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Tales of Texas NEWSLETTER

November 2025

This issue of Tales of Texas concerns the Grand Reopening of Independence Hall, Washington on the Brazos

Above photo is of author and grandson at Washington on the Brazos..

The site of Texas Independence is being given a facelift.

Comments? Go to website listed below.

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Voices of Texas Independence

After years of planning and a $50-million transformation, Washington on the Brazos, the very place where 59 delegates declared Texas an independent nation in 1836, has reopened its doors with a fresh vision. The new visitor center, debuting this month, isn't just a museum, it's a living dialogue between Texas's storied past and its place in a complex present.

Through interactive exhibits, reconstructed town streets, and a soundscape of historical voices, visitors can once again stand where history was written in candlelight and courage.

March 1836

The little frontier town became the heart of a revolution. For years, the delegates had walked the tightrope between independence and staying under the sovereignty of Mexico. Many had taken loyalty oaths to Mexico. However, the ever-changing Mexican government disallowed the *Constitution of 1824* and most delegates saw their oaths depart along with the constitution they swore to. What was different this time?

A letter. Lieutenant Colonel William B. Travis penned a letter from the besieged walls of the Alamo that finally inspired the delegates to act. Travis never knew of the declaration of independence, but it's hoped that he imagined the effects his letter would have.

Tales of Texas

Author & Research Assistant at Site

Nationhood

Washington once bustled as the Republic's capital before the railroads bypassed it. The Texas Centennial in 1936 rescued the site from obscurity, and decades of preservation followed. Now, with the 2025 reopening, the story expands beyond politics to include the enslaved laborers, Tejano allies, Texan women, and Indians of Texas who all shared the frontier's brutal hardships.

A multimedia installation titled *Voices of Independence* immerses visitors in diary excerpts, letters, and speeches—offering not just facts, but feeling. Outside the visitor center, new walking trails trace the footprint of the original town. At Barrington Plantation, living historians (reenactors) portray the daily rigors of frontier farm life, connecting the ideals of freedom to the endurance of ordinary Texans.

Independence Hall

Renovated Campus

Of course, the facility welcomes schools, church groups, and history lovers with accessible spaces, updated programs, and the simple serenity of the Brazos River flowing beside it. The full name of the river was originally *Los Brazos de Dios*, the Arms of God. It truly was the beating heart of Texas.

Washington on the Brazos endures because it is more than a museum—it is a meeting place for every generation to hear the same question the delegates once faced: What does liberty demand of us today?

Every generation of Texans knows that we are all only one generation from bondage. Freedom doesn't exist in a vacuum. With new technology and an ever-present "Big Brother" looking over our every action or keystroke, we must be especially vigilant.

In the hush between exhibits and the river wind, the answer still seems to whisper through the oaks: Texas speaks here. Always has. Always will.