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1945-1946

Texas Centennial of Statehood Commission

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Austin, Texas

January 21, 1946

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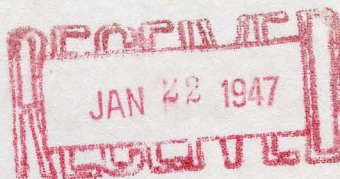
Dear Mr. Carter,

I thought you would like to have this address by the
Centennial Governor.

Yours sincerely

A. Garland Adair
A. Garland Adair
Vice-Chairman

AGA/kfa



Centennial of Statehood Message
by
Governor Coke Stevenson
in the Capitol

December 29, 1945

The international scope and character of the 427 years of recorded history in Texas are known to students of world progress. In recent years, American historians have classified the Declaration of Texas Independence as the fifth most important event in the march of time on this continent. That Declaration in the month of March, 1836, pointed the pioneer fathers to the path that led the Republic of Texas to the great American Union.

The national spotlight was focused on Texas more than a century ago. In the Presidential Campaign of 1844, one of the political slogans was "Polk and Texas or Clay and no Texas." Polk was elected. He was from Tennessee and took his place alongside Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston, who were both from Tennessee, in advocating the advantages of Texas to the Union.

It is the centennial of the admission of Texas into the United States of America that we are now observing. In this centennial we do not seek to develop a bigoted pride of ancestry and history, but, as so nobly stated by the Colonial Dames, "Not pride of birth, but a sense of obligation to it; that we may not descent from illustrious forefathers, but ascend, building yet nobler mansions on the foundations that have been laid."

The national scope and character of the Texas Centennial of Statehood are manifest today with the issuance of the Texas commemorative three cent United States postage stamp as authorized by Postmaster General Robert E. Hannegan. The Postmaster General is represented by the Honorable Joseph J. Lawler, Third Assistant, and others from the Department. We are happy to extend them a genuine Texas welcome and say to them and to all other distinguished guests and friends that true Texans everywhere are grateful to the Federal Government for this beautiful token of appreciation and act of significant service.

The issuance of the Texas stamp will herald to all the world the news that the citizens of this State are not unmindful of their obligations to the past nor of their duty to the present and future generations, and that from this date, December 29, 1945, and on through the year 1946, we are to celebrate in a most worthy

manner the centennial of Statehood.

On October 17, 1839, the Congress of the Republic of Texas arrived in Austin. Since then, except for a span of some two years in the early 1840's, Austin has remained the capital city. During the century of Statehood, Austin is the only capital Texas has known.

Austin can lay claim to the boast that she has been the home of more Postmasters General than any city of equal size in all the Union. While Texas was a sovereign nation, nearly ten years, several Postmasters General made their official homes here; Postmaster General John H. Reagan of the Confederate States of America was for a time a citizen of Austin, and Austin was the home of Postmaster General Albert Sidney Burleson.

The first Statehouse was erected in 1839 on the site of the present municipal building. It was in front of that pine and cedar structure that on February 19, 1846, President Anson Jones of the Lone Star Republic delivered his valedictory; J. Pinckney Henderson gave his inaugural address as the first Governor, and the Stars and Stripes were raised above the capitol. That event, without parallel in the history of democratic governments, is one of the dramatic episodes of our colorful history and will be commemorated here on February 19, 1946. Under the leadership of Mayor Tom Miller a centennial committee is now being organized at Austin to plan for that climax of the historical phases of the State-wide observance. It is fervently hoped that other inspiring programs, coordinated by the Centennial Commission will be held during the coming year in every Texas community. To that end members of the Commission are being appointed in the 254 counties of the State.

As approved by the Forty-ninth Legislature, the plan for the observance is twofold in its objectives: improved conditions in our rural areas and a greater interest in Texas and American history. The former phase proposes the revitalization of agriculture, a most timely thought, not only on behalf of the State during its second century, but also a post-war enterprise with its practical appeal.

Mr. Lawler, as we admire the Texas statehood stamp which you have brought to Austin for its first day of issue, we are reminded

that one of Texas' own native sons, Silliman Evans, who formerly served as Third Assistant Postmaster General, improved the brand of pens used in the post offices, while you have been most successful in improving the appearance of centennial commemoratives. The Texas stamp is truly a thing of beauty and to Texans it will be a joy forever. Flags, like music and flowers, speak a universal language, and the two flags which fly above the Texas capitol and which we and our children most adore, may be viewed on the Texas stamp. The design sent to the Department by the Centennial Commission originally was fashioned by a Texas artist, Buchanan Winn, in his ranch studio in Hays County, and was accepted by the experts of the Department at Washington with only slight modification. The acceptance of the design by your good offices, Mr. Lawler, is just another of the many service acts by which the Post Office Department endears itself to the people.

