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The Llano Grande Grant: The Transformation of Land Ownership in The Rio Grande Valley, 1749-1910

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THE LLANO GRANDE GRANT:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF LAND OWNERSHIP
IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1749-1910

A Thesis

By

MARIA G. VALLEJO

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Major Subject: History

THE LLANO GRANDE GRANT:
THE TRANSFORMARTION OF LAND OWNERSHIP
IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1749-1910

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December 2013

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ABSTRACT

Vallejo, Maria G., The Llano Grande Grant: The Transformation of Land Ownership in the Rio Grande Valley, 1749-1910. Master of Arts (MA), December 2013, 168 pp., 3 tables, 2 figures, references, 149 titles.

The history of the Llano Grande is an important part of Rio Grande Valley life. The thesis presented will analyze the legal ownership of a single land grant from 1749-1910. The modern land tenure in the Rio Grande Valley has its roots in the Spanish land grants. By studying a micro-history of a single land grant we can understand how the land ownership of the Llano Grande and the Rio Grande Valley changed throughout an entire century. The land ownership of the Llano Grande addresses how land was transferred Spanish to Mexican and to Anglo land owners. Also, the rise of Anglo American land ownership in the Llano Grande and their control of Hidalgo County politics. Going beyond the land tenure of the Llano Grande, this thesis will address the historical factors that led to the breakdown of the grant and explain the blueprints and foundations of land tenure in present day in the Rio Grande Valley.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Ramiro Vallejo and María G. Vallejo, who have taught me the meaning of hard work and the zeal for an education. Thank you for all your love, sacrifice, and encouragement throughout my entire life. You have been my main motivation to continue my education these past few years. As well to my siblings, who I hope to inspire for greater and grander ideals.

To my future husband, David Robles, who has encouraged, motivated, and supported me in every step of the way. Thank you for listening to my problems, frustrations, and my excitement over my new discoveries dealing with my thesis work. Your hard work and dedication has inspired me to accomplish my goals.

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The material collected from the Hidalgo County Clerk's office was invaluable to my research. Here I collected the majority of my sources such as deeds, plats, and other court records. Thanks to the Hidalgo County Clerk's office for all their help. I also wish to thank the Special Collections at the University of Texas-Pan American librarians. They were extremely helpful and serviceable. Not only did they keep an eye out for any material that dealt with the Llano Grande, they made every visit a memorable occasion. Thanks to Mark Howe and the International Boundary and Water Commission for providing me maps and court records of great impact in my research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW ON NUEVO SANTANDER

Along the *Río Grande*, the Spanish land grants or *porciones* granted in the mid eighteenth century are an important characteristic of Valley history and life. Through the analysis of the legal ownership of land grants, specifically Llano Grande, changes and patterns of use and distribution of property provide an insight to the Rio Grande Valley land tenure. The grant, located within the modern city limits of Edcouch, Elsa, Mercedes, Progreso, and Weslaco, constituted one of the largest land grants along the *Río Grande* within the jurisdiction of the Spanish villa of Reynosa. Granted by the Spanish Crown in 1790 to Juan José Hinojosa, the Llano Grande contained twenty five square leagues of land, an equivalent of 127,625 acres.¹ Examining the transformation of legal ownership and size of the Llano Grande from the start of Spanish colonization period in 1749 through the 1910 Mexican Revolution, reveals the decline in Hispanic owned *porciones* which in turn marked the beginning of the emergence of Anglo control of the Llano Grande.² The first half of the thesis addresses the formation of the Llano Grande during the Spanish and Mexican period and the literature about that. Chapters three and four deal with acquisition of property by Anglo Americans and Land Corporations. Furthermore, the last chapter of the thesis will address the founding of Weslaco in the early twentieth century.

¹ Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin, TX: Texas General Land Office, 2009), 312.

² The term Anglo American in this thesis is used to identify white non-Hispanic of European origins who were not native to the Rio Grande Valley. Anglo and Anglo American are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

The factors that led to the breakdown of the Llano Grande included economic, political, and societal shifts that affected the Rio Grande Valley as a whole. A major shift in land tenure occurred after the conclusion of the Mexico-United States War in 1848, which established the international boundary line at the Río Grande. The Llano Grande witnessed an increase in the number of owners, including Anglos who arrived with the outbreak of the war and acquired land within the grant. Ranching was the main economic enterprise along the Río Grande and continued to be so until the development of irrigation-based commercial agriculture at the end of the nineteenth century. The railroad and modern method of irrigation of the 1900s transformed the land in the Llano Grande and had a direct influence in the ownership of the grant. These factors shaped and affected the future development of the Llano Grande.

The ownership of the Llano Grande shifted from Spanish, to Mexican, to Mexican American and finally Anglo American proprietors. For over fifty years, Juan José Hinojosa had remained the legal owner of the grant. By 1848, the property was partitioned among his descendants. From then on, the legal owners of the Llano Grande increased in number through the successive generations. Mexican Americans in the post-Mexico-United States War era remained the major proprietors in the Llano Grande.³ Throughout the consecutive decades the grant continued to be broken down, allowing for newly arrived Anglo Americans with access to capital to purchase small sections of the grant. The majority of Anglos who arrived after 1848, included soldiers, merchants, lawyers, and speculators. Anglos came to own substantial acreages in the Llano Grande by the 1880s. By the early twentieth century, the Llano Grande grant was broken down into small forty acre plots sold to American mid-western farmers by land corporations such as the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company.

³ The term Mexican American is used in this thesis to refer to people of Mexican descent living on the northern bank of the Río Grande.

Understanding the Spanish colonization of Nuevo Santander is vital in addressing the foundations of Spanish land grants, especially the Llano Grande. The Lower Rio Grande Valley was part of the northern frontier colony of New Spain, known as Nuevo Santander, established by José de Escandón in 1749. The colony was bounded by the Tampico River to the south, the Gulf of Mexico to the east, the Nueces River to the north, and the colony of Nuevo León to the west. Previously, the arid landscape and the grasslands of the region offered little to the Spanish and were overlooked. Due to the European encroachment and the need to pacify the Native Americans, New Spain was spurred to colonize the territory. By the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century, Spain colonized Nuevo León, Coahuila, San Luis Potosi, and the Tampico region. As a colony of New Spain, Nuevo Santander's economic, political, and social practices left a legacy that came to characterize the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

In order to place the land history of the Llano Grande within the historical context, one needs to assess the literature on Nuevo Santander and the Spanish land grants. However, this literature is scarce; much of the literature that has been examined by both U.S. and Mexican historians provide distinct points of view on Nuevo Santander. The majority of the literature on the Spanish land grants is based on two sources discussed later in this chapter who deal with the process, development, and granting of Spanish land grants along the Rio Grande settlements or *villas del norte*: Galen D. Greaser and Florence J. Scott.

Native Americans along the Río Grande

Native American bands, collectively known as the Coahuiltecs, are an important subject in Rio Grande Valley history, yet the historical literature in this field is limited. The majority of the sources addressing the Coahuiltecs are more archaeological based, yet are

incorporated into the historical literature on the colony of Nuevo Santander. Such sources make a commentary in the subsistence strategies of the bands in south Texas. The Coahuiltecan bands survived on the region's flora and fauna and did not develop permanent settlements. The South Texas arid environment provided limited resources which included deer, small game, fish, as well as prickly pears and other native plants.⁴

One of the first few accounts on the Coahuiltecan came from Álvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, a survivor of the Narvaez expedition, who traversed the Galveston and Río Grande regions of present-day Texas.⁵ Debate and skepticism exists on Cabeza de Vaca, his journey, and the material culture he recounted, yet he provides firsthand descriptions on the Native Americans in this region. Almost a century later, Captain Alonzo de León in his search for the French colony of René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, traversed the region of the Seno Mexicano and Texas. He provided an account on the customs and traditions of the Native Americans he encountered, mainly in the Nuevo León colony.⁶ These primary sources provide the first glimpse into the hunting and gathering groups in the South Texas and Nuevo León regions.

The 1986 dissertation of Martin Salinas titled "Historic Indian Populations of the Rio Grande Delta and Vicinity, An Approach to Definition of Basic Ethnic Units" is one of the most thorough studies on Native American ethnic groups along the Rio Grande Delta. Salinas examined a large body of Spanish documents including mission records and reports by Spanish

⁴ Mario L. Sánchez, ed., *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1991), 18-19.

⁵ Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz, *Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez*, vol. 1 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 93.

⁶ Alonzo de León edited by Israel Cavazos Garza, *Historia de Nuevo León, con noticias sobre Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Texas y Nuevo México: Escrita en el Siglo XVII por Alonso de León, Juan Bautista Chapa, y Fernando Sánchez de Zamora; Estudio preliminar y notas de Israel Cavazos Garza* (Monterrey, N.L.: R. Ayuntamiento de Monterrey 83-85, 1985), 3-119.

officials such as José de Escandón. Through this study, Salinas deciphered and categorized a large number of Native American bands along the Río Grande. Not only does Salinas define ethnic groups, but also addresses the Spanish missions. Within these missions, such as San Joaquin del Monte in the *villa* of Reynosa, the Spanish accommodated the Native American populations in the area. Registered within this mission were the *Comecrudos* and the *Pinto* Native American bands. The *Casas Chiquitas* were recorded, in a survey of the Llano Grande, to be in the vicinity of the Llano Grande.⁷ As such, Salinas in his dissertation aptly places Native Americans within the historical literature and the history of Nuevo Santander.

Martin Salinas moves away from characterizing Native American groups as Coahuiltecan, and instead categorizes distinct ethnic groups from northern Tamaulipas and South Texas. The majority of the Spanish records only characterized the different hunter and gathering bands by physical characteristics, and many bands were wrongly categorized or mixed with other bands in the Spanish records. His work is one of the first which goes beyond the Coahuiltecan term and addresses the different ethnicities, and paid close attention to the history of Nuevo Santander and Native American groups. Even so, his work is limited to the material found within the Spanish documents.

The majority of the material on Coahuiltecan is derived from archaeological sources that use Spanish records such as Escandón's reports. The works by W.W. Newcomb Jr. and T.N. Campbell are anthropological works on the Coahuiltecan. W.W. Newcomb Jr.'s work presents an entire chapter on the Coahuiltecan in *The Indians of Texas* (1961) which discusses the culture, society, and subsistence strategies of these bands. T.N. Campbell in *Coahuiltecan and*

⁷ Martin Salinas, "Historic Indian Populations of the Rio Grande Delta and Vicinity, An Approach to Definition of Basic Ethnic Units," vol. 1 (Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1986), 60, 108, 57-58.

Their Neighbors (1983) as well described the subsistence strategies, yet in his work he argued that the term Coahuiltecan was problematic due to its ambiguity. The first attempts at classification derived from the connections or similarities in language between bands in the south Texas region and were thus classified as Coahuiltecan.⁸ Although written in different times, the works focus on the archaeological background to describe the Coahuiltecan.

In the Rio Grande Valley works on the Native Americans have been sparse. Thomas R. Hester, one of the leading Texas archaeologists, in the 1970s published *Hunters and Gatherers of the Rio Grande Plain and the Lower Coast of Texas*. The work is very succinct and methodically covers the different cultural sequences, the environmental climate, and recovered arrowheads in the Rio Grande Plains.⁹ Mexican historian Patricia Osante, a leading colonial historian, makes a commentary on the lack of archaeological research within the State of Tamaulipas, which could shed more light on the life of Native Americans in Santander.¹⁰ Archaeological material adds to the knowledge on the Native Americans which once called the South Texas plains home.

The majority of the information is derived from Spanish sources, including José de Escandón's and Agustín López de la Cámara Alta's reports on Santander. These Spanish reports, which provided an account of the colonial missions, were the primary source of information on the hunting and gathering bands that joined and acculturated to the Spanish culture. The missions on the frontier sought to pacify and transform the Indians, and were a staple of Nuevo Santander society.

⁸ T.N. Campbell, "Coahuiltecan and Their Neighbors," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, Vol. 10 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 343.

⁹ Thomas R. Hester, *Hunters and Gatherers of the Rio Grande Plain and the Lower Coast of Texas* (San Antonio, TX; Center for Archaeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1976), 3-5.

¹⁰ Patricia Osante, *Orígenes del Nuevo Santander* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997), 15-16.

Within the missions the Native Americans were acculturated under a priest of the religious order of the Apostólico Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Zacatecas.¹¹ According to Cámara Alta's inspection in 1758, the *Nazas*, *Narices*, *Comecrudos*, and *Texones* were located in the vicinity of Reynosa, while the *Pintos*, *Juapaguemes*, and *Catanamepaques* lived in the surrounding areas.¹² While a large number of Native Americans joined the missions, other bands remained as hunters and gatherers. By the nineteenth century the Native Americans ethnic groups began to decline until they were assimilated into Spanish and Mexican society. By the early 1800s the Native Americans had not disappeared from mission records.

The earliest United States work on Nuevo Santander was from Lawrence F. Hill, who characterized Native Americans as either violent or barbaric in nature. He enumerates a small list of groups found within the colony. Published in 1926, his work focused on the earliest period of Nuevo Santander, when the U.S. Southwest had gained importance within the general historical field. Hill work was published after Herbert Eugene Bolton published *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* in 1921, which emphasized the Spanish frontier in North America. Bolton's work highlighted the importance of Spanish colonization in the American Southwest.¹³

The Spanish period of colonization and its development are addressed in the majority of the literature, yet not much emphasis is placed on the Native Americans of the Rio Grande Valley. Juan Fidel Zorilla in *El Poder Colonial en Nuevo Santander* (1989) portrayed the Native

¹¹ Agustín López De La Cámara Alta, *Descripción General De La Colonia De Nuevo Santander*, ed. Patricia Osante (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006), 143-144.

¹² *Ibid.*, 145.

¹³ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 7.

Americans as conflictive and violent among the colonized settlements of Nuevo León.¹⁴ After Escandón's governorship, policies were put into effect to remove the Native Americans.¹⁵ The recent publication of *I Would Rather Sleep In Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of Santa Anita Land Grant* (2003) provides short description of the Native Americans are listed, providing few names and their affiliations with the missions.¹⁶ Although the work is very thorough in regards to the history of the Rio Grande Valley, it does miss the history of Native Americans. As a whole, the sources on Native Americans, both archaeological and historical, need to be further addressed to provide a more comprehensive history of the Native Americans that lived along the Río Grande Valley.

History and Historiography on Nuevo Santander

The Spanish, prompted by the encroachment of European powers and the subjugation of the Natives, made plans to colonize the region of present-day Tamaulipas in 1749. Sixty four years earlier, the French established a colony on the Texas Coast under René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle on February 20, 1685, yet it proved a failure.¹⁷ Regardless of the outcome, the Spanish had concrete evidence of European encroachment and moved towards colonizing the region. Plans for colonization of Nuevo Santander begun as early as 1739, when the King of

¹⁴ Juan Fidel Zorrilla, *El Poder Colonial en Nuevo Santander* (México: Instituto Tamaulipeco de Cultura, 1989), 57-58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁶ Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2003) 38-39.

¹⁷ Robert S. Weddle, "LA SALLE EXPEDITION," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/upl01>), accessed June 06, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association; Sánchez, *A Shared Experience*, 23-24.

Spain promulgated a decree for the establishment of a settlement.¹⁸ The Spanish began the process of establishing a colony in the region they had previously neglected.

