

Porcion 72 Hidalgo, Texas

By

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Everything and everyone has a history. A history of where they came from of where they got something, so it isn't surprising to find that places including land have a history of their own. We all live somewhere whether it be a house, an apartment, a trailer or RV we all have a home placed on property that has been here longer than any one of us, but unlike our homes which we know everything about, we know nothing of the land where it is that our home sits upon. As part of Comparative Colonialism a class available in the University of Texan Pan American and in accordance between that of Dr. Skowronek professor of said class and Dr. Sonia Hernandez and Thomas Knight of the History department of UTPA a research project was developed for such a purpose as to investigate the history behind the land that is we own here in the Rio Grand Valley. This project intends to trace back ownership of the researches individual land starting from this point of age April 2010 all the way back to its original granting by the Spanish crown in 1768, approximately two hundred and forty two years of history.

Why do this? Is a question many people asked when I informed them I was doing this for a class at the university, to which they responded: What's the point of it? The point of this research is to obtain the history of the valley before it is completely lost for future generations. Starting a decade ago construction here in the valley has increased dramatically and the valley I knew by what I see now is completely different from what it was in my childhood. To illustrate this point all those that lived in Alamo, TX. about fifteen years ago can say and even show pictures of how there were agricultural field

everywhere you turned. Now in 2010 there is a hardly one field of agriculture left and those dwindling ones that have survived the dramatical change that occurred can be found engulfed in between, aside or behind that of real estate houses for sale whose realtors stalk these remaining fields like vultures looking for their next available prey to feed upon. Not only is the valley loosing all of its land resources but the land already converted into housing and business areas years past is continuously being cut and or divided into smaller portions from its original tract and passed from hands to hands continuously. Overall the accumulation of all this information to an average person might look like nothing but to researchers that look through these documents can attest that it be tiring and frustrating work for they as I did in research of my property got frustrated because it's too much information too quickly. This information has accumulating in such a short amount time that has demolished historical information with the destruction of many of the valleys history that was not written down before it was constructed upon. Furthermore if research on The Rio Grande Valley land is not started now there wont be anything left to record in future years for the people that know the valley in years past will have unfortunately pass on and with them all the information they might have know will be lost with them because no one cared to ask or write it down when they still could. Construction and advancement isn't bad, for with it brings financial opportunities to this rural place however lets not forget to document what was before otherwise we will be left only with history dating back sixty, seventy years back at most not hundredth's of years as many other places claim to have, which the valley has as well if not further back, we've just forgot to write it down. This is the importance of this research to be a people with history.

Officially the legal description of the property to be researched in this project is known as being that of ½ of the west 20.0 acres of Lot 2 Block 34 of the Alamo Land & Sugar Company Subdivision of Porcion 72, Los Torritos, Santa Ana and El Gato Grants, Hidalgo County, Texas. The regular however mailing address that it is easily more recognized as would be 149 E. Crockett Ave. It was originally purchased by Raul Martinez, Genoveva Gonzalez, Francisco Martinez, Aurelio Martinez, Maria Guadalupe Martinez, Rosalinda Martinez, and Marisela Martinez in 1987 from that of Mike R. Kormeier. It was as my mother puts it “a wonderful place to have lived in for when they first moved in there was no one not a soul for miles wide. All were orchards all around and every spring I would remember every time I opened the windows or the doors the sweet aroma of orange blossoms filling the house. It was good times, peaceful times.”¹ Furthermore for the 5.0 acres of land an upfront installment of two thousand six hundred dollars were required and the total sum when paid in full was that of twenty five thousand dollars.

1987-1900

Before my parents took over the land Mike R. Kormeier had had the land in his possession as he had bought and given as well that of the vendors lien in August 31, 1976² by John H. Northcut the trustee and co partner of M & P Farms for the amount of twenty three thousand dollars for the east ten acres of the west twenty acres of Lot two Block thirty four.

In December 1975 had John D. Mortensen and John G. Phillips founders of M & P Farms bought the same amount of acres from Robert L. Galligan trustee of Walter W.

