

The Bandera PROPHECY

July 16, 2021

Today in Texas history

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1931, Texas and Oklahoma locked horns over a newly completed free bridge, built jointly by the two states, across the Red River between Denison, Texas, and Durant, Oklahoma.

A firm operating a nearby toll bridge had obtained an injunction preventing the Texas Highway Commission from opening the new bridge because the commission had failed to fulfill its contractual obligation to buy the toll bridge. Texas Governor Ross S. Sterling ordered barricades erected across the Texas approaches to the new bridge.

On July 16, however, Oklahoma Governor William (Alfalfa Bill) Murray opened the bridge by executive order. The following days brought a bewildering array of moves and countermoves involving the Texas Rangers, Oklahoma guardsmen, and Murray's declaration of martial law on both sides of the river and personal appearance in the "war zone" armed with an antique revolver.

Finally, on Aug. 6, 1931, the Texas injunction was permanently dissolved, the Oklahoma guardsmen were withdrawn to enforce martial law in the Oklahoma oilfields, and the bridge controversy was laid to rest.

The bridge was dynamited in 1995 to make room for a new one.