By 1748, Escandón led a reconnaissance or *entrada* into the region seeking suitable settlements for the new colony. Escandón divided his forces into seven groups which were to enter the region from different areas and meet at the Río Grande. Two detachments came from the east, three from the south, and one from northeast from the San Antonio de Bexar colony.¹⁹ After compiling the reports by the group leaders, Escandón recommended fourteen sites for settlement, which became the fourteen original *villas* of Santander he founded. The first villa founded on December 25, 1748 was named Santa María de Llera.²⁰ The vast majority of settlers in Santander had come from frontier colonies such as Nuevo León, Querétaro, and Coahuila. These frontier societies had a distinct lifestyle and Nuevo Santander was not comparable to the typical military settlements, the *presidios*, which characterized Spanish colonization along the northern frontier.

Along the banks of the Río Grande five *villas* were founded by José de Escandón. The *villas del norte*, as they came to be known, included Laredo, Revilla, Camargo, Reynosa, and Mier. The easternmost *villas* were Camargo and Reynosa, founded on March 5, 1749 and March 14, 1749 respectively.²¹ Reynosa was to have reoccurring problems with its location due to constant flooding. In subsequent years, Revilla was established on October 10, 1750 while Mier was founded on March 6, 1757.²² On the northern banks of the Río Grande, apart from Laredo,

¹⁸ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 5-6.

¹⁹ Florence J. Scott, "Spanish Land Grants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley," (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1935), 9.

²⁰ Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2000) 29.

²¹ López De La Cámara Alta, *Descripción General*, 142, 146-147.

²² *Ibid.*, 150, 152.

the rancho of Dolores was founded by Don José Vásquez Borrego from Coahuila in 1750.²³ As governor, Escandón was in charge of approving all settlements within the colony.

The historical literature on Nuevo Santander is substantial and includes a large number of manuscripts. The vast majority of sources on Santander date to the 1980s and 1990s and were written by Mexican historians. Patricia Osante, one of the leading Mexican scholars, focuses on the factors of colonization which has been overlooked by many historians. Although this field requires more analysis, strides in the interpretations have been made especially through the late twenty-first century.

The earliest manuscript in English was published in 1926 by Lawrence Hill *José de Escandón and the founding of Nuevo Santander: A Study in Spanish colonization*. The manuscript is a general history of the colony, which focused on the early period of Santander's history up to 1750s. Hill's use of the Spanish archival material is thorough, making good use of the Spanish archives in Mexico City. His work provides a detailed history on the geography of the colony, the foundations of nearby colonies such as Coahuila, Nuevo León, and San Luis Potosi, the foundation of missions, and the history of Nuevo Santander up to 1750s.

Similar to the information gathered on Native Americans, the large majority of primary sources on Nuevo Santander derive from Spanish reports. The Spanish were excellent in documenting the progression and development of the colony. Spanish officials, such as Escandón, wrote accounts of Santander which were sent to New Spain. These records were preserved and provide primary information on the colony. For a thorough analysis on the history and development of Nuevo Santander, it is necessary to analyze these Spanish archival records.

²³ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 30-31.

The main Spanish records included the reports by José de Escandón, Agustín López de la Cámara Alta, and Tienda de Cuervo were cited in most of the historiographical literature on Nuevo Santander. Carrasco (1991) and Osante (1997) both Mexican historians, cite the reports of Escandón within their sources. Both historians cite each other within their works. The Spanish records are essential to understand Nuevo Santander's history and the development of the Río Grande settlements.

The large majority of sources provide general histories on Nuevo Santander, such as the work of Ismael Villarreal Peña. The center of his study was the six river settlements along the Río Grande. Peña presents an account of the founders, settlers, captains, missions, on the *villas* of Laredo, Dolores, Revilla, Mier, Camargo, and Reynosa.²⁴ Similarly, Martin Salinas's thesis focused on the foundations of the *villas* and the missions of the Río Grande delta. Even though these are important sources focusing on the Rio Grande settlements, the material did not provide new research or interpretations.

Advancements and new innovative research on Nuevo Santander history emerged in the historiographical literature by the 1990s. Historians continued to use Spanish sources, yet provided new arguments and points of view. Patricia Osante, a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), has written on Nuevo Santander. She is the editor of Agustín López de la Cámara Alta's report to the Crown. One of her most important works on Nuevo Santander was *Orígenes del Nuevo Santander* (1987) where she argues that economic and political factors were the catalyst for the foundation of Santander. The economic interest in the region by wealthy rancheros in Coahuila and Nuevo León prompted the colonization of

²⁴ Ismael Villarreal Peña, *Seis Villas Del Norte: Antecedentes Históricos de Nuevo Laredo, Dolores, Guerrero, Mier, Camargo y Reynosa* (Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1986), 5-53.

Santander. Carrasco, in his work *El Nuevo Santander y su Arquitectura* (1991), used Escandón to interpret the foundation of the colony and discussed the architecture of the colony. The work analyzes the buildings and constructions of municipal, governmental, and mission structures. Primarily, Carrasco focused on the churches and the missions, and the raw materials of the area which created the distinctive characteristics of the buildings.²⁵ Even though the historical literature of Nuevo Santander was more specialized, the majority of the literature continued to use the same sources and materials in their monographs.

The economic endeavors of Nuevo Santander settlers are present in the majority of the literature published. The northern region of Nuevo Santander was arid and dry, and so ideal for ranching. In this region, ranching became the main economic activity. Small ranches were established on the northern bank of the Río Grande, which were used for grazing livestock.²⁶ The Spanish missions also adhered to the ranching economy. The region maintained ranching as its main economic staple until the end of the 1800s. In the literature, Patricia Osante focused on ranching was the leading factor in Nuevo Santander settlement. Armando Alonzo touches base on the ranching economy in Hidalgo County.

The majority of the Anglo American literature focused on Texas as a whole. Don Worcester's work in *The Texas Longhorn: Relic of the Past, Asset for the Future* (1987) specifically studies the Texas Longhorn cattle. Worcester highlights the importance of the Spanish livestock that helped create the Texas Longhorn. An exception is Armando C. Alonzo's work *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (1998), which focused

²⁵ Jesús Franco Carrasco, *El Nuevo Santander y su Arquitectura*, vol. 1 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1991).

²⁶ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 30-31.

on the ranching economy of Hidalgo County. Alonzo argued that the development of Nuevo Santander established a stratified society in which,

social structure was stratified with three distinct layers. Large land-holders, high governmental officials, and merchants were at the apex of society. *Rancheros*, administrators, and artisans made up the middle group, while the servants and Indians were at the bottom.²⁷

Alonzo does not focus on the actual cattle in comparison to Worcester, but provides a history of the ranching economy along the Río Grande.

In Reynosa, and for most of the settlements in Santander, the military power and control of each villa was held by the captain during Escandón's governorship. Agustín López de la Cámara Alta in 1757 reported that Reynosa had one captain, a sergeant, and nine soldiers along with fifty-seven families.²⁸ Captain Carlos Cantú, replaced by Captain Pedro Estrada, was the leader of the villa and held military and political control.²⁹ This system was dissipated after the *visita general* in 1767.

New interpretations on Santander regarding political and military history were written by Mexican scholars. Monographs such as Zorrilla's *El Poder Colonial en Nuevo Santander* (1989) discuss the political history of the colony, focusing on the office of the governor. Although previous literature placed the foundation of Santander entirely on Escandón's shoulders, Patricia Osante points out other economic and political factors that coalesced and secured the foundation of the colony. Her argument is supported by the research and publication of Jesús Mendoza Muñoz (2005), one of the few works that studied José de Escandón as a person. His political and military career as well as his marriage choices to elite women in Querétaro (María Antonia de

²⁷ Ibid., 44.

²⁸ López de la Cámara Alta, *Descripción General*, 143.

²⁹ Scott, "Spanish Land Grants," 18.

Ocio y Ocampo and to María Josefa Juana de Llera y Bayas) allowed him to rise to power to become the Conde de Sierra Gorda and to colonize Nuevo Santander.³⁰ Muñoz presents a historical biography of José de Escandón focusing on Escandón's life from his time in Querétaro on through the foundation of Nuevo Santander. The leadership of the colony was questioned and analyzed through the monographs published by these Mexican historians.

The historiographical literature on Nuevo Santander has not expanded since the 1990s. No major works on Santander have been recently published. The field as a whole in regards to U.S. sources needs to be further explored, more specific works on the Rio Grande *villas* and their history are far and in between. The material produced by Florence J. Scott, Armando Alonzo, David Montejano, and Galen D. Greaser have written on the history of Nuevo Santander with a focus on South Texas which has addressed part of this gap.

Spanish Land Grants/*Porciones*

The Spanish land grants are an essential part of the history of the Rio Grande Valley. The research on Spanish land grants has gained importance, yet more research is needed to have a more thorough history on land tenure. As a micro-history of a Spanish land grant, this thesis will present a more detailed examination on the factors that led to the breakdown of the Llano Grande. This will connect the land tenure of the Llano Grande to present day Rio Grande Valley property. As such, the study of the Llano Grande land ownership will add to the greater historical literature.

The Spanish land grants and *porciones* are a legacy of the Rio Grande. Understanding the Spanish policies that granted *porciones* and land grants to settlers is essential to grasping the

³⁰ Jesús Mendoza Muñoz, *El Conde de Sierra Gorda don José de Escandón y la Helguera: Militar, Noble y Caballero*. (Cadereyta: Fomento Histórico y Cultural de Cadereyta, 2005), 13-14, 41.

history of the Rio Grande Valley. Jesús Francisco de la Teja intertwines the history of the San Antonio de Bexar colony and the history of land tenure in “Land and Society in 18th Century San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain’s Northern Frontier,” (1998). Teja interconnects the land policies and distribution of property with the changes and interactions of the frontier society. The material gives importance to the land tenure history and the impact it had on the frontier colony of San Antonio that could be applied to Nuevo Santander.

In regards to historical literature, only a handful of monographs have focused on the Rio Grande Valley Spanish land grants. The work by Florence Scott and Galen D. Greaser are the most valuable monographs on the subject. The majority of the literature on the Rio Grande Valley is not as thorough as Scott and Greaser. For example, Lawrence Hill does not address a key factor in the history of Nuevo Santander land tenure history, the General Visit of 1767. Hill only focused on the founding of Santander not on the development of the colony. Florence J. Scott in her Master’s thesis completed in 1935 titled “Spanish Land Grants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley” wrote one of the earliest works which focused on the Rio Grande settlements. The General Land Office of Texas placed emphasis and importance in the Spanish Land Grants and South Texas and published two monographs. The first was the *Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* published in 1988 by Garry Mauro, the Land Commissioner. Secondly, the *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* authored by Galen D. Greaser was published in 2009.

As a Texas Scholar, Scott presented a history of a region that had long been neglected in the major historical narrative of Texas. Florence Johnson Scott focuses on the Rio Grande Valley and use Spanish sources to discuss the formation of Nuevo Santander. Florence J. Scott beginning with her thesis “Spanish Land Grants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley” in 1935

followed by her publication on royal land grants in 1969 are the earliest works focused on the Rio Grande Spanish land grants which made a pathway to the land tenure history of the area.³¹

Both Scott and Greaser's publications presented a basic history of the colonial period of the *villas del norte*. Scott focused on the regulations in establishing the colony as well as the policies in surveying and granting property in the Río Grande settlements. Her work does have factual errors, yet it is one of the pioneering works on Spanish land grants and the Rio Grande history. Her successive publication in 1966 is still cited by many historians and modern day publications such as Greaser (2009) and Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez (2013).

Scott makes the distinction between three types of property in the *villas del norte* which included the *porciones*, land grants, and vacant lands.³² Depending on the condition of the land and the seniority of settlers, grants varied in size. Scott described the colonial hierarchy and qualifications for settlers to receive lands. She focused on the royal edicts and regulations to grant land, and the basis for measuring and granting *porciones* to settlers. Her 1969 *Royal Land Grants* publication studied the owners of the larger land grants and what policies were enacted to receive them. The work is valuable and traces the history of the Llano Grande from its inception to the early twentieth century.³³

Galen D. Greaser's recent publication is a valuable work. The publication uses the General Land archives and Spanish land records extensively. His compilation of all the major land grants and *porciones* in the south Texas region is a significant contribution to the historical literature. Published by the Texas General Land Office, he includes an index of all the Spanish

³¹ Florence Johnson Scott, *Royal Land Grants North of the Río Grande, 1777-1821: Early History of Large Grants made by Spain to Families in Jurisdiction of Reynosa Which Became a Part of Texas After The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848* (Rio Grande City, TX: La Retama Press, 1969).

³² Florence Scott, "Spanish Land Grants," 1.

³³ Scott, *Royal Land Grants*, 21-23.

land grantees in south Texas as well as the court cases of certain land grants. His statistical information and index on individual Spanish land grants throughout South Texas are instrumental in learning about the land grants in this region.

Greaser expands on Scott's work by using updated resources and information. He also corrects Scott's factual errors.³⁴ Scott placed a greater emphasis in the Spanish process in the conveying of land grants, while Greaser elaborated on the post-Mexican American war and the laws that changed the status of Spanish *porciones* and land grants in the South Texas region. Greaser's and Scott's works add to the historical field of Spanish land grants along the Rio Grande.

The 2003 monograph on the Santa Anita Grant *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* added to the historiographical literature on the Rio Grande Valley land grants. The history of the Santa Anita grant is interwoven in the narrative of Rio Grande Valley history. Obviously the well-researched work is very thorough covering every aspect of Valley history since the Spanish period.

The ranching and economic history of Hidalgo County is addressed by Armando Alonzo. He is one of the leading historians in this field and this is one of the most thorough contributions the historical literature. His study of how land tenure is affected by incoming Anglos is an essential part of this thesis on the Llano Grande. Alonzo's work is essential to understanding the life within Hidalgo County as well as the development of the political, economic and social growth of the county.

³⁴ Scott in her 1935 publication does not name Juan José Hinojosa as the proprietor of *porción* sixty-nine. (Scott, "Spanish Land Grants," 96).

Ranching is the main focus of Alonzo's publication, yet the issue of identity is also addressed. Previously, the issue of identity within the colonial period was not explored to a great extent. The creation of the "Tejano" identity is explored throughout the monograph, although Valerio-Jiménez goes more in depth into the subject. Alonzo explains how the Hidalgo County region came to develop its identity.

The recent publication by Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez (2013) studied the social history of the Rio Grande Valley.³⁵ Valerio-Jiménez presents a social history of the region. His themes deal with the construction of race and identity along the Rio Grande borderlands, especially through the changes in governments. His work also delves into the issue of gender, and how the role was forged along the frontier. Interestingly, he brings forth the issue of divorce a topic that has not been covered in much detail in other works. Gender, class, identity, and race are the themes in his new work and provide a new interpretation to the Rio Grande Valley borderland region.

The literature on the Spanish land grants is limited. Outside of few sources presented above, no thorough and well researched works have been published in this field. A large number of non-academic works, genealogical in nature, have been published and many were written by descendants of Spanish land grantees. In regards to academic literature, the borderlands field has come in the latter years of the post-civil rights movement as the history of minorities was explored. The field of borderlands continues develop new perspectives and inquire on the Rio Grande as a border.

³⁵ Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

The Spanish land grants are an important part of the Rio Grande Valley history, yet research on the area needs to be further explored to understand Spanish land grants. The study of the land tenure of the Llano Grande will show the transition of land ownership through time. The thesis does not just present information on the original land grantees, but shows how land ownership changed through time. As Alonzo points out, the decline of Mexican American ownership gave way to Anglo ownership and Anglo corporations. This decline occurred slowly throughout the consecutive decades after the Mexican American War in 1848 in the Llano Grande.

