

A View Through History
With Kyle Schiller Barrett
MCHM Director

Texas Heroes and Legends Come to Life on Texas Independence Day

The Milam County Historical Museum held a special celebration on Saturday, March 2nd to commemorate the day Texas gained its independence in 1836. At this event, the lives of many Texas Revolutionary Heroes and Legends were remembered in downtown Cameron. Living History reenactors Jon Moerbe and Randy Billingsley portrayed soldiers from both the Texas and Mexican armies of the mid-1830's. Visitors were reminded of the brave men like Ben Milam, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Travis, James Fannin, who fought and died for Texas freedom at the Siege of Bexar and the Battle of The Alamo in San Antonio. Patrons to the museum were able to visit with both Billingsley and Moerbe, who were dressed in period uniforms and displayed artifacts from the Texas Revolution area.

Handling double duty on Saturday, Jon Moerbe dressed as both a Texian and Mexican soldier from the famous Battle of The Alamo. He also had examples of military weapons and supplies from the 1830's on display. He encouraged visitors to not only view the authentic relics that he brought, but also encouraged everyone to have a hands-on experience at his display. Moerbe, a native of Thorndale, educated and entertained both young and old alike on the importance of the Texas Revolution. He did all this on a voluntary basis for the Milam County Historical Museums. The sounds of "Will You Come to the Bower," a Texas Revolution Era song, could be heard throughout the day in the museum. Jon Moerbe played a fife just like one that would have been played by soldiers in the 19th century. He has not only portrayed a Texas soldier and Mexican soldado in living history reenactments, but he has also been in Civil War Battlefield reenactments around the country. Later this month, he will be in Goliad to commemorate the 188th anniversary of the famous Goliad Massacre, which took place on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836.

Likewise, Randy Billingsley, a member of the Milam County Historical Commission and the MCHM Board of Directors, portrayed a Texas Hero at Saturday's celebration. Billingsley has become widely known for his excellent portrayal of his ancestor Captain Jesse Billingsley, who fought at the Battle of San Jacinto. Dressed in buckskins and a wide-brimmed hat, he also educated and entertained the visitors at the museum. Billingsley showed how cumbersome it could be for a Texian soldier by carrying his Bowie knife in its scabbard, a long rifle, a powder horn, and his possibles bag. He had many relics and items on display to recreate the early days of Texas military history. For years, Cameron's Randy Billingsley has volunteered his time to share his knowledge of Texas History with the youth and adults of Milam County. He will no doubt be seen on the Plains of San Jacinto around April 21st to commemorate and reenact the battle that gave Texas its independence in 1836. Our museum is grateful for his many contributions and volunteer hours.

At this uniquely Texan celebration, visitors to the museum were served refreshments such as cupcakes proudly adorned with the Lone Star Flag. Those attending the event were given tours of the museum by our volunteers. The MCHM features artifacts from Milam County's historic past and displays of artwork by many local artists. Saturday was also a busy day for volunteers at the popular Milam County Railroad Museum, the Old Jail Museum, the Transportation Exhibit Building, and the Sneed Log Cabin. If you were not one of the many folks who visited the museums in downtown Cameron this past weekend, then come see us. And, we'd like to have you celebrate Texas Independence Day with us next year around March 2nd! So, mark your calendars!