

# Austin History

Austin's rich history has allowed the city to become the iconic melting pot we all love and enjoy today. However, Austin was not always the vibrant capital city that people from across the world come to experience. In fact, at one time, even Texans did not appreciate this great city. In 1839, when designated as the capital of the newly independent Republic of Texas, Austin was described as "the abode of bats, lizards and stray cattle." Early Anglo-American settlers to the banks of the Colorado River originally called the town Waterloo, but when it became Texas' capitol, the name was changed to honor the successful colonizer, Stephen Fuller Austin. The designation of Austin as the capital of Texas met with opposition because legislators had to travel hundreds of miles by horse and wagon through untamed wilderness to reach the capital city. Aside from initial obstacles Austin faced, the city was able to win over the hearts of Texans.

In 1850, Texas joined the United States and became the 28th state, keeping Austin as its capital. Forty-three years later, in 1882, Austin began construction on the city's first State Capitol Building, which originally was made out of limestone. After several years of running the government out of the original capital building, a tragic fire swept through the halls of the capital and a new building had to be constructed. The capital as we know it today is not made of limestone, but of a bright granite quarried in Texas. The building sits at the highest point in the Austin area, and looks out across the downtown. In 1970 this nationally recognized building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and soon after was titled a National Historic Landmark. The Classical Renaissance design and gleaming sunset red granite make this building an icon of the city.

The University of Texas opened its doors next to the Capitol Building in 1883 to become the second oldest university in Texas. Texas A&M University had preceded it by 12 years. The construction of the University of Texas came after Austin had already received its first telegraph message, built its first pontoon bridge, established its own newspaper, the Austin Democratic Statesman and received its first railway; all vital accomplishments in linking Austin to the rest of the nation. During the 1870s and 80s Austin experienced a large boom in construction, business, and population, with a melting pot of immigrants coming from Germany, Sweden, and Mexico. Roughly every 20 years the population of Austin doubles, and as each year goes by the city sprawls even further to accommodate the new residents.

For the past two decades Austin has become known for its leadership in technology and creativity, which brings people in droves to work for technology companies and enjoy the thriving art culture. Once an abode for bats, lizards, and stray cattle, Austin has served as a political seat for Texas for over 100 years, and is known worldwide for its music, art, food, and technology.

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