1821-1900s along the Río Grande

The growth and expansion of the *villas del norte* continued until the Mexican Independence in 1821. After Independence, Nuevo Santander ceased to be a colony and became the state of Tamaulipas. Many of the names of the *villas* were changed. For example, Revilla was renamed Guerrero, Tamaulipas. Andrés Tijerina in *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag 1821-1836* analyzed the Mexican period of Texas, yet did not provide a substantial amount of information on the Rio Grande Valley. Greaser (2009) recounts in great detail the effects of the post-Mexican American war on the Spanish land grants.

In the U.S. historiography, the state of Tamaulipas, has received little attention in terms of literature published. In the Tamaulipas period of Texas history, ranching continued to develop and society retained a similar lifestyle. Not much changed within this period. As a new nation, the Mexican government honored land grants conveyed during the Spanish period. In the state of Tamaulipas, land grants were conveyed beyond the *porciones* in the Reynosa in the area

known as the trans-Nueces region. Land and people continued to migrate north through this period of development.

The border dispute between Texas, and consecutively the United States led to the Mexican American War in 1846-1848 against Mexico. The war had a direct impact on the Rio Grande settlements, since many of the first battles were fought along the Rio Grande in Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. After the defeat of Mexico, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848 marked the official boundary at the *Río Grande* and the northern bank *porciones* became part of the United States. The history of the Mexican American War, due to its territorial implications and development in the western expansion, became part of the historical literature.

Tejas had granted land to foreign settlers, mostly American, and many seeking a better life and fortune had arrived. Such migration was a recurrent theme in the state of Texas, yet not in the Rio Grande Valley. In the Valley, a large number of Anglos reached the area during two influx periods. The first occurred during the Mexican American War, which introduced Anglos to the Rio Grande, of whom many remained and began entrepreneurial activities. A few Anglos such as Charles Stillman arrived in Matamoros before the war began. The second wave or influx occurred in 1900s with the arrival of the railroad and commercial agriculture.

David Montejano focused on this period of Anglo influx in *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. He analyzed race relations in Texas, tracing their development through the economic (wage labor), political, and social history. Montejano's work is one most respected works on Anglo and Mexican relations in South Texas. He argues that the early Anglos managed a peace structure and Mexican-American land loss was not as rampant as in other regions of the Southwest. Similarly, Alonzo argued that Tejanos were able to hold on to

their lands longer, yet the changes from ranching, to farming, and to urbanization created the land displacement. The work by Arnolde De León written in 1983, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900*, also addresses the race relations within the Mexican and Anglo relations in Texas, a topic that has received wide attention. Tension and conflict characterized the border and Jerry Thompson's *Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas* published in 2007 looks at the life of Juan Nepomuceno Cortina and the history of Anglo and Mexican relations. Race relations were a major theme within the development of the Rio Grande and the Llano Grande itself.

Few historical works addressed the agency of intermarriage. The Anglo monopoly of politics and the economy displaced the old ranching elites that had once controlled the region. Intermarriage is an important theme in the history of the Rio Grande Valley. Certain families such as the Ballís and Yturrias helped maintain their status among the American community. Writers such as María Raquel Casas discuss interethnic marriage in California, *Spanish-Mexican Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820-1880*. In regards to the Rio Grande Valley, the work by Ana Cristina Downing De De Juana "Intermarriage in Hidalgo County, 1860-1900," written in 1988, is one of the few sources that look at the agency of intermarriage within the Rio Grande Valley power dynamics and the land loss. Her work is largely theoretical, but does look at intermarriage at the local level. Most sources in the region such as Montejano and Alonzo only make references about the subject. More research needs to be address to cover land grants and the agency of intermarriage.

The destiny of land grants after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is addressed by Virginia H. Taylor's work entitled *The Spanish Archives of the General Land Office of Texas* written in 1955. Taylor presents a history of the Spanish land grants and how such grants were registered

with the Texas General Land Office. Policies and regulations in acquiring and housing the records were the main focus of Taylor. She points out the intricacies of the Spanish land grants including the inconsistency of the unit of measurements.. Many of the warranty deeds from the Hidalgo County Court house were measured in *varas*, a Mexican unit of measurement and not all were uniform measurements. The primary focus is not the Rio Grande Valley yet the monograph is important for researchers. Ultimately, the work by Taylor provides a history of the Spanish titles from the creation of those documents to their storage within the General Land Office.

Charles Stillman, John Young, Richard King, Mifflin Kenedy, John McAllen, John Closner, and John Shary were one of the first Anglos who gained wealth in the Rio Grande Valley. A large majority of the literature of the early history of the Rio Grande Valley, portrays these early Anglos as the pioneers who brought civilization to the region. The idea of the region as a wasteland and wilderness is prevalent throughout much of the literature including the thesis works by Oran Randolph Scott (1934) “History of Hidalgo County: 1749-1852,” W. Clyde Norris (1942) “History of Hidalgo County,” and David Martell Vigness (1946) “The Lower Río Grande Valley 1836-1846.” Written in the mid-twentieth century they dismissed the early Spanish and Mexican historical period in the Rio Grande and praised the Anglo development.

A large majority of the literature emphasize the history of Anglo entrepreneurs and developers in the Rio Grande Valley in the 1900s. The economic development of the early nineteenth century was affected by the arrival of the railroad and the development of commercial agriculture. From then on, Mexican ownership of property continued to pass to Anglo corporations. In Hidalgo County, the land loss proceeded at a slower pace since the center of economic life was in Brownsville. In his publications *Gringo builders, Hidalgo County Railroads, Railroads to the Rio*, James Lewellyn Allhands addressed the construction and

development of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexican Railway into Brownsville in 1904 and the effects on the Rio Grande Valley. Allhands himself worked for the railroads and commented on the progress and development of the new Valley cities.

The twentieth century introduction of the railroad and commercial agriculture led to the economic viability of Rio Grande and affected the Llano Grande. The Valley By-liners, *Story of Texas Tropical Borderland*, wrote a three volume collection of locally based research by non-historians. The material has information on distinct historical events and people that had a part of the Rio Grande Valley, including the life of Florencio Saenz an owner in the Llano Grande.³⁶ Although produced by non-historians, the work has valuable information for researchers.

For this thesis, the bulk of the research materials dealt with are warranty deeds from the Llano Grande. The warranty deeds, the legal title of ownership, are the main material used in the thesis to trace the land owners of the Llano Grande through time. The court records are located in the Hidalgo County Courthouse in Edinburg, Texas. The record of ownership pointed out the changes from Hinojosa's descendants to Anglo settlers, and shows how the land ends up being blocks and subdivisions of the cities of Progreso, Weslaco, Mercedes, Edcouch and Elsa. Abstracts of title compiled by abstract companies offer substantial information. However, a large majority of these records date to 1850s after the county of Hidalgo was founded. Previous to the Mexican American War, the property had been maintained in large part within the Hinojosa descendants.

Archival material used was located in the Special Collections housed at the University of Texas-Pan American include the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company and the

³⁶ Frances Wyatt Isabel, "Florencio Sáenz, *Hacendado* of Toluca Ranch," in *Rio Grande Roundup: Story of Texas Tropical Borderland* by Valley By-Liners, Book 3 (Mission, TX: Border Kingdom Press, 1980) 99-106.

John Shary Collections. The Irrigation Company files contained numerous Water Tax records, School District Tax Records, and State and County Tax records. Through these records the management of the county plots and irrigation practices and the land value of the properties on the Llano Grande. Within the John Shary collection, the newspapers and advertisements on the Rio Grande Valley are an important characteristic to the development of the “Magic Valley” iconography. Advertisements from the San Antonio Express were another aspect of the land tenure in the valley. Advertisements on the Rio Grande Valley and the construction and development of the land in the Rio Grande Valley, show how the Llano Grande was affected by the early twentieth century development.

The research was further expanded to include material on the city of Weslaco. The town site charters, warranty deeds, on an individual property. Weslaco is analyzed to understand the land tenure of Weslaco and the Llano Grande as a whole. The final chapter will focus on Weslaco and the patterns of land tenure will be exemplified in the city. Here, the pieces of the puzzle fit into place to create present day Weslaco and make a commentary on the land tenure of the Llano Grande.

Conclusion

The literature about Nuevo Santander and the Río Grande region has grown greatly in the past three decades, yet works within the historical field have not expanded greatly. There is still research that should be done on the Spanish land grants. This thesis will add to the literature available on the Lower Rio Grande Valley focusing specifically on a single land grant, that of the Llano Grande. Here we will see not only how the Spanish Land Grants came to exist, but addresses the ownership of the Llano Grande. The changes on the Llano Grande through the

course of almost two centuries until 1910 are drastic. Ace twenty five leagues of the Llano Grande. At the end of this time period, the Mexican Revolution and the removal of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico mark the end of the thesis. My work incorporates the beginning of the railroad and the commercial agriculture that will characterize the Rio Grande Valley or the “Magic Valley” of South Texas.

Through the study of the legal ownership of the Llano Grande for the course of over a century we can observe the breakdown of one of the largest land grants along the Río Grande. The importance of tracing the chain of title within the Llano Grande is invaluable to the history of the Rio Grande Valley. The land.Land and property are closely connected to present day owners. Now marked by blocks and subdivisions, the review of the individual land grant aims to show how the land within the Spanish land grants transformed into the present day property.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE LLANO GRANDE

The Spanish control of the Lower Rio Grande Valley was fundamental to the formation of the Llano Grande. During Spain's reign in the Americas, the Spanish Crown granted Nuevo Santander colonists property in the form of *porciones*. Among these grantees was Juan José Hinojosa who, due to his military contributions as captain of Reynosa, was granted two *porciones* along the northern banks of the Río Grande. Many elites gained additional property from their designated *porción*, including Hinojosa who was conveyed the Llano Grande grant. In order to understand how Hinojosa gained the Llano Grande, it is necessary to analyze the foundation and development of Nuevo Santander including the patterns of land distribution issued by New Spain and the Spanish Crown.

Awareness of Spanish land tenure policies are necessary to comprehend how the land grants and *porciones* were established along the Río Grande. After the Llano Grande was granted to Hinojosa, the land ownership of the grant began to change. Land policy changes reflected the economy, the environment, the population, and the migration of not only Spanish but Mexican and late American settlements who established residency along the Río Grande. Examining the land in which Spanish, Mexican and Americans settled and coexisted helps to understand a more in-depth history of the region.

The land policies behind the foundation of large land grants and particularly the effects of

the Mexican American war, I argue, affected the construction and development of the Llano Grande. Between 1790 and the early decades after 1848, a pattern emerges in which the Llano Grande is continuously subdivided. As was custom within the Llano Grande, the land grant had been held communally under the family patriarch, Juan José Hinojosa, in undivided interests. The property was not partitioned, yet the descendants had access to the property. Such arrangement was set in place since the land grant was formally granted to Hinojosa in 1790 in perpetuity. By 1848, a few months before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the Llano Grande was formally divided by the Matamoros, Tamaulipas courts. The breakdown of the grant came with the Dupouy Partition of 1848, which will be discussed later in the chapter. This irrevocably changed the history of the Llano Grande.

Further, by 1850, Anglos began to move into the region although their presence was small. Anglo lawyers and merchants were some of the first non-Mexican Americans who purchased *derechos* or property in the Llano Grande. Although the land was now divided, Mexicans, who were now Mexican Americans under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, remained the majority of the landowners of the Llano Grande.

Thus, the late nineteenth century marked a decline in Mexican ownership of land. The deconstruction of Mexican American power in the Llano Grande ensued through the sale of property to Anglo Americans. The Anglo American control of land in the Llano Grande was a slow process only succeeding by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Mexican Americans, in contrast to other regions of the southwest, maintained their extensive property as the majority of land owners in the Llano Grande for a substantial amount of time. The decline Llano Grande presents a microcosm of the greater process of Mexican American land tenure in the Rio Grande. Spain, Mexican, and later Texas land policies shaped the history of the Llano Grande.

Llano Grande: Spanish and Mexican Period

Frontier life along the Rio Grande revolved around the *villas* established by José de Escandón. The *villas* were concentrated on the southern bank of the Río Grande. Here, the settlers from the *villas del norte* established their homes. The northern bank, on the other hand, served as the grazing lands for the livestock that fueled the cattle and sheep industry in the region. Few ranching settlements, such as Rancho de Dolores under José Vásquez Borrego, were established on the northern bank.³⁷ Initially, the northern bank did not have the adequate infrastructure and lacked the protection available in the *villas*. Not many ventured north to settle. Conditions improved during the last half of the eighteenth century. From the inception of Santander in 1749 through 1810, the population of the *villas del norte* continued to increase, offering more protection from Native American attacks.³⁸ Further, when the *villas del norte* were officially surveyed in 1767, the town center or plaza became the focus of life within each villa. Most owners of the northern *porciones* used their land grants as grazing properties, while most maintained residences in Reynosa.

Nuevo Santander and San Antonio de Bexar were frontier settlements along Spain's northern frontier. The frontier society was based on the mission, presidio, and the town as these "served as the principal tools for hispanization in northern New Spain."³⁹ Nuevo Santander was founded in 1749, fairly late, by the Spanish Crown. San Antonio (de Valero), on the other hand, was established in 1718 by Martín de Alarcón.⁴⁰ The San Antonio colony attracted settlers with

³⁷Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin, TX: Texas General Land Office, 2009), 12.

³⁸Ana Cristina Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage in Hidalgo County, 1860-1900" Master's Thesis, University of Texas-Pan American, 1998, 30-31.

³⁹Jesus Francisco de la Teja, *Land and Society in 18th Century San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (PhD. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1988), 7.

⁴⁰Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage in Hidalgo County, 1860-1900," 26.

the promise of generous land grants to be used for large-scale ranching. The institution of the hacienda did not develop in this frontier region, but as historian Jesus Francisco de la Teja argued, the technique of ranching came to be developed and used in the frontier ranches.⁴¹ The Canary Islanders became the dominant group within the San Antonio colony, and as such controlled the politics of the area and had access to the land and water. With their arrival land was officially distributed.⁴² The town lots near the center of town were more highly valued due to their location and the protection from Indian attacks. These lots were purchased for twice the prices of lots located to the north or west of town.⁴³ In the *villas del norte*, no large dominant group such as the Canary Islanders existed; however, elite ranching families emerged and among them were the Hinojosas and Ballís from Reynosa.

In a similar fashion, Escandón attracted families to settle in Nuevo Santander with the promise of land. He offered two *sitios* to each settler as an incentive. Each *sitio* equaled one league of land or 4,428 acres.⁴⁴ Although Escandón did not divide the land during his time as governor, by 1767 the territory in all Nuevo Santander was granted to the colonists. Viceroy Carlos Francisco de Croix ordered a *visita general* in 1766 appointing Field Marshal Juan Fernando de Palacio and José Osorio Y Llamas to investigate Escandón's conduct as governor and implement royal *cédulas* in Santander.⁴⁵ Distributing land among the settlers was one of the objectives for the *visita*. Palacio and Osorio Y Llamas began surveying and plotting the land on

⁴¹ De la Teja, *Land and Society in 18th Century*, 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 142, 167.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁴⁴ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 9; Florence J. Scott, *Royal Land Grants North of the Rio Grande 1777:1821: Early History of Large Land Grants Made by Spain to Families in Jurisdiction of Reynosa Which Became a Part of Texas After The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848* (Rio Grande City, TX: La Retama Press, 1969), 14.

