

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1755, the stone church at Mission Concepción near San Antonio was dedicated. Its 45-inch walls, two towers, latticed windows, and choir loft, among other features, would stand the test of time through years of tumultuous change.

The mission was originally founded as Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de los Hainais in 1716 in East Texas, but famine, epidemics among the Caddoans, and French incursions forced the Spanish to retreat. They reestablished the facility in 1721, but had moved it to the Colorado River by 1730.

The following year missionaries finally found a more suitable location on the east bank of the San Antonio River and renamed the mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña. Mexican independence in the 19th century brought secularization, and the property was sold at auction.

During the Texas Revolution the battle of Concepción, in which James Bowie and his men defeated Mexican forces led by Martín Perfecto de Cos, took place on the mission grounds.

In 1841 the Republic of Texas gave title of the building and land to the Catholic church, though the church continued to be used as a barn by settlers and, after annexation, as a supply depot by the United States Army. The Concepción church is considered by some historians to be the oldest unrestored church in the United States.

The structure is now part of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and Mass is still celebrated each Sunday.