The Bandera Prophet

October 22, 2025

Today in Texas History

On this day in 1969, students from the University of Texas at Austin demonstrated against the environmental desecration of Waller Creek, which flows through the campus.

The creek is named for pioneer Austinite Edwin Waller. Notable persons who have lived on or near Waller Creek include Elisabet Ney, George Armstrong Custer, Edmund J. Davis, and J. Frank Dobie. By the 1960s, the university occupied both banks of the main branch from 26th Street to 19th Street and smaller portions on the west branch and to the south of Nineteenth.

The Waller Creek Riot was touched off when the UT board of regents decided to bulldoze several hundred feet of Waller Creek to expand Memorial Stadium. In an unsuccessful attempt to stop the bulldozing, student protesters chained themselves to trees; the chairman of the board of regents, Frank Erwin, complete with hard hat and bullhorn, personally oversaw their arrests.

Rapid and often unplanned development, both institutional and domestic, has taken its toll on Waller Creek. Dense urban development on the watershed of this small but easily flooded stream has necessitated careful monitoring of its flow by two gauging stations and continued study by hydrologists, making it a prototype of the small urban stream in the United States.