



The Daughters of the Republic of Texas , TEXAS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mirabeau B. Lamar Day,

A Salute to Texas' Father of Education

January 26 is Mirabeau B. Lamar Day, a day to salute the Father of Education in Texas. On that date in 1839, the Republic of Texas Congress passed The Education Act, setting aside land for public schools. It was President Mirabeau B. Lamar, second President of the Republic of Texas from 1838-1841, who successfully argued the importance of public education, and proposed the first actions that laid the foundation for a public school system in Texas. His accomplishments earned him the title of Father of Education in Texas.

Lamar was inaugurated on December 10, 1838. In his address to the Texas Congress that day, he expressed a leading policy of his administration to lay the foundation for education, which he believed necessary for the government to prosper and the people to preserve their liberties. While the Texas Constitution of 1836 had addressed the duty of Congress to provide, by law, for a general system of education, no laws had been enacted. Lamar was determined to follow through with legislation, and made an innovative proposal: to establish public education with land endowments. Why land? The reason was simple. The Republic of Texas lacked hard cash, but its public domain lands were immense and viewed as sources of great wealth. The Education Act passed on January 26, 1839 appropriated three leagues of land (approximately 13, 284 acres) to each county to establish public schools and 50 leagues (approximately 221,400 acres) were set aside to fund higher education. In 1840, the amount to the counties was increased by another league, for a total of approximately 17,

712 acres per county. Before these public lands were exhausted at the end of the nineteenth century, county schools had received a total of 4,229,166 acres of land for public education.

An important figure in Texas history, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar was born August 16, 1798 in Georgia. He was multi-talented, becoming an expert horseman, an accomplished fencer, a writer of poetry, a publisher, a painter, and a state senator in Georgia before coming to Texas in 1835. He came to Texas, following James W. Fannin, Jr., to collect historical data, and quickly became active in the fight for independence. Lamar was commended for bravery at San Jacinto and served the Republic of Texas as a secretary of war, vice-president, and President. After statehood, Lamar served the U.S. during the Mexican-American War, and in 1857, was appointed U.S. Minister to Nicaragua and Costa Rica by President James Buchanan. Two months after returning from his diplomatic mission of twenty months, Lamar died of a heart attack on December 19, 1859 at his home in Richmond, Texas. He was eulogized in the Texas Telegraph and Register as "a worthy man."

The lasting legacy of Mirabeau B. Lamar is Texas' public education system. Today, it consists of a vast network of schools serving early elementary through higher education levels. The system includes 8,526 schools through Grade 12 with an enrollment of 4,912,385 students. Texas public higher education institutions serve 1.34 million students in nine health science centers, 38 universities, 50 community college districts, three state colleges, and four state technical colleges.

Monuments to Mirabeau B. Lamar are numerous across Texas. In addition to Lamar University, many schools are named in his honor, as well as major streets in Texas cities. Lamar County, in northeast Texas is named for him, and also the small community of Lamar in Aransas County.

(include information about Lamar monuments in your area here)

Mirabeau B. Lamar Day is one of twelve Texas Honor Days designated by The Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The D.R.T. is the oldest women's patriotic organization in Texas and is dedicated to the preservation and education of Texas history. For more information on Mirabeau B. Lamar, Texas Honor Days, and the work of the D.R.T., please visit the website at www.drinfo.org

Sources: History of Education in Texas by J. J. Lane, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903 (Google eBook); Texas State Historical Association, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mnl01>; Cruger & Moore, editor. Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston, Tex.), Vol. 4, No. 19, Ed. 1, Wednesday, December 12, 1838, Newspaper, December 12, 1838; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph48025/> :accessed January 12, 2013), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas; Texas Education Agency, Snapshot 2011 State Totals, <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us>; The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2012 Higher Education Almanac, <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/>; Pamphlets: Education. English. 1810-1906], Volume 12 (Google eBook); Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Texas Honor Days, Mirabeau B. Lamar Day, <http://www.drinfo.org/mirabeau-b-lamar>.