

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas
The Bandera Prophet

On this day in 1839, Austin became the first municipality in Texas to include public-health provisions in its act of incorporation. The act, approved by the Congress of the Republic of Texas, authorized the mayor and council "to determine the mode of inspection of all comestibles sold publicly in the market or in other places; and to regulate everything relative to bakers, butchers, tavern-keepers or grog-shops."

Though similar provisions were included in the acts incorporating Texana (1840), Jefferson (1848), San Antonio (1852), and Galveston (1856), the Texas government enacted very few public-health measures before the 20th century; as in the rest of the United States, local public-health activities preceded state health organization by more than half a century.

In 1903, the Department of Public Health and Vital Statistics was established, and in 1909 a seven-member State Board of Health was formed in response to longstanding agitation by the Texas State Medical Association. The next 20 years witnessed the birth of a number of major public-health programs that have survived to this day. Today, governments at all levels-federal, state, and local-cooperate to provide health services to the public.