⁴⁵ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 25.

the northern *villas* of Santander and finished on December 1768 in the southern section of the colony.⁴⁶ In a systematic manner, the land then was granted.

The royal representatives arrived in Reynosa in August 22, 1767. Juan Antonio Ballí and José Matías de Tijerina were elected the representatives of Reynosa in the presence of Juan José Hinojosa, the captain of Reynosa. The royal surveyors were joined by two locally appointed surveyors José María Ballí and José Antonio Velasco to survey and plot out the layout of the villa. José María Ballí and Juan José Hinojosa were key members in surveying and distributing the land in Reynosa through the *visita general* in 1767. Hinojosa, as the captain of Reynosa, notified and gave “possession of the lands” to Reynosa and due to his status he received a double *porción*.⁴⁷ Historian Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez argues that wealthy land owners were the “agents of the state” in the frontier and “received powerful positions,” which was evident with the social and political positions enjoyed by Juan José Hinojosa and José María Ballí.⁴⁸

The surveying was done swiftly within the colonies and the *villas del norte* were no exception. Following the same procedure for all the *villas*, the boundaries off the town was the first to be measured. The measurements were taken by extending a cord known as the *cordel*, the standard measuring rope of 50 varas.⁴⁹ The *cordel* was extended in all cardinal directions creating the outline of the town square or plaza. The eastern lots were the religious buildings including the church, while the western section was for the jail and other municipal buildings.⁵⁰ Surrounding the town square, small lots of land were granted to registered colonists

⁴⁶ Ibid., 26, 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 68, 67.

⁴⁸ Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013) 51.

⁴⁹ Scott, *Royal Land Grants*, 14.

⁵⁰ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 68.

to build homes within a certain amount of time.⁵¹ This arrangement let the families of settlers continue to live in a populated area while the rancheros traveled to their respective land grants to maintain their ranching enterprises, especially those who received land grants on the northern bank of the Rio Grande Valley.

From then on, the surveyors measured the territory within the jurisdiction of each villa. Within Reynosa ninety-two settlers sought to gain land, yet only eighty *porciones* were granted due to the fact that many did not meet the requirements or left the colony beforehand.⁵² In order to decide the amount of land granted to settlers, the commission set qualifications for settlers based on seniority and merit. In terms of seniority, the primitive settler or his children were the oldest settlers who had lived in the colony for six years or more and was granted two leagues of grazing territory and also gained twelve *caballerias* for agriculture.⁵³ An old settler, who resided more than two years and less than six, received two leagues of pastureland and six *caballerias*. Recent arrivals only received two leagues of land for grazing if they had lived two years in the colony or less. Lastly, captains within each villa, such as Juan José Hinojosa, received twice as a primitive settler.⁵⁴ Land was also granted by merit to those men who provided services to the Crown. Many men of military and political backgrounds with wealth were able to gain large land grants from the Crown, such as the Llano Grande.⁵⁵ The *visita general* of 1767 marked the first major land policy from the Spanish Crown, which had a lasting effect in the Rio Grande Valley.

⁵¹Scott, *Royal Land Grants*, 14.

⁵²Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 68.

⁵³A *Caballería* measured 125 acres each and a league contained 4443 acres from Florence Scott's works *Royal Land Grants* pg. 14 and Scott "Spanish Land Grants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley", 53. Valerio-Jiménez stated that a two sitios or league was 8856 or 4428 per league, acres which differs from Scott's measurements.

⁵⁴Scott, *Royal Land Grants*. 14-15.

⁵⁵Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope*, 55.

The *porciones* along the Río Grande were conveyed in large part due to the economy and environment of the region. Ranching dominated the economy as well as the social life in the *villas del norte*. Inspection reports on Nuevo Santander by José de Escandón, José Tienda de Cuervo, and Agustín López de la Cámara Alta all pointed to the increase in population and a large number of livestock. In Cámara Alta's report to the Spanish Crown, he noted that the region had become very profitable due to trading ranching products. Reynosa, according to Cámara Alta, reported a large number of livestock, indicative of the ranching practices. The inventory included "Caballos mansos [Horses] 233...Reses [Cattle] 1 216...[and] Ganado menor [small livestock] 13 810."⁵⁶ The grasslands of the Río Grande were ideal for livestock, and the number of livestock in such reports indicated the importance of ranching. Farming, on the other hand, was possible only for subsistence purposes due to the aridity and the lack of large-scale irrigation projects.

Ranching was essential in the Río Grande settlements and soon trade flourished with neighboring colonies. Hides and tallows procured from the cattle along the Río Grande were traded with the surrounding colonies for food staples. The southern *villas* traded the farming goods produced while the northern section provided ranching products. Ranching along the northern boundary of Santander was the main economic enterprise for over a century.

The Río Grande land grants were divided as concessions for ranching developments. The eighty *porciones* owned in the vicinity of Reynosa were granted vast tracts of land for grazing. "Surveyors occasionally made adjustments in the size of the *porciones* when they considered that part of the tract was not suited for the intended purpose of grazing livestock."⁵⁷ Ranching, as

⁵⁶ Agustín López De La Cámara Alta, *Descripción General De La Colonia De Nuevo Santander*, ed. Patricia Osante (México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006) 144.

⁵⁷ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 68; Quote Greaser, 67.

expressed by Emilia Schunior Ramírez, was a way of life in the region.⁵⁸ She wrote, *Ranching Life in Hidalgo County after 1850*, based on oral histories on the Río Grande and on the ranching system. She stated that by 1820, forty to fifty ranches existed in present day Hidalgo County.⁵⁹ Clearly, ranching became the dominant industry along the Río Grande lasting well into the late nineteenth century.

The accessibility of water was a primary concern for the region's settlers. Since the Río Grande was the only source of water, all the *porciones* had access to the river. Historian Andrés Tijerina presented the land-water concept, of which accessibility to water was a factor in the division of property. The *porciones* along the Río Grande were conveyed as a "function of their size and number, [and] based on the principle that all units should share a *porción* or portion of the available stream. The land unit, then, represented the right of each land owner to equal share of the area's water."⁶⁰ The *porciones* had a distinct, narrow and rectangular shape, which extended an average of fifteen miles. If the number of settlers was higher for a certain villa, the *porciones* were adjusted to create properties smaller in width, yet longer in length. As such, tracts of land were granted "as a concession to aridity and space vegetation, land grant allowed for large, often vast, expanses."⁶¹ Settlers also had access to the Río Conchos and San Juan rivers, both tributaries to the Río Grande, for the sustainability of livestock and the grantees. While *porciones* had access to water via the Río Grande, larger land grants did not have access to water. The large majority of the land grants were located above the *porciones*, with the

⁵⁸ Emilia Schunior Ramírez was born in 1902, was educated in the Río Grande Valley and throughout her life she was very active in education South Texas

⁵⁹ Cynthia E. Orozco, "RAMIREZ, EMILIA WILHELMINA SCHUNIOR," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fradv>), accessed April 08, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. Emilia Schunior Ramírez, *Ranch Life in Hidalgo County After 1850* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1971), pt.1, n.p.

⁶⁰ Andrés Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas under the Mexican Flag 1821-1836*, reprint 1994 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

exception of the Llano Grande, La Feria, and a few others that had the Rio Grande as their southern boundary.⁶² As a whole, Rio Grande settlements were divided on the accessibility to water and surrounding environment.

The land grants on the northern bank were designated as a way to extend the ranching properties of many influential families in Reynosa.⁶³ The Ballís and the Hinojosas were both prominent families and through intermarriage their elite positions were further strengthened.⁶⁴ The Ballís arrived with José de Escandón when Nuevo Santander was established, and were known as the earliest founding or *primitivo* settlers.⁶⁵ The Hinojosas, a prominent military family, came from the colony of Nuevo León. Juan José Hinojosa's grandfather Lieutenant Diego Hinojosa and his wife María Cantú Treviño were born around 1640 in Nuevo León and were married in 1663. Diego became the Lieutenant of the Valley of San Antonio de los Llanos.⁶⁶ One of their seven children was Captain Diego Hinojosa Cantú, who was born in Cerralvo, Nuevo León. He married Josefa de la Garza on April 29, 1694 and had twelve children including Juan José Hinojosa.⁶⁷ Juan José Hinojosa first settled in Camargo and then moved to Reynosa where he became captain of the villa.⁶⁸ Also, according to Alicia Hinojosa Ramírez, a descendant compiling a genealogy, Captain Juan José Hinojosa served as mayor of Reynosa

⁶² Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 83-84.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁴ Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2003) 43.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁶ Marion B. Arpee, *Lieutenant Diego Hinojosa of El Nuevo Reyno de Leon, Mexico* (Harlingen, TX: M.B. Arpee, 1988) x, 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

while applying for the title to the Llano Grande.⁶⁹ From Nuevo León to Reynosa, the Hinojosas maintained a military presence and were also prominent members of Santander society.

The family of Juan José Hinojosa was large. He married María Antonia Inéz Baéz de Benavidez and had eight children with her; these descendants became the owners of the Llano Grande.⁷⁰ Juana Hermenejilda Hinojosa born around 1745 was the first child of Juan José Hinojosa, and was born a few years before the founding of Nuevo Santander.⁷¹ Hinojosa had five daughters: Juana, María Ygnacia, Josefa, Rosa María, and Manuela Hinojosa. The sons of Juan José Hinojosa were Vicente, Cipriano, and Juan José Hinojosa.⁷² The family was numerous, and was able to maintain ownership of the Llano Grande for a long period of time, as noted by historian Armando Alonzo. Due to the economic benefit of large families, the children of Juan José Hinojosa were able to retain the property within the family.⁷³

Juan José Hinojosa's elite position in Reynosa as captain in 1767 allowed him to receive a larger *porción*. Hinojosa was granted *porción* number sixty nine within the jurisdiction of Reynosa. The *porción* "was twice the usual size of a *primitivo poblador*," and included 12,799 acres in modern-day Pharr, Texas.⁷⁴ As a family, the Hinojosas and the Ballís gained substantial acreage in what is now the Río Grande Valley. The husband of Ygnacia Hinojosa, José Narciso Cavazos, an *agregado*, categorized as an old settlers who had lived in the colony more six years

⁶⁹ Alicia Hinojosa, *The Hinojosa Family: From Mier, Tamaulipas, Mexico to Texas* (Somerville, New Jersey: A. Hinojosa Perone, 1992) 38.

⁷⁰ Juan José Hinojosa's wife is named differently within different sources, at times "Baéz Benavidez" "Ballí Benavidez. The genealogy compiled by Alicia Hinojosa she is referred as María Antonia Inez Ballí de Benavidez, and in the Hidalgo and Starr Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties that Lie in the "Llano Grande" and "La Blanca" Grants in Hidalgo County, Texas* referred to Hinojosa's wife as María Ballí.

⁷¹ Arpee, *Lieutenant Diego Hinojosa*, 17.

⁷² Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties That Lie In The "Llano Grande" and "La Blanca" Grants in Hidalgo County, Texas* (Edinburg, TX: The Company, 1918) 1-2.

⁷³ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 105.

⁷⁴ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 75, 312.

sand more than two and was also a soldier.⁷⁵ Cavazos lived in Santander since 1761 and was granted *porción* seventy one with 5,314 acres.⁷⁶ Narciso Cavazos had been “a native of El Pilon in...Nuevo ...León, and a resident of Reynosa,” who had migrated to the *villas del norte* as Juan José Hinojosa did.⁷⁷ He did not receive a double *porción*, but he was able to gained *porción* 72.⁷⁸ José María Ballí, husband of Rosa María Hinojosa, also an *agregado*, was granted *porción* seventy two with 5,904 acres.⁷⁹ Although we know little about the relationship between those families, we do know they were prominent members of Reynosa and had enough wealth to gain the larger land grants.

After the *porciones* were granted in 1767, settlers of Reynosa gained additional property. The large land grants were the second phase of expansion in the *villas del norte*. Land also could be acquired by a *composición* as well as a purchase. A *composición* was the legal process implemented by Spanish crown to correct “the widespread unauthorized occupation of land or to clear defects in title.”⁸⁰ Applicants, as part of the terms, paid the Crown for acquiring official titles to land they had previously settled without proper authorization.⁸¹ The Ballís and Hinojosas “and their large circle of in-laws acquired title to most of the river land on its north bank between a point west of the present town of Weslaco and on down to Port Isabel.”⁸² Through *composiciones* the Hinojosa family was able to secure official titles to properties they

⁷⁵ Scott, *Royal Land Grants*, 14-15; Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 179.

⁷⁶ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 75, 205; Cavazos is referred as either “Narciso” or “Narcizo” throughout primary sources and historical literature, yet within this thesis he will be referred as “Narciso.”

⁷⁷ Arpee, *Lieutenant Diego Hinojosa*, 18.

⁷⁸ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 75.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 75, 195.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸² Florence J. Scott, *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande; A Historical Record of Spanish Exploration, Subjugation and Colonization of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the activities of José Escandón, count of Sierra Gorda, Together with the Development of Towns and Ranches under Spanish, Mexican and Texas Sovereignties, 1747-1848*, Revised ed.(Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1966), 103.

had previously occupied. Captain Juan José Hinojosa and José María Ballí applied jointly for the “Llano Grande” and “La Feria” land grants on July 4, 1776.⁸³ Both made the argument that the land within “San Vicente del Llano Grande” had been cultivated for the better part of ten years “with their ranches and herds.”⁸⁴ Due to his ranching activities, Juan José Hinojosa occupied tracts of land for grazing livestock and then applied to gain the official title to what became the Llano Grande. This was a common practice in the region.

The lands beyond the *porciones* were royal lands which could be purchased by Spanish residents. While the land was fairly inexpensive, the costs for the surveys, fees, and the litigation for the property only allowed the wealthy and politically connected settlers to gain land grants. The process began with the *denuncio* or claim to gain legal title of land to the municipal authorities.⁸⁵ The claimed property was surveyed, and the application was taken to the Intendencia of San Luis Potosí which reached the Viceroy of New Spain. The applicants were politically influential men who had the financial backing to pay for fees and improvements to the land.⁸⁶ Since the Crown wished to continue expanding north, “laws gave preference to those who actually used the land over those who held it by virtue of a *denuncio* or claim.”⁸⁷ The Crown gained revenue from these sales and expanded Spanish control.

The Hinojosa family benefited most from this policy. Juan José Hinojosa gained 140,424 acres from the Llano Grande and *porción* sixty-nine on the northern bank of the Río Grande.⁸⁸

⁸³Brian Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1985) 25.

⁸⁴ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 79-82; Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of the Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc., In The Llano Grande Grant, Hidalgo County, Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick-Clarke Litho Co., 1926), 5 found in Llano Grande Tract-Abstract, “Plantation Company”, Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

⁸⁵ Scott, *Royal Land Grants*, 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21, 23.

⁸⁷ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 121.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 312.

