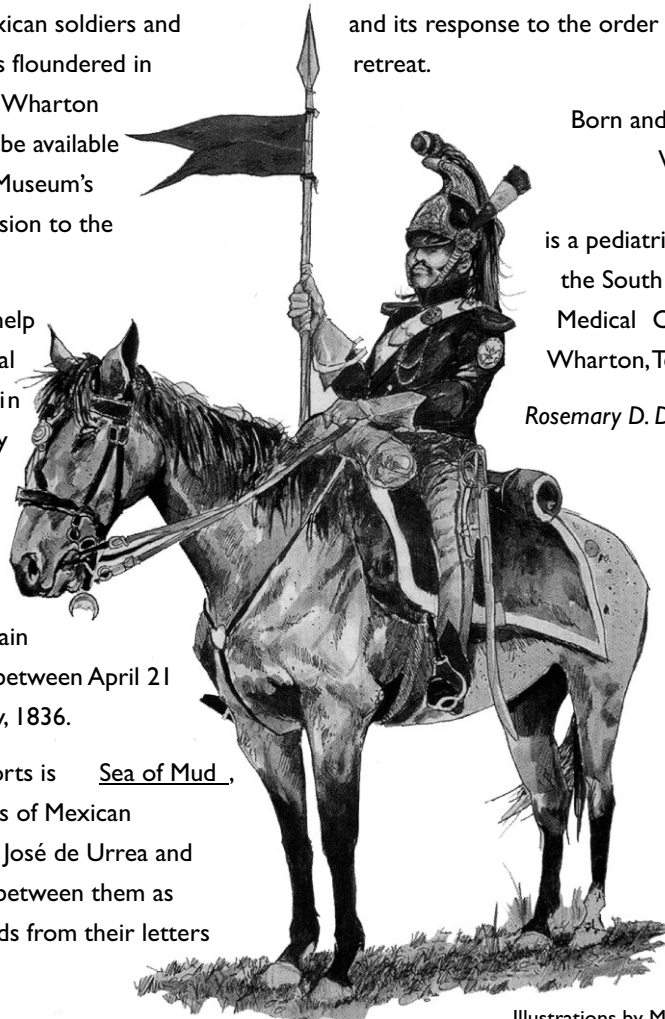
In 1996, Dimmick with the help of the Houston Archeological Society excavated in Wharton County, specifically between the San Bernard and West Bernard rivers. The archeological findings from this dig shed new light on what happened to the main force of the Mexican Army between April 21 and the second week of May, 1836.

The result of Dimmick's efforts is Sea of Mud, which focuses on the actions of Mexican generals Vicente Filisola and José de Urrea and the bitter rivalry that grew between them as presented in their own words from their letters and diaries.

Enriching the story the documents tell are the hundreds of artifacts the author and his “digging buddies” have located in the course of thousands of hours spent excavating the Sea of Mud or *El Mar de Lodo*. These artifacts, many of them pictured in the book, were dropped or discarded by Mexican *soldados*. The documents and archeological fieldwork yield a more accurate picture than ever before presented of Santa Anna's army and its response to the order of retreat.

Born and raised in Wyoming, Dimmick is a pediatrician with the South Texas Medical Clinics in Wharton, Texas.

Rosemary D. Duke



Illustrations by Manuel Hinojosa

March 2005

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Dr. Gregg J. Dimmick will talk about the

Sea of Mud
on March 10th

in the
Museum Auditorium
at 6:30 PM.

For more information, call 979/864-1208.

New & Renewing Museum Members

New Members

Senior

Virginia L. Foster, Houston

Recent renewals

El Presidente

Sharon Rogers/BASF, Freeport

El General

Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Andrews, Lake Jackson

Margaret Buchta/Barta Brothers, Damon

Rayman Carlton, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia

John & Nancy Gilbert, Lake Jackson

Ruth Lauzon, Angleton

Mr. & Mrs. Spike McKinney, Angleton

Henry & Karyn Munson, Angleton

Don & Jo Parish, Angleton

La Familia

Mr. & Mrs. George Buchta, Damon

Robert & Patsy Giesecke, Alvin

Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Neal, Sr., Angleton

El Tejano

Graham Luhn, Houston

Laura McCutchen, Boulder, Colorado

Mary Ruth Rhodenbaugh, Brazoria

Senior

Mrs. E. R. Beall, Liverpool

Coryne Choate, Lake Jackson

Charlie Ogilvie, West Columbia

Wilma Ogilvie, West Columbia

Ellen Pedisich, Lake Jackson

Jack Sampson, Lake Jackson

Lee Slonek, Lake Jackson

Ginger Tumlinson, Clute

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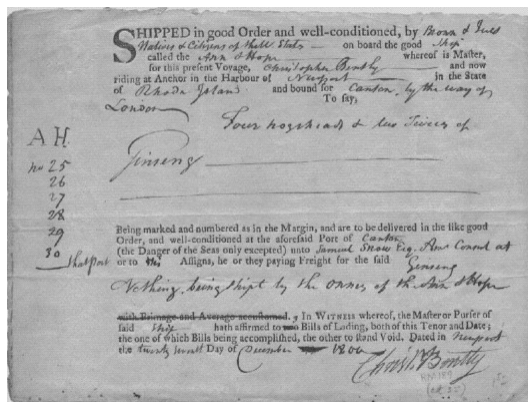
Schools, Programs and the Web

