



Talking Back Theatre is available for booking
Catalogue of Living History Plays

1. 1822 - Brazoria County

HELL OR HIGH WATER: Brit Bailey Heads Off Stephen F. Austin

This vignette shows the hearty spirit and tenacious perseverance of the first Anglo settlers in Texas. It also reveals the attitude of the colonists toward the importance of slavery.

2. 1824 - Brazoria County

JUMPING JUBA

An intimate portrait into the private lives of early Texas slaves. Slave families were often separated at the discretion of their masters for economic reasons. Although marriages were often prohibited or unrecognized, African Americans desired to be bound to each other for life. Stripped of their freedom and community structure, customs had to be re-created--among them is "jumping de broom" to symbolize matrimony.

3. 1830 - Fort Bend County

ARCY MAKES ROOM FOR JUDITH MARTIN

This vignette depicts what happens when a slave family is separated.

When Henry and Nancy Jones came to Texas as part of Stephen F. Austin's Old Three Hundred, original Texas colonists, they had only one slave, Arcy. So Judith Martin was hired away from her family to help the Joneses and Arcy, thereby, separating her from husband, Peter Martin, and their children.

4. 1832 - Brazoria County

STILL AM-A RISIN: Stephen F. Austin pays a Visit to Jane Long

By 1832, there is a semblance of domestic life in Brazoria. Jane has settled down to run one of the first boarding houses. The social life of Texas' first nobility is taking shape. While Stephen F. Austin expresses his anxiety over the impending revolution, in a final monologue, Kian reveals her private thoughts regarding the freedom she longs for but may never have.

5. 1837 - Fort Bend County

ARCY ATTEMPTS ESCAPE

Around the Stock Farm there is tense debate for and against slavery in the newly formed Republic of Texas. The Mexican Government and Sam Houston are against it, however the proponents for slavery have won their cause. Slave imports are on the increase. Arcy, however, tries to convince Father Muldoon, a Catholic priest, to help her and her son escape to Mexico.

6. 1845 - Montgomery County

FUGITIVES OF PASSION: ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

A love story between a man and a woman, a woman and her child, which examines the conditions that impelled Cujo and Hannah to run. Hannah had to leave her mulatto child, fathered by her master, to seek asylum with Cujo, who wanted to be treated like a man.

7. 1850's - Brazoria County

CHRISTMAS AT VARNER-HOGG PLANTATION

A young slave mother anticipates a visit from her husband, who lives on a neighboring plantation, while she narrates the story of how he was sold to their newborn baby. Christmas songs with audience participation.

8. 1850 – Washington County

SWEET BY AND BY: BARRINGTON FARM CHRONICLE

While Jake's murder didn't go unnoticed, it was one of those slavery matter-of-facts. The economic importance of slaves in Texas was a cornerstone in the growth of the state, regulated its politics, and figured largely Texas' future between the years of statehood and the Civil War when many Texas planters achieved prominence, including Anson Jones, Texas Republic's last President.

9. 1853 - Walker County

A LITTLE SLAVE FOR SALE--CHEAP!

As an emancipated adult, Jeff Hamilton can still remember how it felt to be hot, thirsty, teased and taunted on the slave-block. He never forgot the look on his mother's face the last morning he saw her. By an act of God, he was saved from peril by General Sam Houston who purchased him from the slave-block when he was 13 years old.

10. 1862 - Walker County

PORCH POLITICS: SAM HOUSTON STYLE

It's business as usual at the Houston household with Sam Houston, his wife, Margaret, their eight children and ten slaves. However, the politics of the Civil War brought some unexpected changes. Because Houston had opposed Texas' secession and joining the Confederacy, his term as Texas Governor was cut short. One of his most trusted slaves, Tom Blue, escapes to Mexico, and in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation, the General frees his slaves.

11. 1856 - 1868 - Brazoria County

CANE CUTTER COUNTRY: SAGA OF THE LAKE JACKSON PLANTATION

By 1856, Abner Jackson and his wife Margaret Stroebel Jackson are in possession of three sugar cane plantations and over 300 slaves. Abner is at the height of his economic and political success. This story begins in the middle of the labor intensive sugar cane harvest. Although his slaves sing and dance to ease the boredom of hard labor, they are hardly happy. There is a series of deaths, the Civil War and an age-old family feud. What else could go wrong?

12. 1862 - Waller County

PLANTATION LIENDO: CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT

Plantation Liendo was the site of the largest cotton plantation (67,000 acres) in Waller County and as such, was the home of around 300 slaves. Liendo, the social center of Southeast Texas, was also the site of considerable activity during the war, from a recruiting station for the Confederacy at the war's outset to a Union prisoner of war camp at the war's end. Numerous scenarios evolve which represent the wealth and prevalence of Old South aristocracy during the war-- including the varied relationships between enlisted and civilian, free and enslaved, white and colored, to demonstrate the extent of wartime interdependency.

13. June 20, 1865 - Fort Bend County

SLAVERY CHAIN DONE BROKE AT LAS'

The morning after the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, Rebecca has trouble making a decision whether to stay on or leave the plantation. This vignette examines the consequences of both, and how difficult it was for slaves to decide. Songs with audience participation included.

14. 1890 - Fort Bend County

SOCIAL POLITICS IN VICTORIAN TEXAS

From 1869 to 1889 African Americans in Fort Bend enjoyed some prosperity and leadership both at the local and state level. Following the *Jaybird Woodpecker War of 1889*, the Democrats took over and blacks no longer held public offices. This was the climate of social politics in 1890. In spite of the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, the KKK was very effective in cutting down Negro participation in elections.

15. 1930 - Fort Bend County

JUNETEENTH AT THE RANCH

A celebration of independence with an old-time prayer meeting in a one-room school house, songs, games, and a barbecue. All of these period events depict what it meant for African Americans to gain their freedom at the end of the Civil War.