

A Daytrip to Galveston – Bryan Museum

To escape the heat of July, Donna Stephens arranged for a Garden Club outing to Galveston on July 26th. In the early morning we climbed on a precinct bus to start our adventure. The itinerary arranged by Donna included a guided tour of the Bryan Museum followed by a lunch at 'Shrimps N' Stuff' restaurant.



The Bryan Museum

After a long ride through Houston's rush hour traffic, we arrived safely at the museum and gathered in the elegant lobby where we received our tickets and were joined by our tour guide.



The Bryan museum is dedicated to Texas history. The original building, constructed in 1894 in the Gothic Revival style, served as an orphanage. The hurricane of 1900 damaged the building but spared all children and adults living on site. All 29 orphans were temporarily relocated to facilities in Dallas. Through massive fundraising efforts by prominent

philanthropists, including William Randolph Hearst, Samuel Clemens (better known as Mark Twain), Mrs. John Astor, and Texas Governor, Joseph D. Sayers, the building was restored in 1902 and continued to provide a home to orphans until 1947.



In the years after, the home was purchased and skillfully renovated by several private entrepreneurs until J.P. Bryan purchased the building in 2013 for his large collection of Texas artifacts. After an extensive restoration, **The Bryan Museum** opened its doors to the public in June 2015.

A short documentary introduced us to J.P. Bryan and his vision for the creation of this museum. It currently displays three distinct eras in Texas history: the Spanish Colonial era, the Texas Frontier period and the establishment of Texas as a State from the “Wild West”.



The Spanish Colonial Gallery (pre-history – 1821)



This area covers the time of “The Age of Discovery” that started in the late 15th century. During this time many European empires, began their exploration of the ‘New World’. Ships sailed from Spain, Holland, France and Portugal and landed in South America and the coast of Florida from which the expeditions on land started. European explorers, conquerors, missionaries and settlers sought new territories, material wealth, prestige, and the spread of Christianity.

Artifacts in this section of the museum document both the native American heritage and the mostly Spanish and French exploration of Texas.



Ships like this replica sailed half way around the globe to bring conquerors and missionaries to the shores of the Americas.

The explorer Cabeza De Vaca described his journey from Florida, through Texas to northern Mexico in his journal and it is thought to be the first written account of the land and its inhabitants during that time.

This silver and mother-of-pearl chest contained important documents and land grants from the Spanish king to give the exploration its authority.

Amazingly the key was not lost over the centuries and is still part of this the well-preserved chest.



The French explorer Robert Cavalier de La Salle was in search of the mouth of the Mississippi when he ended up in Matagorda Bay.

Spanish Christian friars founded the first mission in Texas, the Alamo. From there the religious men traveled to California, building missions and churches along the way.



Large display cases, embedded into the walls of the room, depict the chronological events of the military and missionary commission of the conquest.



Numerous religious artifacts, well preserved, tell the story of the spread of Christianity to the Americas.



The Texas Frontier Gallery (1821-1848)



This section of the museum documents the journey of Anglo colonization of Texas as it was part of the Mexican state. Subsequent revolution and war in the struggle for independence from Mexico eventually won Texas its Statehood in 1836.

Starting in 1821, Stephen F. Austin received land grants from the Mexican government and recruited European immigrants to journey to Texas. The promise of free land brought over 300 families to settle this sparsely populated and dangerous region of the country.

A large portion of the exhibition hall is dedicated to the battle of San Jacinto. The detail was amazing and prompted the observer to identify key figures of the battle.