The rest of his family including his son, son-in-laws, and grandchildren gained an extensive land grants on the northern bank. Vicente Hinojosa, José María Ballí (his children), and José Narciso Cavazos were the prominent members of the family who received additional land grants. José María Ballí, who had applied for the “La Feria” grant with Juan José Hinojosa, gained the title to that property in 1790. His wife Rosa María Ballí gained the property in his stead since he had died before the property was officially granted. The 53,140.8 acres of the La Feria grant bordered the Llano Grande to the east. Furthermore, Rosa María Ballí’s children gained additional land grants north of the Río Grande. Juan José Ballí gained the San Salvador de Tule grant of approximately 315,391 acres in Hidalgo, Brooks, Kenedy, and Willacy Counties. Nicolás Ballí with his nephew, Juan José, gained the title to “Padre Island” of 50,925.8 acres on the coast issues by the State of Tamaulipas in 1829.⁸⁹ Narciso Cavazos applied for and was granted the “San Juan de Carricitos” grant on February 22, 1792. The 601,657 acres of this grant comprised land within present day Willacy, Kennedy, and Hidalgo Counties.⁹⁰ Vicente Hinojosa, with the support of his sister Rosa María Ballí, gained the title to “Las Mesteñas, Petitas, y la Abra” grant with 92,976.4 acres. As a whole, the family gained substantial acreages in the Río Grande Valley.

The legal process to obtain the title of ownership of a Spanish land grant was a long one, and in the case of the Llano Grande took fourteen years to acquire. Juan José and José María Ballí had applied for the Llano Grande and La Feria grant in 1776 and the title was officially conveyed in 1790. By then, both José María Ballí and Juan José Hinojosa had died and the property was held by the descendants. The descendants of Hinojosa maintained the grant intact for grazing livestock and accessibility to the Rio Grande.

⁸⁹ Ibid.,198.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 203.

The larger land grants such as Narciso Cavazos' "San Juan de Carricitos" did not have access to permanent water supplies such as the Río Grande. Due to the lack of water, the climate, and the geography, the land grants were substantially larger in this, the trans-Nueces region. With no access to permanent river supplies, wells were constructed to gain water for livestock and the owners. The San Salvador de Tule and the "Las Mesteñas, Petitas, y la Abra" grants faced similar obstacles, and water was accessed through these wells. The region was previously unattractive because of the lack of water resources and the vulnerability to Indian attacks by such groups as the Comanches and Apaches.⁹¹ Water was one of the key concerns for land grantees who owned livestock in the larger land grants north of the Rio Grande.

The lack of accessibility to water did not stop further migration north. Even after Mexican Independence, the state of Tamaulipas continued to expand northward toward the Nueces River. Previously, Escandón had planned to expand settlement to the Nueces, yet Indian attacks and the isolation from settlements made the project unfeasible. Historian Armando Alonzo argued that a second wave of expansion to the north began in the 1770's due to the increase in population and the absence of Indian attacks. In 1749, the *villa* of Reynosa had 279 settlers, excluding children, and by 1794 the population had increased to 1,191 settlers. By 1828-29 the population stood at 4,060 settlers.⁹² A large majority of land grant applicant sought property in the Nueces region in order to extend their grazing properties. Tamaulipas sought to attract a larger number of settlers into the region by passing the colonization law of 1830, yet it

⁹¹ Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope*, 45.

⁹² Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 41. The statistical data from Table 2.1 in *Tejano Legacy*.

differed from Texas colonization laws which attracted Anglo settlement.⁹³ The Mexican *rancheros* continued to expand north towards the Nueces region seeking property.

Porciones granted Nuevo Santander colonist with property, yet land grants also facilitated the territorial expansion of influential Reynosa families. The Hinojosas were politically connected and had the wealth to gain larger properties. The majority of their property was located on the northern banks of the Río Grande. These *porciones* and land grants were one of the lasting legacies of the Spanish empire in Nuevo Santander, *villas del norte*, and the Rio Grande Valley.

War and Transition along the Rio Grande

When the Spanish had lost their foothold on New Spain and Mexico gained its independence in 1821, Nuevo Santander ceased to exist. Nuevo Santander became the state of Tamaulipas. Since the new state constitution, adopted in 1825, upheld the validity of the Spanish land grants, the grantees did not suffer from the transition to the Mexican government.⁹⁴ Under the Mexican government, Tamaulipas continued to grant land closer to the Nueces River. When the Republic of Texas claimed the Río Grande as its southern boundary, the residents in the Rio Grande continued to transact their legal proceedings through the Mexican *villas* on the southern bank of the Río Grande.

Boundary disputes and the U.S. desire to acquire Nuevo Mexico and California escalated into a full scale war between Mexico and the United States which began on May 1846. The first battles occurred in Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma along the Río Grande. The war lasted two

⁹³ Leroy P. Graf, "Colonizing Projects in Texas South of the Nueces, 1820-1845," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (Apr. 1947): 435, accessed June 6, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30237489>.

⁹⁴ Scott, *Historical Heritage*, 125.

years, and officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in the spring of 1848. With the Río Grande as the new boundary between the United States and Mexico, the land grants on the northern bank were split from their southern counterparts.

After annexation rapid Mexican American land loss was a prevalent theme throughout the southwest, yet it was not the case for the Spanish land grants along the Río Grande. The Mexican American land owners within the Llano Grande maintained the property in their hands for a longer period of time. Anglo Americans who sought free property within the Rio Grande only found landowners of Spanish land grantees. The land continued to remain in the grantees' descendants' or Mexican ownership. Their power began to decline, yet the land remained in the hands of Mexican American land owners. Nuevo Santander, in comparison, “hardly ever granted land to Anglos and Europeans.”⁹⁵ In Texas, the American residents controlled the land, politics, and the economy in the region, yet that was not the case in the Rio Grande settlements. Anglo Americans came to control the politics and the economy in the region in the 1850s, prior to gaining the large majority of ownership in the Llano Grande.

The Dupouy Partition of 1848

By the end of 1847, descendants of Juan José Hinojosa and interested parties agreed to partition the property and began the process of surveying and dividing the property. In 1848, the legal document of the agreement was recorded in the city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Different pressures, such as the Mexican American War and internal strife within land owners, led to the division of the grant into eight shares. The partition marked the initial stages of the breakup of the Llano Grande.

⁹⁵ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 149.

The Llano Grande was divided into eight shares for each of the eight children of Juan José Hinojosa. In order to partition the property a survey of the grant was conducted from January 3, 1848 to March 29, 1848 by Alfredo Dupouy.⁹⁶ This act officially divided the land grant after fifty eight years under Juan José Hinojosa's name. Although he died before the land grant was officially granted in 1790, the children of Hinojosa retained the Llano Grande under his name until 1848. This partition was pivotal to the changes that ensued after the Mexican American War.

Although, the Llano Grande had been under a single owner, land transactions occurred within the grant. As David Montejano stated, the Rio Grande lands had been held in “undivided ‘*derechos*,’ or rights, a colonial practice dating back to the late sixteenth century.”⁹⁷ Rights or *derechos* allowed access to the property while maintaining the integrity of the grant as a whole. For example, Juana Hermenejilda Hinojosa granted *derechos* to her son-in-law Nicolás García y Garza. Juana, as a gift to Nicolás, gave him her rights to the Llano Grande on September 1, 1826 for providing for her after her husband's death, Antonio Moralez, on September 1, 1826. Such rights granted him access to the “cattle lands” in the Llano Grande.⁹⁸ Manuel Cavazos, son of Ygnacia Hinojosa, transferred his interest to his sister Ygnacia Hinojosa on June 22, 1832. Such transactions did not involve property but transferred Manuel's rights to his sister.⁹⁹ Manuela Hinojosa rights were transferred to her son Ramon Cavazos on February 7, 1820. Ramon, in

⁹⁶Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of the Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 17.

⁹⁷ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010) 13th print, 313.

⁹⁸ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties That Lie In The “Llano Grande” and “La Blanca” Grants in Hidalgo County, Texas* (Edinburg, TX: The Company, 1918) 17-18, the quote on the cattle lands was taken from page 23 of the document in the English translation of the original document in pages 16-21.

⁹⁹ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 27.

turn, sold his rights to Leonardo Manso on November 3, 1840.¹⁰⁰ While the grant remained intact, *derechos* allowed for a larger pool of owners to be incorporated as Llano Grande proprietors.

Since the property had been held collectively by Hinojosa's children, every generation increased the number of owners. As each generation of descendants gained *derechos*, many began to sell their rights in the Llano Grande to outside buyers. Descendants, after a time, were not the only owners of rights within the grant as was the case with Leonardo Manso. This larger conglomeration of owners, especially outside parties, created the pressure to distribute the property. These *derecho* owners wanted to have actual property under their name. In the Dupouy Partition the following names as signers of the agreement:

Dn. Julio Garza, Dn. Antonio Ballí Cavazos, Don Juan Villareal,
Don, Jose Ramon Cavazos Hinojosa, Don Francisco Cavazos
Cortin, Don Leonardo Manso, Don Cirildo Hinojosa, Don Leandro
de la Garza, Don Cipriano Hinojosa, Don Laureano Hinojosa, Don
Rosalio Trevino y Don Yndalecio Dominguez.¹⁰¹

The majority of the signers were descendants of Juan José Hinojosa's children, which were represented by a male member of each of the eight children. The sons and daughters of Hinojosa, by 1848 were of advanced age or deceased and were not the main parties involved. Antonio Ballí Cavazos was a signer of the Dupouy Partition and the grandson of Manuela Hinojosa and Matías Cavazos.¹⁰² Another signer, Laureano Hinojosa was the son of Juan José

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 12, 16.

¹⁰¹ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 6.

¹⁰² Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio, Texas: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912), 5

Hinojosa and the grandson of the original grantee.¹⁰³ Among the parties involved in the partition, the Hinojosa family had a strong presence in the records of the Dupouy Partition.

Descendants of Hinojosa were directly involved in the division, yet outside members such as Leonardo Manso had a stake in the partition. His interest and involvement in the partition stemmed from his need to gain property from the large number of *derechos* he acquired from the Hinojosa family. Throughout 1830s to 1840s Manso purchased *derechos* from Feliciano Hinojosa, Manuela Hinojosa, Ramon Cavazos, and Juan Striker.¹⁰⁴ On February 6, 1837 Juan Striker sold his rights to Leonardo Manso for \$800. The rights had been previously purchased from Quito Hinojosa on December 4, 1835.¹⁰⁵ Such a partition secured property for the *derechos* Manso, and as a consequence became the owner of the largest share. Manso was also the leading attorney and was granted a Power of Attorney to transact the legal agreement for the Dupouy Partition under the Mexican government. Rafael García, in a letter dated December 8, 1847, grants Manso a power of attorney to represent the descendants of Ygnacia Hinojosa in the partition. Also, Dupouy on January 8, 1848 received twenty three pesos and eighty four cents from Manso for the survey of the Llano Grande, including his share.¹⁰⁶ Manso was directly involved and participated in the partition of the grant from 1847 to 1848.

Concerns over the legal title and boundaries of the grant led for the division. Many had reservations for maintaining such ambiguous rights to the Llano Grande, and wished to have clear titles to what they owned. The idea of dividing the property was not relatively new or sudden, and according to Florence Scott the owners wanted to partition the Llano Grande since

¹⁰³ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 6.

its official delegation in 1790. The parties involved wanted to establish “the true limits which should enclose each participant and remove for future cause all of doubt or disagreement” between the owners of the grant.¹⁰⁷ The *derechos* in the Llano Grande were ambiguous in regards to the geographical section or acreage each of the descendants and other land owners actually maintained. Owners feared that if clear demarcations were not established, parties within the grant could take advantage of the situation for their own benefit. With the “number of shares...increasing, and there appears among them some who give us cause of anxiety, for, far from paving the way to make the divisions, they set up obstacles and allege difficulties, successively selling portions of land in one adjoining Agostadero”¹⁰⁸ The threat to property was incentive to establish actual boundaries and secure the *derechos* in the Llano Grande.

Although Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí was to gain importance as one of the largest land owners within the Rio Grande, she was part of the internal dispute. Previously, boundary disputes emerged between the Llano Grande and the La Feria grant. When the La Feria grant was partitioned in 1843, the land was surveyed and the boundary line established between both grants. In a notice, the Llano Grande owners, represented by Leonardo Manso, were informed of the survey and appeared for the proceedings. Juan José Ballí, representing the heirs of Rosa María Ballí de Hinojosa claimed three leagues in the Llano Grande which created disputes between the parties of both grants. The Llano Grande owners argued against the proposed boundary line since it was not the original line. By December 7, 1843 an agreement between Leonardo Manso and Juan José Ballí was reached. The agreement established the boundary line, and bound Juan José Ballí to replace land if any was missing if a survey was conducted in the

¹⁰⁷ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.; An agostadero is a term used for land that is used for grazing cattle or pasture and is another name used to refer to the Spanish land grants. In this quote the agostadero is referring to the La Feria grant.

Llano Grande. The property was to derive from the lands designated to the co-heirs of Rosa María within the Llano Grande.¹⁰⁹

Another dispute ensued when Rosa María Ballí sold property to Don Francisco Galbert in the “La Feria” grant. Galbert, through this purchase, claimed land on the eastern section of the Llano Grande.¹¹⁰ The Llano Grande owners accused the descendants of Rosa Ballí of arbitrarily taking possession of the Llano Grande and selling property without the consent of the other co-owners.¹¹¹ The Llano Grande owners objected to the claim and moved to survey the property in order to have clear boundaries. As was expected, Rosa María’s descendants were not active participants in the process of dividing the land. She and her descendants were allotted the one-eighth of the Llano Grande located on the easternmost section of the grant bordering the La Feria grant.

The partition contained “eight (8) equal grand-subdivisions, or parts, from West to East, allotting one of such equal parts of the Grant to each of the children and heirs of the original Grantee (or their then vendees).”¹¹² The first and westernmost share was designated to Juana Hermenejilda Hinojosa the first born of the original grantee. Since Juana had sold her rights to the Llano Grande prior to the Dupouy Partition, Julio de la Garza became the legal owner of the first share. The size of the property measured 2,656.29 varas, which encompassed 14,115.68 acres.¹¹³ The second share was accorded Josefa Hinojosa and bordered the first share on the west. Josefa sold her share to Matías Cavazos, her brother-in-law, who became the legal owner

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9-11.

¹¹⁰ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 20-21.

¹¹¹ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 6.

¹¹² Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 3.

¹¹³ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 6; The 2656.29 varas is the width of the property which is multiplied by the length of 30,000 varas. The 79, 688,700 square varas is the equivalent of 14,115.68 acres.

of the second share. In total, the second share had 3325.31 varas an equivalent of 17,640.90 acres.¹¹⁴ The third share, designated for Manuela Hinojosa, wife of Matías Cavazos was acquired by Leonardo Manso. Prior to 1848, Manuela sold her share to her son Ramon Cavazos, who in turn sold the share to Leonardo Manso. Manso's property was more extensive because he also owned two-thirds of Cipriano Hinojosa's and one-fifth of Vicente Hinojosa's share. The property owned by Manso totaled to 4958 varas or 26,347.11 acres.¹¹⁵

The fourth through sixth shares followed a similar pattern, yet these three shares were the smallest within the Llano Grande. These shares maintained the property within the Hinojosa descendants. The fourth share assigned to María Ygnacia Hinojosa Cavazos, wife of Jose Narciso Cavazos, was owned by her children. Three-fourths of the fourth share was owned by Manuel Hinojosa, Francisca Hinojosa and Ygnacia Hinojosa which measured 1,992.18 varas or 10,586.56 acres of the fourth share.¹¹⁶ María Ygnacia's fourth child sold her interest to Matías Cavazos and the property was located within the second share.¹¹⁷ The fifth share belonged to Vicente Hinojosa and his descendants and measured 2,125 varas (11,292.38 acres). One-fifth was owned by Leonardo Manso and was included in the second share.¹¹⁸ Similarly, two-thirds of the sixth share owned by Manso was included in his share. The one-third that was left in the sixth share was designated for Cypriano Hinojosa was owned by Gregoria Longoria, his daughter-in-law, and his grandson Cypriano Hinojosa. The property contained 88541-100 varas

¹¹⁴ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*,4.

