



## Compare & Contrast



### **Austin City as the state capitol:**

On January 18, 1841, he wrote her that it was snowing and firewood was scarce. Although he had a large fire, it was so cold that he could hardly write, and he had to keep his ink beside the fire or it would freeze.

He described his room as “less comfortable than a stable.” While he was paying high for board and lodging, he was compelled to lie under his own blankets—even his saddle blanket. As for the city itself, he described it as a place “savages wou’d not live in!” However, history would prove his prophesy wrong when he wrote, “As a city its days are number’d and its glory will pass away!” (page 46)

### **Houston City as the state capitol:**

The Governor’s Mansion, adjacent to the capitol, was by far the most elegant home Margaret had lived in during her married life. It had been finished in 1855 with money received from the United States government on settling the boundary dispute with Texas under the 1855 compromise law.

It is a magnificent home with a beautiful grassy yard and fine trees. Wide porches extend across the front of both the upper and lower stories, and six tall, graceful columns support the roof. Beyond the reception hall at the front door is a winding stairway which is so nearly perfect that it has been inspected, described, and copied by architects for years. At the top of the stairway is the bedroom which is still referred to as the “Sam Houston” room because Houston chose the furnishings for this master bedroom.

On the ground floor, the wide entrance hall extends through the center of the house. To the right of the hall is the big parlor which was used for formal state occasions. To the left is the smaller family parlor and dining hall. In the family parlor hangs a chandelier which was used in Houston’s day. During that time, the lamps were filled with kerosene. The fixture was later changed to a gas light, and then wired for electricity. (pages 286-287)



# THE PORTAL TO TEXAS HISTORY

*Embark on a Voyage of Discovery*

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1. List the similarities between the two passages.

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2. What are the differences between the two passages?

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3. In your own words, describe Houston's home in each city when it was the state capitol.

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**Washington-on-the-Brazos as the state capitol:**

The Brazos is the largest of the inland streams of Texas, and the little town of Washington was built on a bluff and could not be seen from the river.

The road ran up the eastern portion of the Brazos valley until it turned nearly at a right angle through the bottom lands within a few miles of the ferry, which was located at the foot of Main Street. Margaret's first glimpse of her new home came as the wagons ascended the second bluff. The residents lived in well-made log and clapboard houses which had been built on gently rising hills. About five hundred yards from the bluff stood Independence Hall on Main Street. There were some cross streets, with a few houses located on them, but the main business was confined to this one principal street.

For all its gracious people, Washington-on-the-Brazos was still a primitive, frontier town. The women spent much time in spinning and weaving, and most garments were homespun. The men often wore buckskin and moccasins. Margaret's poke bonnets from Alabama were probably brought out only for state occasions.

Margaret found Washington to be a city of fine people, generous, hospitable, and courteous to strangers. So honest were the townspeople that scarcely anything was ever stolen. When people left their homes, they of course closed the doors to keep varmints and wild beasts out, but the latch-string always hung outside so that a stranger might enter and make use of the house. (pages 94-95)

4. In your own words, describe Washington on the Brazos when it was the state capitol. (extra space is provided on the next page)

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5. From the three cities above, which do you think was the most appropriate as the state capitol? List your choice in order of preference with the first choice on line 1 and thereon.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

