

In the beginningthere was Petersburg.
1846 - 1854

On April 4, 1846, an act was passed by the Legislature of the State of Texas to locate the county seat of the newly created Lavaca County.

Samuel Berry, James Brown, Beverly Greenwood, John Clark and Gabriel Zumwalt were appointed commissioners to locate the county seat. The act directed the commissioners to select a site located not more than 5 miles from the center of the said county and that the commissioners were authorized to receive any lands that may be donated to said county or purchase such lands as they may deem proper for the location of said county seat, not to exceed 640 acres.

On July 13, 1846, an election was held at Clark's Mill to elect the officers for the newly organized county.

Chief Justice:	Andrew Ponton
Probate Judge:	Benjamin Haile Stribling
County Clerk:	Josiah Dowling
District Clerk:	David Laughlin
Sheriff:	Michael H. Hinch
Tax Assess & Collector	Gabriel Zumwalt
Treasurer:	Philip Howard
Commissioners:	James Ryan, Thomas Chaudoin, Wm. H.H. Baldrige, Eben Best
J.P.:	Philip Howard & S.A. Long
Constable:	Felix Holster

Arthur Sherrill, of Colorado County, who owned a league of land in the newly created county, donated 350 acres of land to Lavaca County for the location of the county seat.

The county seat was called Petersburg and was in the Sherrill League in a wooded area on the east bank of the Lavaca River about a quarter mile from the Zumwalt Settlement and about five miles downriver from the Hallet Settlement.

According to the agreement between Sherrill and the fledgling county government, Lavaca County would take first choice of the lots for public buildings and Sherrill would then take his choice of eight lots. The balance of the lots would be divided $\frac{3}{4}$ to the County and $\frac{1}{4}$ to Sherrill.

This donation was accepted by the Commissioners Court on August 31, 1847.

Petersburg Takes Root

On September 14, 1846, William A. Shepard (William Austin Shepherd) was employed to survey the town of Petersburg. The town was divided into 25 blocks. Each block had six lots 50 ft. wide and 100 ft. long and the streets were 60 ft. wide.

That same day, Arthur and Mary Sherrill sold to Andrew Ponton, the County Judge of Lavaca County, 350 additional acres for \$1000.00.

As per the agreement on April 6th, County Judge Andrew Ponton deeded to Arthur Sherrill eight choice lots in the town of Petersburg. The County Commissioners would also select a public courthouse square, a lot for a church, a lot for a school house, a lot for a jail and other necessary public buildings. Also, per the agreement, after the survey was completed, the county would deed every fourth lot to Sherrill.

To raise necessary county funds, the commissioners ordered a sale of public lots which was advertised in the Texian Advocate of Victoria, Texas. The price of lots fronting on the public square were priced at \$30.00 while back lots would sell for \$20.00. The sale was set to take place on November 2, 1846. It was advertised that the timber on the town tract would be for the use and benefit of the purchasers of the tracts.

The sale was not as successful as the commissioners and the town promoters had hoped; three weeks later the prices were lowered to \$20.00 and \$10.00. On August 17, 1848, another public sale was ordered with back lots priced at \$7.00 and front lots to remain at \$20.00.

Roads were surveyed, marked, and opened by the Court shortly after its organization. Petersburg would need roads leading into it if it were to serve the citizens of the county.

Four of the earliest roads mentioned in the Commissioners Court minutes were:

1. A road to run from the crossing on the Navidad River near Thomas Chaudion's thence the nearest and best route to Petersburg.

2. A road from Petersburg to Port Lavaca to intersect the Victoria road at some point.
3. A road from Thomas Chaudion on the Navidad river to Gideon B. Blackburn on Mustang Creek to from a connection with the route from LaGrange to Chisholm's Ferry.
4. A road commencing at Isaac Mitchell to Hallettsville to some suitable point on Rocky Creek.

Sources:

Boethel Notes

Lavaca County Deed A/13

Lavaca County Deed A/14

Lavaca County Deed A/23

Lavaca County District Court Case #96

Houston Post September 29, 1968

Hallettsville Herald March 10, 1910

Lavaca County Tribune November 30, 1951, October 9, 1951

Herald & Planter October 23, 1878

Hallettsville Herald December 25, 1887

The Texas Monument April 16, 1851

Texian Advocate May 4, 1848

Indianola Bulletin October 19, 1853

San Antonio Express September 12, 1968

Lavaca County Tribune March 5, 1935

Free State of Lavaca p.157

History of Lavaca County p.40, 42, 46, 47

Sand in Your Craw p. 98

Notary Public Records Petersburg Part 1 D.W. Huddleston Aug. 27, 1853 to Feb. 15, 1858

Police Court Minutes of Lavaca County from August 31, 1846 – November 29, 1852