Our honored guest, Joseph J. Lawler, comes to us as a native son of Pennsylvania. Mr. Lawler, we desire to extend greetings to you and to all Pennsylvanians on this occasion, for it was your grand old State that gave birth to the first Texan who died in the Texas Revolution.

It seems appropriate to digress for a moment from the general theme to express our gratitude to postal employees everywhere. In fair weather and foul, they carry on and represent the government in such splendid manner that with every call they make we are reminded of the excellent service rendered by a Department authorized by the Federal Constitution. In this connection, we are reminded that one Peter Carr, back in 1839, carried the first mail to and from Austin. Carr made a weekly trip from Austin to La Grange, via Bastrop, operating both a star mail route and portable post office on horseback. When he met an acquaintance and the friend inquired whether he had any mail, Carr obligingly emptied his entire pouch on the ground and carefully examined each piece of mail. If a friend had a letter, it was delivered without charge. No stamps were used. Postmasters were expected to collect twenty-five cents for each parcel of mail on delivery. Carr's free service was based on a desire to be useful to his fellow man.

The Texas State Historial Association, the Junior Historians, the Sons and Daughters of the Republic, the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution and all other kindred bodies of men and women throughout the State are to be congratulated because of their inspiring services, not only in the interest of the Texas centennial, but also because of their labor of love all through the years on behalf of a better informed citizenship. Upon them has been placed a heavy burden which every citizen should be proud to help carry. That burden is to preserve the best and noblest in our State and National existence and to point out the defects and dark spots in our history so that our youth may be the beneficiaries and thereby become a greater asset to and friend of good government now and hereafter. Allied with these noble organizations should be our educational institutions, museums, libraries, religious bodies and the press, whose prime duty it is to build a better citizenship. Knowledge of history -- the history of Texas and the United States of America, cannot fail to have one good result: it will instill in all hearts a greater love for our country. We cannot neglect to mention here the mighty influence for good in the teaching of our country's history to the youth of the land in the debates, declamations and other activities of the Interscholastic League of Texas schools. Parent-teacher organizations also have wrought well in this connection, as have all veteran groups. Texans are a grateful people and proud of their heroic history.

Centennial observances are the mirrors of progress. They possess an educational, spiritual, patriotic and material value, defying measure. With malice toward none and friendship for all men of good will, we may all be Texans on this anniversary. In our high regard for and devotion to the cause and principles of freedom, I feel sure that we are "one and indivisible."

In this inspiring presence here today, I can see the tall frail figure of a modest, patient but determined man. His shoulders are not stooped with the weight of years but with the inherited burden he dutifully bears. His name is immortal among men. Many other figures, both men and women, and their children in drawn prairie schooners, ride with him into Texas from the motherland. To me, he and they are the heroes of this day. Without

them Old Glory would not here fly, nor would these stirring bands play. Without them Texas would not be the great State that it is. The man who deserves this tribute is Stephen F. Austin, the Father of Texas. And that great company of faithful followers are the Texas pioneers. They were at the Alamo - at Goliad - at San Jacinto. They blazed the trail through sodden forests; they drank the brackish waters where the wild beasts wallowed. They tasted the bitter dust of the desert. They starved, thirsted, faced and fought a savage foe, were persecuted and cast down, but were never broken. Here they stand today - the incarnate souls of a righteous race - Stephen F. Austin and the Texas pioneers.

Glory they do not ask. Their descendants are scattered throughout the war devastated globe and along the blessed trails they first beat out for civilization's advancing hosts. Theirs is the one and only satisfying glory. They pointed the way to liberty and left the world a better place in which to live. Their sons and daughters who followed the Stars and Stripes in the first and in the late world war sustained the valorous reputation bequeathed to them. And their children are here, thank God, to do honor to their proud ancestors. The century old journey is at end and the immortal spirits of American pioneers stand beside us today, with full appreciation of the tribute we render them as we press forward the cause of an advancing democracy - strong - valiant - confident - alert and ready-minded ever that Eternal Vigilance is the price of FREEDOM.

The United States of America and the Lone Star Republic of Texas were established upon the rock of God's gracious favor and guidance. His protection, we devoutly believe, will continue to make our beloved Nation indestructible and "Texas one and indivisible" so long as they cling to the faith of the founding fathers. Dependence upon the Supreme Ruler of the universe and the faith of our fathers are expressed in our Constitutions and Bill of Rights whose eternal truths cannot be corroded by time nor eaten away by the passing of centuries. The chaos of conflict the ravages of wars and battle bombs cannot overturn and crumble to dust the sacred temple of our liberty so long as American sons and daughters continue to prove themselves worthy of the holy

trust bequeathed to them by heroic pioneers. Their faith, hope and charity gave them strength and courage to plan wisely for the ages. As we emerge from our first century in the blessed Union, may we of the Lone Star State, with equal virtue, guard our heritage and hand it down to posterity as their true birthright liberty under the Constitution, "the immediate jewel of the soul"