

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1874, after considering a challenge from his Democratic opponents, the Texas Senate confirmed the election of Walter Moses Burton. Burton was brought to Texas as a slave from North Carolina in 1850 at the age of 21. He belonged to a Fort Bend planter, Thomas Burke Burton, who taught him how to read and write, skills that served him well in later years.

After the Civil War Burton became one of the wealthiest and most influential blacks in Fort Bend County. He became involved in politics as early as 1869, when he was elected sheriff and tax collector of Fort Bend County, and served as the president of the Fort Bend County Union League.

In 1873 Burton campaigned for and won a seat in the Texas Senate, where he served for seven years, from 1874 to 1875 and from 1876 to 1882. In the Senate he championed the education of blacks.

Among the many bills that he helped push through was one that called for the establishment of Prairie View Normal School (now Prairie View A&M University). When he left the Senate in 1882 Burton was given an ebony and gold cane for his service in that chamber.

He remained active in state and local politics until his death in 1913.