The Texian army of militia men under the command of Sam Houston faced a well-organized and well equipped fighting force under the command of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

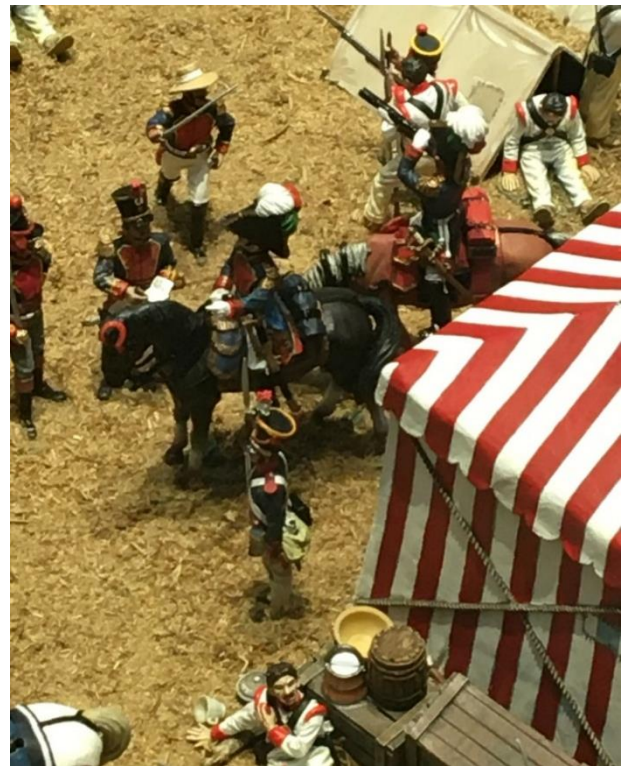
(His command post is the red and white striped tent at the right side of the picture)

Santa Anna is riding a black horse wearing a colorful uniform with a white plume on his hat.



Sam Houston as its first (and third) president.

Also of interest to the local visitors are maps, artifacts and documents of the early history and development of the city of Houston.



The struggle for independence ended with the Texian's win over the Mexican army at the battle of San Jacinto. This cleared the way for the creation of the independent Republic of TEXAS with

Statehood & Beyond Gallery (1848-1945)



It was a turbulent time indeed! The journey looks at Texas, a fledgling new state dealing with challenging conditions of lawlessness in the “Wild West”, as well as many wars and revolutions.



CIVIL WAR

Civil war artifacts



THE AMERICAN WAR



The violin case cleverly hides several pistols.

The evolution of firearms is on display in this case.



A large collection of expertly crafted and elaborately decorated saddles are on display along with spurs and other 'cowboy' memorabilia.





A well-appointed library holds books and documents pertaining to the history of Texas.





Another large room displays art work from famous painters depicting Texas landscapes, daily life, work and culture.

“Horse and Cowboy” by **Tom Lea** (1907-2001). Born in El Paso, Lea's illustrations are mostly of cowboys and the wild Texas landscapes.



“Prickly Pear Landscape” and “Bluebonnets” by **Julian Onderdonk** (1882-1922), a native of San Antonio, his most popular subjects were bluebonnets and Texas landscapes. President G.W. Bush decorated the Oval office with three of Onderdonk's paintings.



“Dry Creek” by **Jose Arpa y Parea** (1858-1985). Born in Spain, he traveled to Mexico and Texas. He painted in a realistic style, and was especially noted for his use of brilliant colors and his expertise in capturing the visual effects of sunlight.



Franklin Reaugh (1860-1945) traveled with his parents from Illinois and settled in Terrell East Texas. Reaugh was inspired by his travels through rugged landscapes and the wild birds and animals he saw on the way.





The basement of the building is currently renovated to create a museum dedicated to the orphanage, which was this home's initial function. The dark cellar resembles the deep ocean with caves, mermaids, sea creatures and lost pirate treasures.



After a stop at the interesting gift store on the way out, we boarded our bus again. We had reservation for lunch at Shrimp N' Stuff.

<https://www.shrimpnstuff.com/>



At the restaurant, we settled in a quiet private room where a young, handsome and friendly waiter took our orders. It was a happy atmosphere that improved even more after some adult beverages were consumed.



Luckily our waiter who was soon called 'Baby Cakes' did not mind our friendly harassment. The room fell silent once the food arrived which was relished by all.



Several deserts went around the table for everyone to share. Too soon it was time to start our trip back home. We decided that we could not leave Galveston without a visit to the beach. Our accommodating bus driver took the long way home. Driving along the Seawall we cherished the sight of the sun shining brightly on the refreshing water of the Gulf.