¹ Interview with Genoveva Gonzalez April 27, 2010 look at Appendix 1

² See Appendix 2

Cross and Frances A. Cross, wife of Water Cross, for the total amount of fifteen thousand dollars to be paid in annual installments of two thousand two hundred thirty five dollars and forty five cents a year.³

Mr. and Mrs. Cross had previously bought the property themselves directly from W. H. McClintock widower of Jane Louise Walker McClintock as well as sole and chief executer of their combined estate in August 1967 for the complete sum of seven thousand dollars in seven annual payments a year.⁴

May 1961 was the when that W. H. McClintock and wife Jane Louise Walker McClintock too over control of the same property form that of E. Knoepfle and Helen Knoepfle paid the first installment of one thousand dollars of the total of seven thousand dollars for such the same amount of land.⁵

E. Knoepfle and wife Helen Knoepfle bought the same property from that of W. S. Ray trustee to that of D. R. Ralston and Roberta E. Ralston proprietors of the East ten acres of the west twenty acres of lot two in block thirty four as was seen that they had that property in their control in their joint account.⁶

D. R. Ralston and Roberta E. Ralston had previously bought it from Lydia B. Leak, Jack G. Leak, her husband and M. Bert Fuller for the total amount of three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars in the year 1946. It is at this time as well that we start to see the legal description of the property change from the said ten acres to being that of the east half of the west twenty acres of said lot two of block thirty four.⁷

³ See Appendix 3

⁴ See Appendix 4

⁵ See Appendix 5

⁶ See Appendix 6

⁷ See Appendix 7

A year prior in 1945 had Lydia B. Leak, Jack G. Leak, gained rights to the property by paying Clement O. Williams and Marie F. Williams his wife six hundred and twenty five dollars with a six per cent annum for two vendor lien notes.⁸

Clement O. Williams himself gained the property in April 1943 from George A. and Euchariste E. d' Hemecourt both original residents of Cook county, Illinois for the price of two hundred dollars down a thousand dollars paid in full by Clement O. Williams and Marie and a hundred dollars every April for ten years amounting to another thousand dollars.⁹

In 1931 did George A. d' Hemecourt buy the land east 15.16 acres of lot two and block thirty four from a fellow Illinois native I. Bernard for the total cost of ten dollars and other valuable considerations.¹⁰

I. Bernard bought the land vendor lien of 15.16 acres east of lot two block thirty four for one thousand three hundred and seventy five dollars to be divided into two hundred and seventy five dollars for five years starting in November 1926 and ending in November 1930. This was to be paid to a Samuel Cole.¹¹

Samuel Cole himself bought the land from Elroy Streeter and his wife Nellie Streeter in January 1921 for the settled amount of ten dollars with full accordance that he should comply with that of the previous arrangements made by John T. Beamer for the Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company.¹²

Elroy Streeter bought the land from the trustees R.E. Creager and Chas T. Knapp

⁸ See Appendix 8

⁹ See Appendix 9

¹⁰ See Appendix 10

¹¹ See Appendix 11

¹² See Appendix 12

representing The Alamo Land and Sugar Company founded out of the state of west Virginia. The amount settled for this transaction was six hundred thousand dollars but included 45.16 acres of land basically being all of lot two, block thirty four.¹³

The Alamo Land and Sugar Company bought from William Shallenberger a native of Illinois for the compromised amount of fourteen thousand dollars that of the area called the “Young league” or the fourth league that pertained to the fourth grand out of the El Gato Grant in Hidalgo TX. This took place on the January of 1917 upon which did release the 45.16 acres of land into the care of Alamo Land and Sugar Company.¹⁴

William Shallenberger and F. F. McElhinney did buy from the John T. Beamer a native of the state of Iowa, four thousand and forty eight and two tenths acres of land for the costly price of one dollar and zero cents and other compensations to be delivered at a later time in June 1913. This to include the reserved land within the sold tract of three hundred and four and three tenth of acreage donated to the building of the railroad by the St. Louis, Mexico, and Brownsville Railroad companied. John T. Beamer had already promised to donate.¹⁵

Early on John T. Beamer had started to buy and collect large parcels of land all along the South Texas, Mexico border and in Jul 1911 he made an accord with The Louisiana Rio Grande Canal Company. For the sum of four hundred three thousand eight hundred and twenty dollars to be divide by a first installment of fifty five thousand then divide the remaining three hundred forty eight thousand eight hundred and twenty dollars for the next three years. Beamer would receive thirty one thousand six hundred and thirty