Several historians have told me they really enjoy the Museum's website, www.bchm.org. They appreciate how easy it is to locate information as the depth of the collection we have provided online allows them to quickly find support material for their work.

These comments about our website echo in my mind when I think about ways to add new programs and improve old ones. In order to reach the students in Brazoria County (over 50,000 in grades 1-12 alone) as well as generate new audiences, the Museum has been looking at new methods for getting the message out.

Integrating traditional school tours, outreach programs and trunks with the website is the obvious next step. This means taking a close look at the Museum's collections and exhibits and determining how we can best present them to support the curricula in the schools.

An example of how we can do this via a classroom activity is under development. Using material from the Museum's archives and collections, I am assembling a classroom activity for students to learn about economics and free enterprise. Information from cargo manifests, shop inventories, price indices, numismatics and colonist biographies is compiled into a game that students can play in an Austin's Colony microeconomic climate. The students will take on the roles of historical characters from the colony, each of whom has a certain amount of economic wealth. They then will play through a period of buying, selling, trading and deal making. Such a program allows teachers to use one more class activity that reinforces a wide variety of curriculum goals.



Developing lesson plans all day in my office unfortunately does nothing to help the teacher. By providing the lesson plan on the website for a free download, however, we are able to help the teachers use the resources of the Museum in their classroom. In addition to providing the lesson online, teachers also will be able to request it directly from the Museum as well as borrow supplemental enhancements for the program from the Museum. Thus, they actually can have samples of the goods that were bartered and sold, currency and letters of credit, and biography cards for each of the personalities.

This is just one of many ways we are planning on reaching more classrooms and assisting teachers. If you would like to volunteer to help develop this program, or any of a number of other similar programs, please let me know. This is a volunteer opportunity that can be fulfilled at home on your own schedule.

Bruce R. Taylor-Hille

The Museum Staff also can be reached at the following:

100 East Cedar Street

Angleton, TX 77515

979/864-1208 (office)

979/864-1217 (fax)



Thanks to Killum Pest Control for their donated services to the Museum.

Adriance Library & Research Center

Brazoria County is reluctantly saying good-bye to retired teacher Sarah Shepherd Bostick. She has pulled up stakes at the old family home on Myrtle Street in Angleton for a move to Hurst, Texas. I did not believe it until I saw the moving van in front of her house.

There is probably not very much that would lure Sarah away from her old hometown, but the promise of living close to her daughter and caring for her young grandson was just too appealing to resist. Sarah has been active in the community here for many years, and she will be missed. We truly hate to see her go, but Sarah is leaving us.

Moving always turns up mementos and memorabilia, clippings and photographs, and other family information that has been stored away over the years. Sarah has very generously shared some of this family history with the Museum. While packing to leave, she ran across some materials that she felt should reside in the Adriance Research Library. It has been interesting to go through them and learn more about the Stevens family of Brazoria County.

No doubt Sarah's young grandson will learn as he grows up about the five generations of his family who settled and made their homes in Brazoria County. Their story begins with a pharmacist, Hennell Stevens, who got his degree at the Philadelphia College of Medicine in 1853. He married Miss Sarah Blake Rowley of Massachusetts on Christmas Day in 1854.

As a young man, Hennell had taught himself to survey land and was able to put this skill to good use in Texas after the Civil War. He came to Texas in 1866, with his wife and two sons. Two more sons were born to the couple after their move to Texas. The family settled on the Cedar Brake Plantation, a property Hennell had bought sight unseen with most of his savings.

Cedar Brake Plantation turned out to be little more than a run down farm and Hennell had no experience with farming. As cotton prices plummeted, he soon found himself in financial straits. At first, his neighbors regarded him as a Yankee and a carpetbagger, but he was able to get an appointment as Postmaster at Columbia in 1867. In 1869, he was appointed County Judge and then was elected County Surveyor in 1872. He lost his farm in the payment of debts, but found himself led into the profession of surveying. In the land business, Hennell became an Abstracter of Titles.

