

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas
The Bandera Prophet

On this day in 1839, Waterloo (soon to be renamed Austin) was approved as the new capital of the Republic of Texas.

In 1836, Columbia (now West Columbia) had become the first capital of an elected government of the republic. It remained capital for three months. The city of Houston was then selected as a temporary capital until 1839. A capital-site commission selected a site near La Grange in 1838 and Congress passed a bill to build the capital there, but President Sam Houston vetoed it.

Mirabeau B. Lamar, Houston's successor as president and a proponent of westward expansion, instructed the commission to inspect a site he had visited on the Colorado River. Impressed by its beauty, abundant natural resources, and central location, the commission purchased 7,735 acres comprising the hamlet of Waterloo and adjacent lands. Because the area's remoteness from population centers and its vulnerability to attacks by Mexican troops and Indians displeased many Texans, including Houston, political opposition made Austin's early years precarious ones. In 1842, during his second term as president, Houston ordered the government to return to the city of Houston, and issued an executive order making Washington-on-the-Brazos capital. The order spawned the Archive War.

The Constitution of 1845 provided that Austin be capital until 1850, when a vote was required to choose the permanent capital. The city received majorities in that election and a subsequent election in 1872.