¹³ See Appendix 13

¹⁴ See Appendix 14

¹⁵ See Appendix 15

two acres of land.¹⁶

Although the researcher looked for from whom The Louisiana Rio Grande Canal Company got the land grants that later they sold to John T. Beamer no results came up. However the researcher did find one more proprietor before the 1800's .This being that of John Closner buying a vast amount of land once pertaining to the larger tract once called Porcion 72. Bought from The Box family heirs containing those of Louisa Box, John L Box, Myona Box de Cavazos, Porfirio Cavazos, Emma Box de Bravo, David de Bravo, Lina Box. The amount paid for this area containing most of Porcion seventy two was fifty dollars in U.S. currency.¹⁷

1899-1800

As time heads back more and more was it seen that it was one family that controlled one area for larger amount of times. Such was the case for the Box family that controlled most of Porcion seventy two from 1903 all the way back to 1875 when it was that L. H. Box the patriarch of the Box family that took control of said area. He did this by out-biding all others present at the auction of the estate of W. M. Robertson in the June 1875. This auction took place due to the fact that sheriff's office seized all of his estate for the state of Texas since there was no heir apparent for W.M. Robertson.¹⁸

The only other deeds found in the 1800's relating to that particular area would be the deeds and or petitions already relating to the Balli family the original Porcion holders. The most modern deed would include the deed of 1857 in which McGraw buys from the Balli family these being Betino Balli, Guadalupe Balli, Ygnacio Balli, Benigno Leal, and

¹⁶ See Appendix 16

¹⁷ See Appendix 17

¹⁸ See Appendix 18

M. Antonia Leal a very large area of acreage including where it is that the property being researched lies upon.¹⁹

The earliest document found in the 1800's would be the very petition in which Benigno Leal the husband of M. Antonia Balli Leal petition the government for the right of Porcion 72 for his wife and his wife's brother Ygnacio Balli in which the court agree and in February 10, 1852 they are officially given unto them.²⁰

1700's

The only recorded deed or grant of the 1700's would include that of the official land grant given upon that of the Jose Maria Balli. The Porcion he was assigned was given to him on May 15, 1768 by the Spanish Crow. Unlike the rest of the other Porcion owners that were defined as antiguo agregado he was given a much larger tract of land than the norm because the are given to him was tough and rough. He was awarded in total five thousand nine hundred and four acres. Then after his land was given over to Benigno Leal and his wife and brother and law for being the direct blood relative of Jose Maria Balli himself.²¹

Jose Maria Balli was one of the five sons of Nicolas Balli and Josefa Guerra de Balli who were in actuality descendants of Pedro Balli II and Pedro Balli the appointed fourth printer of the New World as he had been assigned by King Philippe of Spain in 1574. Because of this when Jose de Escandon started the colonization of Nuevo Santander in 1749, Jose Maria Balli and his brother applied for surveyor's position which

¹⁹See Appendix 19

²⁰Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin: Texas General Land Office, 2009), 195-196

²¹Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin: Texas General Land Office, 2009), 195-196

earned Jose Maria Balli the Porcion 72.²²

The Research presented had been based on the official documents found in that of the Hidalgo County Courthouse Land office so they are up to date. However it is in the researchers opinion that this research paper be updated in a couple of years due to the fact that due to a personal tragedy in our family, we are deeply considering and most have all come to an accord and or acceptance that this land will not for much more time remain in our family's hands.

Two hundred and forty two years this land in the Rio Grand Valley has been occupied. By Spanish, Mexican, American, and all combined; there are many stories many of which we will never know for with progress one must get rid of the old to make way for the new. This is the importance of this research to record that of which was so that it is not forgotten, even after we ourselves turn to dust. So said in this research that of all if not most proprietors who have owned ½ of the west 20.0 acres of Lot 2 Block 34 of the Alamo Land & Sugar Company Subdivision of Porcion 72 have been noted down, for the sole purpose that when it is no longer just empty acreage someone if they search can say this land is as old in history as some of the most researched colonized areas from somewhere else.

²² "Balli Branch" http://members.tripod.com/rickgarza_1/balli_branch.htm(accessed April 28, 2010).

Bibliography

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