Hennell met a circuit riding Methodist preacher named J.H. Shapard and surveyed a piece of land for him. They became friends and business partners, organizing Shapard, Stevens & Co. in 1873. They dealt in real estate and making abstracts of title. By 1876, Hennell was licensed to practice law. Although he never worked as an attorney, the knowledge of the law was extremely helpful to him in his business. Hennell's son, Frank Wilson Stevens, succeeded Hennell as County Surveyor and later joined the business. In 1890, it was incorporated as the Brazoria County Abstract Company, which operated in Brazoria County for over 100 years.

Hennell became the Post Master in Brazoria in 1882, after which he finally put his training as a pharmacist to use. He opened "Moore & Stevens" drug store, at Main and Market streets in Brazoria, with the abstract company operating on the second floor of the building. There is a bit of a mystery here in that no one in the Stevens family knows anything about or what became of the partner named Moore. At the time of Hennell's death in 1897, he was the sole owner of the drug store.

When Shapard, Stevens & Co. became involved in the development of new Velasco, Frank opened an office at the mouth of the Brazos in the little town of Quintana in 1891. When boom went to bust at Velasco, Frank moved the business to Angleton and became the President of the Brazoria County Abstract Company. His son, Frank K. Stevens, graduated from Angleton High School, the only graduate of Angleton's first graduating class (1901).

Frank K. married Sarah Munson in 1910. They had four children: Lydia, Eleanor, Frank and George. Frank K. left the abstract business for a while when a stock corporation called the Angleton Fig Company was formed in 1923. He became the general manager and foreman of the fig company. In 1928, the elder Stevens died, and since he and his son had already bought out Mr. Shapard's interest, Frank K. found himself back in the abstract business.

The Stevens family and the Brazoria County Abstract company were major players in the development of Brazoria County's economy. Over the years, they participated in the ebb and flow of the land title business, from Velasco's boom days, through the discovery of oil, the Great Depression, two world wars, and the coming of Dow Chemical in 1940. In 1946, the business added a department for title insurance. In 1949, the company moved into a new building on the site of its first Angleton office on Magnolia Street.

Frank K. and Sarah's son Frank became President of the Brazoria County Abstract Company in 1966. His sister Lydia also worked in the family business. David E. Shepherd started to work there in 1935, and a year later he and Lydia married. Their children were David, Jr., Sarah and Anne. Now we have come full circle. Sarah is leaving us, but she will carry Brazoria County with her wherever she goes. Members of the Stevens and Shepherd families still reside here, and Brazoria County has profited from their contributions as businessmen since their ancestor Hennell Stevens and his wife Sarah first came to this area almost 140 years ago.

Jim Stevens, grandson of Frank K. Stevens, became the president of the company in 1983, the fifth generation of the Stevens family to do so. A few years ago the company was sold to Stewart Title Company, which continues to operate in Angleton. The name Brazoria County Abstract Company has passed into history. Jamie Murray





Brazoria County
Historical Museum

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www.bchm.org

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Angleton, Texas

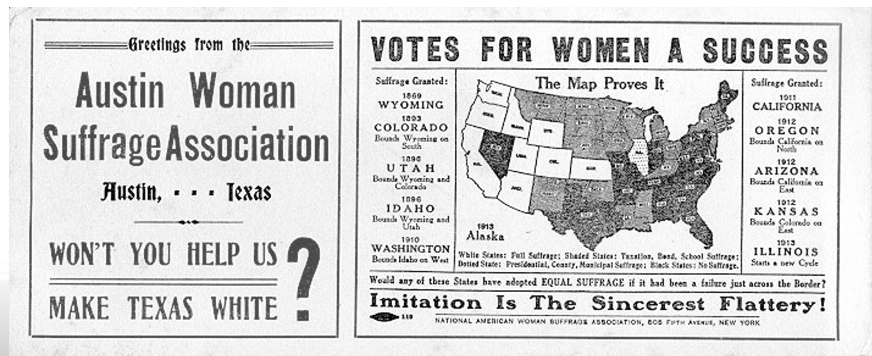
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HAPPY EASTER

Citizens at Last!

The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas

The Brazoria County Historical Museum has opened a new exhibit entitled “*Citizens At Last! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas*”. The exhibit was created by the Texas Humanities Resource Center in Austin. “*Citizens At Last!*” will be on display on the Museum’s second floor at the east end, March 1 - 25. Interested persons wishing to secure more information or to schedule a class or club visit should contact the Museum at 979/864-1208. Admission is free.



Created by the Woman's Collection of Texas Woman's University Library to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, this exhibition is based upon the landmark monograph about the Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas by A. Elizabeth Taylor. The exhibit contains twelve panels featuring prints of archival photographs, newspaper clippings, billboards, postal cards, campaign banners, advertisements, handbills, and other documents from the suffrage movement. Captions for the exhibit are drawn from Ms. Taylor’s book.

Michael Bailey