¹¹⁶ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To the Capisallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said* (San Antonio, TX: Passing Show Printing Co, 1913), 4.

¹¹⁷ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 12.

¹¹⁸ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 4.

the equivalent of 4702.94 acres.¹¹⁹ The fifth and sixth shares had the smallest acreages within the Llano Grande.

The seventh and eight shares were located on the eastern part of the Llano Grande. Juan José Hinojosa, the namesake of the original grantee, was designated the seventh share of the Llano Grande. The property containing 2,656.25 varas (14,115.47 acres) was owned by his descendants.¹²⁰ Finally, the eighth share on the easternmost portion of the grant was given to Rosa María Hinojosa Ballí and contained the same acreage of Juan José Hinojosa's property.¹²¹ Only the seventh and eight shares had the same acreage, and the rest varied in size due to the parties involved. The division of the Llano Grande was done through family ties for ownership, even though many of the shares had ceased to belong to direct descendants of Juan José Hinojosa. The shares constituted smaller, yet still substantial acreages for the descendants and buyers of the Llano Grande.

The division not only proved to be a strategy to maintain property within landowning Mexicans, but also created smaller properties within the grant. The eight shares averaged approximately 15,000 acres each share. However, Leonardo Manso's property was wider due to the acreage he had purchased from the Hinojosa descendants previous to the partition. The shares were comparable to other *porciones* near the Río Grande, narrow in width and reaching far into the interior. The Llano Grande was one of the few large land grants north of the Río Grande that had the river as its southern boundary. The Dupouy Partition granted each of the eight shares access to the Río Grande. As such, the shares resembled the *porciones* that had been

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 4. There are two variations in the name for the owner of the sixth share, "Cypriano" and "Cipriano." For this thesis the name "Cypriano" will be used.

¹²⁰ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 14.

¹²¹ Ibid., 15.

granted in 1767. Eight new individual *porciones* were carved out the Llano Grande radically changing the landscape of land tenure in the grant.

The breakup of the Llano Grande began with the Dupouy Partition with further subdivisions through time. Not all of the eight shares shared similar histories, yet the custom of the Spanish and Mexican tradition of *derechos* continued to be sold to Mexican and Anglos after the Mexican American War. After the division, Mexican Americans and Anglos gained rights to the Llano Grande through *derechos* which granted rights to the shares instead of the whole grant. Such arrangements were common in the Rio Grande and made land ownership a complicated affair.

The Dupouy Partition drastically changed the landscape of the Llano Grande as well as the land tenure by dividing the grant into smaller yet substantial portions. This change was to affect the Llano Grande in different ways. It strengthened Mexican American ownership of the grant and created greater obstacles for Anglo Americans to own the entire grant. Even so, Anglos slowly began to own parts of the Llano Grande throughout the late nineteenth century. The Dupouy Partition was the first major change in the Llano Grande that led to a continuous subdivision of property and actual purchases by Anglos.

Llano Grande: Land Policies in the post-Mexican American War

The Dupouy Partition took place a few months before the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Mexico lost half of its northern territory, and now had the Río Grande as the international boundary. As such, the Reynosa residents living or owning property on the northern bank of the Río Grande were under the jurisdiction of the United States.

Under the new nation, the policies were enacted to validate the Spanish land titles in the South Texas region.

New land policies required Spanish land grantee owners to reregister and confirm the properties with the state of Texas. In regards to the Llano Grande, the Dupouy Partition was filed in the new county of Cameron. Hidalgo County was established in January 24, 1852.¹²² Joaquin Arguelles, a Notary Public, who had certified and recorded the Dupouy Partition in Matamoros records, also testified to Thomas W. Slemmons, the Consul of the United States in Matamoros, about the validity of the division.¹²³ Arguelles, not only testified as the Notary Public, but also became a proprietor within the Llano Grande's second share. The Llano Grande owners were employing the American municipal offices in the northern bank to secure their properties as individual owners of the grant. This testimony took place on January 20, 1849 a year before Texas Governor Bell began the Bourland and Miller Commission in 1850.¹²⁴ The Bourland and Miller Commission was established by the state of Texas to investigate the Spanish land grants in South Texas in 1850. As a commission, Bourland and Miller heard claims, garnered testimony, and submitted to the Texas legislature with recommendations for the validity of grants.¹²⁵

The Lower Rio Grande Valley began a period of change when the American political system superseded the Mexican system. New American towns such as Brownsville were

¹²² W. Clyde Norris, *History of Hidalgo County* (Master's Thesis: Texas College of Arts and Industries, 1942), 21.

¹²³ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc.*, 26.; Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 12.

¹²⁴ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 12. Within this abstract of title two dates are given for this testimony to Thomas W. Slemmons on page 12 states the date as January 20, 1849 and on page 21 the date is given as June 12, 1849. As an abstract of title the Abstract companies gather and collect this information and an error is the possibility of the date difference.

¹²⁵ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 134-135.

established along the northern banks of the Rio Grande often across from extant Mexican communities.¹²⁶ Brownsville along with its sister city, Matamoros, became the focus of Río Grande trade.¹²⁷ Even as the region was being incorporated into the American system, ranching continued to be the main focus of the economy even for Anglo Americans who arrived after the Mexican American War.

The State of Texas had a unique land policy in regards to the state's public lands. In contrast to other territories incorporated to the United States, Texas "retained title to its unappropriated and vacant lands when it became a state."¹²⁸ As such, Texas as well as New Mexico established land commissions to manage and validate land grants, especially those that were deemed "imperfect."¹²⁹ The Texas General Land office, under J.P. Borden, was in charge of gathering the titles of property throughout Texas, yet the task problematic. As such, the Texas public lands could not be determined.¹³⁰ Texas sought to figure out the public lands in the state and figure out the validity of the Spanish land grants.

Two years after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Governor Bell, through the approval of the state legislature, "appointed William H. Bourland and James B. Miller" as the commissioners in charge of validating land grants in South Texas.¹³¹ Within the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo articles VIII and IX outlined the incorporation of Mexican citizens and their property. The Bourland and Miller Commission were to investigate and certify all of the Spanish

¹²⁶ Valerio-Jimenez, *River of Hope*, 142.

¹²⁷ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 16.

¹²⁸ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants* 132.

¹²⁹ Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990) eBook Collection (EBSCO host) (accessed September 22, 2013), 75.

¹³⁰ Virginia H. Taylor, *The Spanish Archives of the General Land Office of Texas* (Austin, TX: The Lone Star Press, 1955) 103-107.

¹³¹ Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 135.

land grants along the Trans-Nueces region beginning with Laredo on July 15, 1850.¹³² In each city, the Bourland Commission established its offices and land owners needed to file a claim to begin the process of examination. Knowledge of the English was a necessary requirement since “each claimant was asked to file with the board, in English.”¹³³ This left many Spanish land grantee owners in a vulnerable position when validating their grants.

The Rio Grande residents had trepidations over the motives of the Commission. The Commission required the “claimants” to prove their ownership of a land grant by providing “evidences of title or right under which the same was held or claimed.”¹³⁴ As such, the applicants paid fees for the examination of their claims which were “five dollars for every *sitio* or fraction thereof greater than one labor covered by the petition.”¹³⁵ In the Bourland and Miller report, Juan José Hinojosa was named the grantee of the grant and Juan José and Rosa María Ynojosa were the applicants for the Llano Grande and the La Feria grant.¹³⁶ Ballí and Hinojosa applied jointly for these land grants to the Spanish crown in 1776 and in 1850 the owners applied for the validity of their land titles together to the Bourland and Miller Commission. The Llano Grande was validated by the Texas legislature while other land grants were not approved.

The Llano Grande was validated on February 10, 1852 by the Texas Legislature. The court records and warranty deeds of the Llano Grande confirmed the validity of the land grant within Texas courts. As stated in a warranty deed involving Pedro García, the court record stated that the property had been confirmed by the Texas legislature and was “confirmation number thirteen (13) for Cameron County, Texas...an Act of the Legislature of the State of Texas,

¹³² Ibid., 135.

¹³³ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 135.

¹³⁶ Texas General Land Office, *Report of James R. Miller and W.H. Bourland Commissioners to Investigate Land Titles West of the Nueces* (Austin, TX: General Land Office, 1852) 36.

entitled ‘An act to relinquish the right of the State to certain lands therein named approved February 10th 1852 and being all the interest inherited by the grantors.’¹³⁷ By using the land policies established by the Texas legislature, the grantees were able to validate a large number of land grants in Texas. A total of 234 land claims were confirmed by the legislature.¹³⁸ According to Alonzo, the Bourland and Miller Commission refused to recommend the Llano Grande for validation of title, yet the Texas Legislature still confirmed the land grant. He argued that the political reputation and connections of the Hinojosa and Ballí families were the basis for the confirmation.¹³⁹

These were the basis of land policies implemented by the Texas legislature. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, provisions were made to respect the property of the Mexican American citizens. On a state level, the Bourland and Miller Commission directly affected the Llano Grande. The validation of the land grant by the legislature allowed the Llano Grande owners to successfully navigate the land policies established by the United States and maintain their property. The decline of Mexican American ownership in the Llano Grande was to come from local political and economic factors as well as the continued subdivision of the grant. Even so, Mexican Americans were able to remain the majority of land owners until the end of the nineteenth century.

Mexican American Land Tenure after 1848 in the Llano Grande

Initially, Mexican Americans owned the majority of the Llano Grande. Through time, the Llano Grande was subdivided and this created a larger pool of owners for smaller properties.

¹³⁷ Deed, Pedro García Cavazos et al. to Florencio Saenz, May 1, 1886, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹³⁸ Greaser, 137.

¹³⁹ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 154.

Anglos purchased the smaller properties gaining a foothold in the area. In regards to Mexican American ownership, the patterns of land distribution varied depending on the individual shares. In certain cases such as the Fourth share, originally owned by the descendants of Ygnacia Hinojosa; Florencio Saenz was able to consolidate the entire share through various recorded land transactions. In other shares, the properties were broken down and continued to be subdivided through time. Mexican Americans remained the majority of land owners until the latter half of the nineteenth century, yet their decline was a slow and gradual process. This was aided by the land policies and patterns of distribution by Mexican Americans in the Llano Grande.

The court records in Hidalgo County pertaining to the Llano Grande reveal a large number of owners with Spanish surnames during the 1860s through the 1880s. Records reveal that the Hinojosa family remained tied to the Llano Grande. Their presence did not disappear, but after the Dupouy Partition, the number of Mexican landowners had increased to include more non-family members. In the first few years after the Mexican American War the land sales and/or transfers dealt with descendants of Juan José Hinojosa and their families. For example, in the fourth share, Ygnacia Hinojosa's children were the legal owners of the share and Ygnacia's granddaughter gained the majority of the land.¹⁴⁰ Through the consecutive decades the lands were sold to non-family Mexican and Mexican Americans until the mid-nineteenth century. Anglo ownership was present, but not in large numbers. Their presence was seen throughout the early post- Mexican American War years.

Land transactions reveal that a large number of Hinojosas continued to maintain residencies on the southern bank of the Río Grande. As late as 1883, Hermenegildo and Juliana

¹⁴⁰ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 6.

Cavazos y Cavazos sold their *derechos* in the Llano Grande for three hundred dollars in Mexican coin to Bernardo Yturria. These had been the children of Maximo Cavazos, son Jose Narciso Cavazos and Ygnacia Hinojosa.¹⁴¹ Cavazos and Yturria in the warranty deeds have Matamoros, Tamaulipas as their jurisdiction indicating their residence on the southern bank.¹⁴² Descendants of the original owners of the Llano Grande continued to own property within the grant despite residing in Matamoros and Reynosa. Due to their status of large land owning families, they assimilated into Anglo society while maintaining their properties.

By 1870s, Mexican American land owners still constituted the majority of the land owners of the Llano Grande. What was different was the size of their property. The acreage was smaller and the larger pool of owners allowed for Anglos to enter the region to purchase and consolidate larger properties. Alonzo argued that by 1870's "Tejano" presence was on the rise, but "a further erosion of large landholdings (more than two thousand acres) among Mexicans; and the persistence in large landholdings among Anglos and Europeans...Mexican landholders increased from 79 in 1870 to 137 in 1875 and to 193 in 1880."¹⁴³ The large majority of land transactions involved Mexican American land owners of which a large number of *derechos* to the Llano Grande continued to be sold.

Undivided interests continued to be a pattern within the Llano Grande, even to the late nineteenth century. Some shares sold rights early on to Anglo lawyers as was the case with Vicente Hinojosa's fifth share. *Derechos* were the earliest forms of transactions within the Llano Grande. Bernardo Yturria's land transactions indicate this practice continued throughout 1890s. Antonio Ballí Cavazos sold his rights in the fourth share to Bernardo Yturria on July 16, 1883,

¹⁴¹ Deed, Hermenegildo and Juliana Cavazos y Cavazos to Bernardo Yturria, July 1883, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 168.

for three hundred dollars in Mexican coin.¹⁴⁴ Since Antonio Ballí Cavazos sold his *derechos* in the Llano Grande, no clear boundaries were provided in the description of the rights transferred to Yturria. By the nineteenth century the practice of *derechos* continued, yet the properties were smaller in size. These types of land policies were prevalent with Mexican ownership. Although inheritance divided properties, the families maintained the property in communal ownership at a smaller scale. In the case of Abundio Cantu, in a court agreement Cantu's property was divided into two properties. One belonged to his mother, while the second was held in communal ownership by the rest of his family.¹⁴⁵ Antonio Tenorio y Ballí, as the appointed attorney to María Concepcion Ballí and her husband, sold to Jesus de Lira "the equal undivided our fifty sixth parts of the land tract of land." María Concepcion had inherited property through her uncle Nicolas Ballí who gained property through his mother Rosa Hinojosa de Ballí.¹⁴⁶ The practice of *derechos* allowed new owners in the Llano Grande and facilitated the grazing of livestock in the grant. These *derechos* were held on smaller acreages, a theme throughout the early history of the Llano Grande.

Through the land transactions recorded for the second share, a pattern emerges within the land tenure. The grant is distributed through inheritance and later consolidated by one of the owners. Originally owned by Matías Cavazos, the second share was inherited to his three children Antonia Cavazos, Ramon Cavazos, and Lino Cavazos. They in turn divided their respective properties amongst their heirs.¹⁴⁷ Antonia Cavazos, wife of Manuel Ballí, subdivided her share among her children. Lino Cavazos granted 900 varas (approximately 4786 acres)

¹⁴⁴ Deed, Antonio Cavazos Ballí to Bernardo Yturria, July 16, 1883, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁴⁵ Agreement to Partition the Estate, Abundio Cantu to Guadalupe C. de Cantu et al., July 29, 1899, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁴⁶ Deed, María Concepcion Ballí de Alvarez and Jose María Alvarez through Antonio Tenorio y Ballí, January 12, 1873, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁴⁷ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 4-5.

granted the property as inheritance to his six children in equal parts totaling fifteen varas each (approximately 797.11 acres) in the shape of *porciones*. Out of the second share, 1,320 varas were granted to Antonio Ballí Cavazos, son of Antonia Cavazos.¹⁴⁸ Ramón Cavazos property, his inheritance from Matías Cavazos, was sold to Anglo American Edward Dougherty and Francisco Cavazos bypassing this pattern of land distribution.¹⁴⁹ Outside Ramón Cavazos's share, land continued to be reduced through a large number of inheritances between the shares of the Llano Grande. By this point, the properties were very narrow properties extending to the rear line of the grant. As a Spanish and Mexican custom, both genders were able to inherit property from their families and the descendants of Matías Cavazos are a clear example of such a practice. This policy of inheritance increased the number of land owners and reduced the size of properties within the Llano Grande.

