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March 13, 2009

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Special Mirabeau B. Lamar exhibit opens at Sam Houston Center on March 21

LIBERTY, Texas - A special exhibit, "Mirabeau B. Lamar: Father of Texas Education" will open on Saturday, March 21, 2009 at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas.

The exhibit features five panels depicting the life and accomplishments of Mirabeau B. Lamar: Early Life, Military Career in Texas, his role as "Father of Texas Education," Political Life, and Private Life. The exhibit panels were prepared by Donna Beth Shaw of Houston and are on loan to the Sam Houston Center for this exhibit that will run through June 21.

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, son of John and Rebecca (Lamar) Lamar, was born near Louisville, Georgia, on August 16, 1798. As a young man, Lamar excelled at horseback riding and fencing, wrote poetry, painted in oils, and read widely.

At the age of 25, Lamar was serving as secretary to the governor of Georgia. He married Tabitha Jordan of Twiggs County, Georgia, on January 1, 1826. Lamar was elected state senator in 1829 and was a candidate for re-election when his wife died on August 20, 1830. He withdrew from the race and traveled until he was sufficiently recovered. He composed several of his best-known poems during this time.

After two unsuccessful candidacies for Congress in 1832 and 1834, Lamar followed his friend James W. Fannin, Jr. to Texas in 1835. He decided to make Texas his home and immediately became involved in the revolutionary cause. After hearing news of the Battle of the Alamo and the Goliad Massacre, Lamar joined the Texas army as a private.

He was commissioned a colonel on the field of San Jacinto just before the start of the battle and made commander of the cavalry. During the battle, he distinguished himself by his bravery and quick action. After the Texan victory, Lamar was made secretary of war in David G. Burnet's cabinet, and in the fall of 1836 was elected vice-president of the Republic of Texas.

Lamar became a political opponent of Sam Houston. Houston could not succeed himself as president, and in 1838 Mirabeau B. Lamar was elected the second President of the Republic of Texas. When he took office, the republic had no money, no commercial treaties, no international recognition except from

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the United States, Texans were under constant Indian attack, and Mexico was threatening invasion.

Lamar's advocacy of a system of education based on endowment of public lands resulted in the Texas Education Act, signed on January 26, 1839, and earned him the nickname, "Father of Texas Education."

Upon his proposal, the new capital city of Austin was built on the Indian frontier beside the Colorado River and occupied in October 1839. Lamar went on the offensive against the Indians, driving the Cherokees out of Texas and waging war against the Comanches. The war with the Comanches succeeded in driving the tribe from the settlements, but at a great loss of life on both sides.

When Texas joined the Union in 1846 and the U.S.-Mexican War broke out, Lamar joined the U. S. Army as a lieutenant colonel, fighting in the battle of Monterrey and helping organize a municipal government in Laredo. After 1848 he traveled and wrote poetry and biographical sketches for a proposed history of Texas.

In 1851 he married Henrietta Maffitt, and they had a daughter, Loretto. From 1857-1859, he served as United States minister to Nicaragua and Costa Rica. He died on his plantation in Richmond, Texas, in 1859 and was buried in the Masonic Cemetery at Richmond.

The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center, a part of the Archives and Information Services Division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. The center is located three miles north of Liberty, Texas on FM 1011, off of State Highway 146. The center is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. For further information, call (936) 336-8821 or write to P. O. Box 310, Liberty, TX 77575-0310.

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