

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

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The Bandera Prophet

On this day in 1886, one of the biggest gun battles in the history of the American West broke out on the day after a city election in Laredo. In 1884 two political factions in Laredo and Webb counties designated themselves as Botas and Guaraches. The Botas ("Boots"), led by Raymond Martin and José María Rodríguez, were essentially the "wealthy" class, although they drew much support from the less fortunate. The reform club, which adopted the slogan Guaraches ("Sandals") to symbolize the lower class, included Santos Benavides and, later, Darío Gonzales.

In the city election of 1886, the Guaraches won only two seats on the Laredo city council. In their celebration the following day, the Botas paraded the streets of Laredo promising to bury a Guarache in effigy. After the Guaraches attacked the Bota parade, as many as 250 men became involved in the fighting at one time or another.

It took two companies of the 16th United States Infantry and one company of the 8th Cavalry to restore peace. Although the official number of dead in what was called the Laredo Election Riot was placed at 16, unofficial reports placed the number as high as 30, with as many as 45 wounded.