As land continued to be subdivided, certain properties were consolidated into larger tracts of land. Many descendants of share owners acquired property from family members expanding their holdings. Within the second share, granted to Matías Cavazos, Antonia Cavazos de Ballí granted her inheritance to her children, including Antonio Ballí Cavazos. Antonio purchased his cousin and brother's property acquiring more land. From Bernardo Cavazos, his cousin, he acquired 250 varas on March 22, 1848 and a few years later purchased 550 varas from his brother Ysidro on January 21, 1852.¹⁵⁰ Antonio consolidated 1,319.50 varas or an approximate of 7,011.90 acres. Furthermore, Antonio Ballí Cavazos "verbally partitioned among his seven...children, each receiving 188 ½ varas river frontage on the *Río Grande*."¹⁵¹ Each "Ballí Strip" measured approximately 1,008 acres of property, a substantial amount of land to modern-

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 5-7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 7.

day residents. Yet, with regards to the size of the previously owned property, the “Ballí Strips” were considerably smaller.

The third share owned by Leonardo Manso held the greatest acreage in the Llano Grande. The property was further subdivided and was granted to Antonio Cano (791 varas), Marcos Guzman (249 varas), Jesus and Florencio Saenz (833 varas), Joaquin Arguelles (833 varas), Camilo Arguelles (833 varas), Jose Arguelles (833 varas), and Ambrosio Arguelles (833 varas each).¹⁵² A large conglomeration of owners came to own the property gained by Leonardo Manso in the Dupouy Partition. In a warranty deed, a record of sale, Juan Bautista Zolezzi sold to Ambrosio Arguelles, his brother-in-law, 791 varas in 1882. Ambrosio already owned 833 varas from by Leonardo Manso.¹⁵³ The third share was subdivided in much the similar way the second share was divided, yet the share was not consolidated into larger properties or involved Hinojosa descendants.

The fourth share of the Llano Grande followed a similar history to the second share. Ygnacia Hinojosa’s share was granted to her children Manuel Hinojosa, María Ygnacia Hinojosa, and Francisca Hinojosa. Amongst the three children, the property was rearranged, transferred, and consolidated. Manuel transferred his property to his sister María Ygnacia. Since Francisca was not able to have children, she granted 644 varas to her sister María Ygnacia and niece María Josefa Cavazos (approximately 3,529 acres).¹⁵⁴ María Ygnacia Cavazos consolidated her brother and sister’s share and divided her property amongst her four daughters.

¹⁵² Ibid., 32.

¹⁵³ Deed, Juan Bautista Zolezzi to Ambrosio Arguelles, June 16, 1882, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁵⁴ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 5-6.

María Josefa, the daughter of María Ygnacia, consolidated a larger acreage by acquiring property from her mother and aunt aggregating to 1,245 varas or 6,616 acres from these arrangements.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, the fourth share was consolidated by Florencio Saenz, a wealthy successful rancher. Saenz married Sostenes Cano, daughter of Antonio Cano, landowner in the third share of the Llano Grande. Within the property owned by Saenz in the fourth share, he established the Toluca Ranch in the 1880s in present day Progreso, Texas.¹⁵⁶ Ranches were the main centers to gather and transact business and trade. Florencio Saenz was also involved in politics in Hidalgo County and was even elected County Commissioner for Precinct One.¹⁵⁷ As a land owner, Saenz gained property from the descendants of Ygnacia Hinojosa. According to Frances Wyatt Isabell of the Valley By-liner, Saenz purchased 5898 acres from his distant cousin a descendant of María Josefa Hinojosa. From María Josefa's son, Manuel García Cavazos, Saenz purchased 3087.47 acres for \$1743.00 dollars on May 1, 1886.¹⁵⁸ The property remained within a family for a long time, but Florencio had consolidated the Fourth Share under his name.

Descendants of Ygnacia Hinojosa Cavazos, Vicente Hinojosa, and Rosa María Ballí had accessed to the "San Juan de Carricitos," "Las Mesteñas, Petitas y la Abra," and "La Feria" grant. Descendants had access to more than one grant creating a complex system of land tenure. Access to other grants offered more acreage to the descendants of Vicente, Rosa, and Ygnacia Hinojosa. Rosa María Ballí owned the eight share of the Llano Grande, and her sons owned San

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁵⁶ Mario L. Sanchez ed., *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and The Texas Historical Commission, 1991), 110.

¹⁵⁷ Frances Wyatt Isabell, "Thaddeus M. Rhodes: Political Leader," in *Rio Grande Roundup: Story of Texas Tropical Borderland*, Valley By-Liners, (Mission, TX: Border Kingdom Press, 1980) 99.

¹⁵⁸ Deed, Pedro García et al. To Florencio Saenz, May 1, 1886, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

Salvador de Tule and Padre Island. Vicente Hinojosa's children gained rights to both the "Las Mesteñas, Petitas, y La Abra" and the "Llano Grande" grants.

The land transactions of inheritance were being sold between family members as presented above. The shares went through a process of rearrangement between Mexican American landowners within the Llano Grande. It is not to say that Anglo Americans were not part of the Llano Grande land tenure, yet this section presents the land policies adopted by Mexican American land owners. Throughout the court house records, Mexican Americans outside the descendants of Hinojosa were also consolidating property.

The land transactions of Bernardo Yturria are a confirmation of Hispanic ownership that transcended to both sides of the Río Grande. Bernardo Yturria throughout the years of 1883-1885 in the warranty deeds recorded in Hidalgo County, was able to amass a substantial number of *derechos*. Most of the García Cavazos descendants of María Josefa, granddaughter of María Ygnacia Cavazos Hinojosa, sold their rights of title to Bernardo Yturria. Most of the grantors to Bernardo Yturria were of the jurisdiction of Matamoros.

Bernardo Yturria was the brother of Francisco Yturria, well known in Rio Grande Valley history. The Yturria family was one of the few Mexican families who were able to be hold on to their land. The Yturria was a merchant family based from Matamoros and closely associated with Charles Stillman and Richard King.¹⁵⁹ Francisco had bought parts of the San Juan de Carricitos Grant from Narciso Cavazos, who according to the author Frank Daniel Yturria "began selling their *derechos*, or rights, to the land."¹⁶⁰ The San Juan de Carricitos did not have the same fate as the Llano Grande and was bought out by Anglos and Mexican Americans

¹⁵⁹ Frank Daniel Yturria, *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Extraordinary Times of Francisco Yturria*, (Brownsville, TX: The University of Texas At Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2006), 153.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

including Richard King and Fernando Yturria. Francisco Yturria was also an active member who participated in bringing the railroad into the Rio Grande Valley. Francisco Yturria was able to successfully incorporate himself into the Anglo American system by his close connections to Anglo merchants.

Table 1: Bernardo Yturria's land transactions

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Size	Prize
Hermenegildo y Juliana Cavazos	Bernardo Yturria	July 19, 1883	Rights in the Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$300 Mexican Currency
Antonio Cavazos Ballí	Bernardo Yturria	July 16, 1883	Rights to Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$300 Mexican Currency
Santo García Cavazos	Bernardo Yturria	July 19, 1883	Rights to Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$150 Mexican Currency
José María Cavazos García et al.	Bernardo Yturria	July 19, 1883	Rights to Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$150
Francisca Cavazos Gómez et al.	Bernardo Yturria	Sept. 24, 1885	Rights to Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$258 U.S. Currency
Santos García Cavazos de Contreras	Bernardo Yturria	Sept. 28, 1885	Rights to Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$150

Source: Hidalgo County Clerk Deed Records for Hermenegildo y Juliana Cavazos, Antonio Cavazos Ballí, Santo García Cavazos Ballí, José María Cavazos García et al., Francisca Cavazos Gómez et al., and Santos García Cavazos de Contreras.

Bernardo Yturria was not as a prominent player as his brother, but within the Llano Grande he bought a large number of *derechos* for low prices on property. According to the account by Frank Daniel Yturria, he had been a clerk in Francisco's store, but later established his own merchant house in Matamoros. By the time of his death in July 31, 1891 he owned considerable acreage within the Llano Grande.¹⁶¹ Bernardo Yturria purchased *derechos* from Antonio Cavazos Ballí, Santo García Cavazos, and the parties of García Cavazos sold rights to Yturria on the month of July of 1883.¹⁶² By September of 28, 1885 Santos García Cavazos de Contreras and her husband Agustín Contreras sold to Yturria *derechos* to the Llano Grande and

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 225.

¹⁶² Deed, Antonio Cavazos Ballí to Bernardo Yturria, July 16, 1883, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas; Deed, Santos García Cavazos to Bernardo Yturria, July 19, 1883, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas; Deed, José María Cavazos García et al. to Bernardo Yturria, July 19, 1883, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

San Juan de Carricitos grant.¹⁶³ Derechos were still being sold to Mexicans, such as Yturria, by the late 1880s while Anglos were purchasing property. Anglos start to take over the economic, political, and economic life after the Mexican American War.

Mexican Americans did not suffer complete land loss by the 1880s in the Llano Grande. The Mexican Americans continued to be part of the land transactions and court records. In the Case of Bernardo Yturria, Many Mexican American owners sold to other Mexican American citizens. *Derechos* purchased by Bernardo Yturria indicate that some owners of the Llano Grande were still living in Mexico. If the money of the transactions was not American, it was Mexican currency. We cannot determine if Antonio Cavazos Ballí or Santos García Cavazos were absentee owners or traveled between their land and Matamoros, but it is certain that they did maintain ownership of property as late as 1880s, when they transferred the land to Yturria.

David Montejano and Armando Alonzo argued that Mexican land loss was gradual which allowed “Tejanos” to maintain their land for a longer period. As late as 1895, Lauriano Hinojosa and his wife Rosario Hinojosa sold to Silverio Solis and Jesus Cavazos, both of Hidalgo County, 309.54 acres for \$325 in Mexican silver coins.¹⁶⁴ Mexican Americans were still part of the land transactions by the late 1800s as presented above. Land was not taken away quickly, yet Anglos began to settle in the Rio Grande Valley. Slowly in some areas of the grant and more quickly in others, the Llano Grande was purchased, legally or through suspicious activity. By the 1900s Anglos became the major proprietors in the grant. No longer were the descendants of the grantees able to keep the grants at the sprawling acreages that once characterized the Spanish land grants.

¹⁶³ Deed, Santos García Cavazos de Contreras and Agustín Contreras to Bernardo Yturria, September 28, 1885, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁶⁴ Deed, Lauriano and Rosario Hinojosa to Silverio Solis and Jesus Cavazos, November 14, 1895, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

The warranty deeds and land transactions indicate that the value of the land in the Llano Grande was low, especially in the early period after the war with the United States. Francisca Cavazos Gomez and the rest of the grandchildren of Ygnacia Hinojosa from Matamoros sold to Bernardo Yturria their rights in \$258 dollars in Mexican currency on July 16, 1883.¹⁶⁵ Leonardo Hinojosa and his wife Rosario Cano de Hinojosa sold to Silverio Solis and Jesus Cavazos 116 ½ varas or 309.54 acres for \$325 Mexican Silver coins. Each acre was worth ninety five cents.¹⁶⁶ Mexican currency was prevalent in the early transactions after the post-Mexican American War.

The land value for the property in the grant was relatively low, but by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century land values had increased. The increase in prices corresponded to Anglo ownership in the Llano Grande. William P. Dougherty sold his 1,437 acre property to James B. Wells on June 18, 1887 for \$500 dollars.¹⁶⁷ In a December 20, 1902 land transaction between the children of Rafaela Hernandez de Rhodes and Thaddeus M. Rhodes sold to John Closner 2,655.33 acres for \$1.50 per acre, totaling \$3983.00 U.S. dollars.¹⁶⁸ Closner paid half of the price and the rest was to be paid within 6 months after the purchase. The value of land increased as Anglos came to own more land.

Ranching remained the main economic activity within the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The property within the grant resembled the *porciones* that had marked the Río Grande. The properties partitioned between the families were used for both subsistence agriculture and ranching. Farming was done close to the Río Grande and the land in the far north region was the

¹⁶⁵ American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ Deed, Lauriano Hinojosa and Rosario Cano de Hinojosa to Silverio Solis and Jesus Cavazos, 1895, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁶⁷ Deed, William P. Dougherty to James B. Wells, June 18, 1887, pg. 535-537 of Book "D" Records of Real Estate, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁶⁸ Deed, Thaddeus M. Rhodes et al. to John Closner, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

grazing area for the cattle. The livestock still roamed the region and small ranchos marked the landscape of the eight shares. Owners of the Llano Grande continued to ranch, and in an affidavit by Florencio Saenz in 1903, he stated that

It was and is the invariable custom of the owners of these lands to enclose that portion of their holding fronting on the Rio Grande River, and to erect houses, jacals, fences, and other substantial improvements thereon; and to cultivate corn, cotton, sugar cane, melons and other agricultural products thereon. The river front portion of their lands were enclosed and cultivated as farms or labors and the rear portion or back lands, as they were called, were invariably used for ranch purposes and for the pasture of horses, mules, burros, cattle, goats and live-stock generally.¹⁶⁹

The enterprise was not gone and still was a reflection of the land policies within the Llano Grande. The actual wealth of Mexican American land owners was the cattle and the grazing land. By the 1880s and 1890s ranching declined and farming became the main economic activity along the Rio Grande.

The Dupouy partition and the land policies enacted by the landowners in the Llano Grande transformed the land tenure of the grant. Mexican Americans were the major land owners, who sold their properties to other Mexican Americans and Anglo American buyers. Patterns of land tenure continued to break down the Llano Grande and led to the rise of Anglo owners and land corporations.

Conclusion

An examination of various land transactions allows us to trace the history of land ownership before and after the Mexican American War. The Llano Grande serves as a micro-history of the changes in land tenure of the Rio Grande Valley as a whole. The large majority of

¹⁶⁹ American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 59.

the Spanish land grants in the Rio Grande ceased to contain thousands of acreages by the early twentieth century. Understanding the history of the early formation of the Llano Grande presents the evidence on how the land grant was broken down. The Spanish period is one of the most vital historical times for the Llano Grande, where the land tenure of the grant was established.

Changes in the land tenure policies and the history of the Rio Grande Valley affected the ownership of the grant. Major land policies, such as the Dupouy partition and the change in sovereignty to the United States, began the continued subdivision of the Llano Grande. The Dupouy Partition was the first major division, and as a consequence eight shares made up the Llano Grande. Through the examination of the land records in Hidalgo County, the Mexican/Mexican Americans were the legal owners of the Llano Grande. Through time the profile of the Llano Grande landowners changed to include Anglos after 1848. Changes slowly took place that continued to break up the grant and allowed Anglos to purchase property in the Llano Grande.

Studying and examining the grant's history allows us to see the patterns of development in the Llano Grande. During the Nuevo Santander period the Llano Grande was granted to Juan José Hinojosa and held in communal ownership. Political and economic factors aided in the breakdown of the grant throughout the nineteenth century. Mexican American land tenure policies allowed for the continual breakup of the Llano Grande through inheritance practices and *derechos*. The Llano Grande owners were found to be the minority by the end of the nineteenth century when they had been the majority from 1850s through the 1870s.

