

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas
The Bandera Prophet

On this day in 1860, the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad completed its bridge from Virginia Point to Galveston Island.

Virginia Point, on the mainland west of Galveston, was an outlying part of Stephen F. Austin's Coast Colony. The bridge brought growth, as it facilitated traffic between Galveston and Houston. Previously, merchandise had to be unloaded at the point from trains, carried by the steam ferryboat Texas across to Galveston, unloaded onto drays, and unloaded again on the wharves. With the new 10,000-foot bridge in service, trains came through Virginia Point daily.

The causeway survived the ravages of the Civil War, only to be destroyed by a hurricane in 1867. While repairs were being made, ferry boats again carried the freight.

In 1875, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway constructed a second wooden bridge. Other railroad interests brought a third railroad bridge from North Galveston to Virginia Point in 1892, and Galveston County built a steel wagon bridge in 1893. But the Galveston hurricane of 1900 swept away the bridges and most of Virginia Point.

A reinforced-concrete causeway completed in 1911 carried the Galveston-Houston Electric Railway, five steam railroads, and the county highway. Virginia Point remained a train stop and fishing resort until another hurricane wiped out the town in 1915.

In 1936, the electric railway abandoned its tracks as automobile traffic took over. The University of Texas operated a shell and topsoil company in Virginia Point until the 1950s. Texas City annexed the point in 1952, but never included it in its seawall system.

Increased shipping in the Intracoastal Canal and bay has eroded portions of the old townsite, which is now reached only at low tide by a shell road under the old causeway.