

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1891, the U.S. secretary of the treasury officially opened the new port of Velasco near the site of Old Velasco, on the Brazos River a few miles upstream from the Gulf of Mexico.

The former town, one of the oldest communities in Texas, saw its heyday between the early Anglo settlement of Texas and the Civil War. The first Austin colonists landed there in 1821. Velasco was important during its early days as the site of the battle of Velasco, as a temporary capital of the Republic of Texas, and as the place where Santa Anna signed the treaties that ended the Texas Revolution.

But the old town, subsequently a resort, declined after the Civil War and was mostly blown away by a hurricane in 1875. The new town of Velasco was laid out in 1891 and promoted throughout the Midwest. With its new deepwater port, it flourished-complete with railroad connections, two weekly newspapers, a lively shipping industry, and a population that reached 3,000-until another hurricane, the catastrophic Galveston Hurricane of 1900, wiped the place out again.

Afterward, recovery was slow and uncertain until diversion of the Brazos River and the formation of a tidal estuary deep enough to accommodate large vessels in the old river channel gave life to both Velasco and the new town of Freeport.

The two towns were incorporated under the name Freeport in 1957, when the population of Velasco was about 4,000. The Velasco post office became Velasco Station. The entire area is now part of the Brazosport industrial and port area.