This study serves as a microcosm of land tenure in the present day Rio Grande Valley. The Llano Grande was one of the first land grants who actually divided the property, and stands

on its own for being able to maintain the ownership of the grant within the descendants of the original grantee for a longer period of time. Ultimately, these policies allowed Anglos to purchase property and begin the Anglo period in the Llano Grande history.

CHAPTER III

CAPITAL, INTERMARRIAGE, AND POLITICS: THE EARLY ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY BY ANGLO AMERICANS IN THE LLANO GRANDE

Due to the small number of intermarriages, the large majority of land transfers from Mexican American to Anglos occurred through purchase or tax sales within the Llano Grande, and not intermarriage. After the Dupouy Partition of 1848, the Llano Grande property was broken down into smaller acre plots. While Mexican Americans were the major land owners after the Mexican American War, the amount of land in their possession shrank during the second half of the nineteenth century. The breakup of the original grant into smaller tracts facilitated the acquisition of land by Anglo Americans. Although Mexican Americans remained the largest percentage of the population in Hidalgo County, a small population of Anglos emerged as the principal land owners of the Llano Grande by the early 1900s. Anglos held an economic advantage which allowed them to acquire substantial acreages. Access to capital was a major factor in the displacement of Mexican Americans by Anglos as the main land owners in the Llano Grande.

The shift from Mexican American to Anglo ownership increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century, thus land loss was not swift and instantaneous. Since the Hinojosa descendants maintained and inherited property, a small number of land transactions involved intermarriages. The majority of land transactions involving Anglos occurred through tax sales. Many Mexican American owners who fell behind on taxes and properties often were confiscated

and sold at auctions. By examining the land transactions within the Llano Grande, we see how Mexican Americans were displaced as the major land owners.

Acquisition of property by newly arrived Anglos was closely connected with Hidalgo County politics and economy. A large number of Anglos purchasing property within the Llano Grande were merchants and lawyers such as Edward Dougherty, James B. Wells Jr., John Young, and Thaddeus M. Rhodes. Law firms and lawyers were also proprietors of the Llano Grande, who gained property as repayment for their services by Mexican families. Anglos who purchased property within the grant also held political offices within the Democratic Party in Hidalgo County. As Sheriffs and County Clerks, they gained property within the Llano Grande much more effectively. There was a direct link between politics and land ownership.

The presence of Anglos in the Lower Rio Grande Valley was relatively small until the latter half of the nineteenth century. In direct contrast, Anglos within the San Antonio region became the majority of the population by the 1830s. Only a handful of Anglos resided in the Río Grande previous to the Mexican American War, as was the case with Charles Stillman. He arrived in the 1820s and established a successful mercantile store along the southern bank of the Río Grande at Matamoros.¹⁷⁰ The southern bank of the Río Grande was the center of commerce and trade along the Río Grande in the pre-1848 period. While their numbers were low, Anglos were a major influence along the northern banks of the Río Grande.

The first wave of Anglo Americans arrived during the Mexican American War from 1846 to 1848. Amongst the early Anglo settlers were U.S. soldiers who traveled to the Río Grande with General Zachary Taylor's army; many remained in the area after the war. "Of Irish

¹⁷⁰Marilyn McAdams Sibley, "Charles Stillman: A Case Study of Entrepreneurship on the Rio Grande, 1861-1865," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77, No. 2 (Oct. 1973): 229, accessed June 11, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30238259>.

descent”, Edward Dougherty from New York fought under Taylor’s army in the Mexican American War. In the 1860s, Dougherty was one of the earliest Anglo owners in the Llano Grande, besides John Young.¹⁷¹ Stephen Powers, another soldier in Taylor’s army, became one of the leading lawyers in Brownsville.¹⁷² Many prominent merchants, lawyers, and politicians in the Rio Grande Valley such as Dougherty and Powers, first entered the region as soldiers or members of the United States Army during the Mexican American War.

Lucrative business and trade attracted Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Brownsville and Matamoros became the center of commerce in the region, while Roma became a major shipping center for the steamboat trade.¹⁷³ The commercial opportunities along the border were good, and many “local mercantile firms flourished, and the communities along the river banks prospered.”¹⁷⁴ While ranching continued to be the main economic enterprise, the markets trading with the interior of Mexico appealed to newly arrived Anglos and Mexican American merchants.

Not all trade was legal along the border; smuggling was an old practice since the Spanish colonial days. Francisco Yturria, a successful Mexican American merchant, in a recollection stated that, “smuggling was a way of life in Matamoros, long since woven into the economic and social fabric of the city.”¹⁷⁵ During the American Civil War, the Rio Grande Valley became the main region to smuggle Confederate cotton into Mexico. Since the Río Grande was an

¹⁷¹ Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988) 109.

¹⁷² Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 100.

¹⁷³ Mario L. Sánchez ed., *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Heritage Corridor*, ed., 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage project and The Texas Historical Commission, 1994), 50.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷⁵ Frank Daniel Yturria, *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Extraordinary Times of Francisco Yturria* (Brownsville, TX: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2006), 23.

international boundary which the Union could not block, Mexican ships carried Confederate cotton to international markets making Mexico an important trading partner.¹⁷⁶ The Confederate cotton made its way south to Brownsville where it was smuggled south to Matamoros and moved to the port of Bagdad for shipment. Brownsville and Matamoros were two of the cities that most benefited from the smuggling of Confederate cotton.¹⁷⁷ Merchants and cotton growers on both sides of the Río Grande also gained profit from cotton smuggling during the American Civil War.

Through cotton smuggling operations Anglos Americans gained substantial wealth. Cotton was the foundation for many of the Anglo ranching empires. Richard King, along with Charles Stillman and Mifflin Kenedy, serve as examples of Anglos who gained substantial wealth to acquire large tracts of land in the Rio Grande Valley.¹⁷⁸ Through this wealth, Anglos purchased land as a means of expanding their properties and many entered the land speculation business. Land was purchased at fairly low prices and many transactions were of dubious nature. Within the Llano Grande, some of the early Anglo land owners gained wealth before purchasing property in the grant, even before the American Civil War as was the case of John Young and Richard King. By the late nineteenth century, “between 1880 and 1885” Mexican American land owners became a minority of Hidalgo County displaced by Anglo Americans.¹⁷⁹

After the Civil War, cattle trails expanded north from the valley and ranching continued to expand commercially. Large land owning families with substantial livestock benefited economically from the cattle drives. The drives took the cattle north to railroad depots to

¹⁷⁶Ronnie C. Tyler, “Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865,” *The Southern Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (April 1970): 458, accessed July 3, 2013, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/30236595>.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 462.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 477.

¹⁷⁹ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 181.

transport cattle to the American markets. The Hinojosas along with the Ballí, Cano, and Leal families, all owners in the Llano Grande, were the leading ranchers in the 1850s and 1860s in Hidalgo County.¹⁸⁰ Yet, by the late nineteenth century ranching began to decline, displacing small ranchers in South Texas, the majority of who were of Mexican descent. Land owners with extensive livestock continued the ranching economy, yet as a whole, ranching in South Texas began to deteriorate. “Barely fifty years after the annexation of the West, however, the ranching society collapsed before the rush of farm settlers.”¹⁸¹ By the late nineteenth century, ranching ceased to be the main economic enterprise in the border, but small-scale ranching continued to be practiced along the northern boundaries of South Texas. Farming, however, came to dominate the Hidalgo County economy by the twentieth century due to the invention of large-scale irrigation. By the 1900s crops were grown on the land, such as the citrus orchards, and became more profitable than the property itself.

One of the main economic advantages for Anglos in the region was the accessibility to capital from the Eastern United States. While Mexican American land owners had what was termed by David Montejano as “landed capital” and “fixed” wealth from the control of large amounts of land, the Anglos had “merchant capital” or “regenerative” wealth.¹⁸² The Hinojosa descendants inherited large amounts of property along with cattle which accounted for their prosperity. Anglos, on the other hand, had access to capital in the form of credit. In the Llano Grande, Anglo Americans became the proprietors of land due to this capital.

Research at the Hidalgo County Courthouse reveals that Spanish surnamed individuals continued to be part of the land transactions within the Llano Grande, yet the majority of

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹⁸¹ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 103.

¹⁸² Ibid., 50.

purchases and transfers were predominantly from Mexican American to Anglos by the 1880s and 1890s. In regards to size, fifty percent of Mexican Americans claimed over two thousand acres in 1865 in Hidalgo County. Within twenty years, “by 1880 only 20 percent” of Mexican Americans “claimed that amount.”¹⁸³ Anglos, on the other hand, continued to expand their holdings from “20.5 percent in 1880 to 38 percent in 1885, to 57.5 percent in 1900.”¹⁸⁴ Mexican Americans, including Juan José Hinojosa’s descendants, were still part of the land transactions of the Llano Grande as late as the 1900s, but acreages were considerably smaller. Anglos claimed larger acreages within Hidalgo County and in the Llano Grande as well.¹⁸⁵

The ranching decline and droughts helped to further erode the control of Mexican American as land owners. Also, the “egalitarian landholding traditions...accounted for much of the subdivision of the original land grants.”¹⁸⁶ The Llano Grande was no exception and was divided through the descendants of the original land owners. The decline of Mexican Americans, as historian Armando Alonzo finds, began within Hidalgo County between 1880 and 1885.¹⁸⁷ From then on, Anglo ownership increased on through the twentieth century.

In Hidalgo County by 1880, Mexican Americans accounted for 840 households, while only 18 households were for Anglo Americans.¹⁸⁸ Many Anglos gained ownership through marriage to landed Mexican American women. According to Alonzo, in Hidalgo County “from 1852 to 1882, out of nearly five hundred marriages involving Tejanos eleven Anglo-Hispanic

¹⁸³ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 169.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁸⁵ Deed, Guadalupe C. de Cantu et al to Gumercinda C. C. Champion, November 3, 1902, Hidalgo County Deed Records. The property transferred was 88.56 acres in 1902; Deed, William P. Dougherty to James B. Wells, April 27, 1889, Hidalgo County Deed Records. The property transferred was 1493 acres.

¹⁸⁶ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 181.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 111. Derived from Table 4.6 titled Number of Households in Hidalgo County, by Ethnicity, 1860-1900.

marriages occurred in which the woman was Hispanic.”¹⁸⁹ By contrast, in Cameron County where Anglos accounted for a larger portion of residents, higher rates of intermarriages occurred in which a woman was Hispanic. As a whole, intermarriage between Anglo men and Mexican women increased from the 1860s through the 1880s yet began to decline by the 1890s.¹⁹⁰

Warranty deeds involving the Llano Grande indicate only a limited number of Anglo-Hispanic surnames were part of the land transactions, given the lower number of intermarriages between Mexican land owners and Anglos. Examples include the marriage between Gumercinda Cano C. Champion and Peter S. Champion. Gumercinda was the daughter of Antonio Cano and Mauricia Fernández Cano. Antonio owned 791 varas in the third share of the Llano Grande, and Gumercinda held a claim to her father’s property. Peter S. Champion, her husband, held not land but access to American political system. Peter was the brother of Albert Champion who was born in Austria. The Champion family was one of the first settlers in present day Port Isabel, Texas.¹⁹¹ As a member of the Democratic Party, Peter S. Champion held a political office in Hidalgo County. Many of these marriages connected daughters of Mexican land owners to politically well-connected Anglos such as Champion. Antonio Cano’s granddaughter Gerarda Solis, through his other daughter Mauriana Susana Solis, became the wife of A.J. Krummel. He was a Justice of the Peace of Precinct One of Hidalgo County in 1895.¹⁹² Mexican American land owners’ daughters, such as the daughter and granddaughter of Antonio Cano married

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁹⁰ Ana Cristina Downing de De Juana, “Intermarriage in Hidalgo County, 860-1900,” (Master’s Thesis: University of Texas-Pan American, 1998) 100-101.

¹⁹¹ A. A. Champion, "CHAMPION, ALBERT," *Handbook of Texas Online*(<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch10>), accessed December 01, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

¹⁹² Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio TX: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912), 33; Deed, Lauriano Hinojosa and Rosario de Hinojosa to Silverio Solis and Jesus Cavazos, 1895, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

politically influential men in the county allowing Anglo Americans a means to acquire property long held by Hispanic families.

The most notable intermarriage involved, the Champion family, a simple perusal of the warranty deeds and land transfers in the Llano Grande reveal the extent of their presence. Gumercinda was involved in land transactions in which she purchased property, without her husband, from Abundio Cantú's descendants. Women had the power to acquire and sell property within Hidalgo County. In 1902, the 88.56 acres held in undivided interest by Cantú's descendants was sold for one hundred dollars to Gumercinda which amounted to \$1.13 an acre.¹⁹³ Through his wife, Peter S. Champion gained access to property and their daughter Juana in turn inherited the land. The geographical location of his property extended from the Río Grande to Military Road.¹⁹⁴ Juana Champion de Cavazos, along with her husband Desiderio Cavazos, sold her inheritance back to her father in 1911 for five hundred dollars.¹⁹⁵ The interplay of land transactions was an example how intermarriage affected the Llano Grande.”

Many Anglo Americans married Mexican women before purchasing property in the Llano Grande. Edward Dougherty first met his wife, María Marcela García, during the Mexican American War and married on November 13, 1847. The couple lived in different towns in the region, including Río Grande City and Brownsville. In the 1850s, Edward Dougherty established Rudyville, a trading town where he settled down with his family.¹⁹⁶ His children William P. Dougherty and James Dougherty, maintained property within the Llano Grande, and were also deeply connected with the Democratic Party. William, James, and their sister María

¹⁹³ Deed, Guadalupe C. Cantu et al. to Gumercinda C.C. Champion, November 3, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁹⁴ Deed, Juana Champion de Cavazos and Desiderio Cavazos to Peter S. Champion, September 6, 1911, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 109.

Concepción were recorded as land owners in the grant and sold their property to lawyer and politician James B. Wells by the 1890s.

Furthermore, Edward Dougherty's daughter, María Concepción, married Alexander Leo Jr. The Leo and Daugherty family were both politically influential families in Hidalgo County and her marriage consolidated such bond. Alexander Leo Jr., son of a German trader, became the sheriff of Hidalgo County. Leo Jr. was the sheriff of Hidalgo County, and sold a large number of tax delinquent properties from Mexican Americans.¹⁹⁷ Similar to Leo, a large number of Anglo Americans who purchased tax delinquent properties were political officers in Hidalgo County throughout the 1870s.¹⁹⁸

Under similar circumstances as Dougherty, Thaddeus M. Rhodes married Rafaela Hernandez.¹⁹⁹ Not only was Rhodes a successful rancher in the Llano Grande, he was also part of the political elite in Hidalgo County.²⁰⁰ He was the first County Clerk and also served as a county judge from 1876 through 1890.²⁰¹ Dougherty and Rhodes married Mexican women who did not belong to the Llano Grande land owning families. While many Anglos did marry into landed families within the grant, both Daugherty gained property within the Llano Grande through their political connections and access to capital rather than intermarriage.

The intermarriages in the Rio Grande Valley and the Llano Grande not only took place between Anglos and Mexicans. The children of such intermarriage as was the case of María Concepción, continued to marry landed Mexican ranchero families. María Concepción's second

¹⁹⁷ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 205; Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 109, 177.

¹⁹⁸ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 177.

¹⁹⁹ Deed, Thaddeus M. Rhodes et al. to John Closner, December 20, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁰⁰ Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 137.

²⁰¹ Brian Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1985) 90.

marriage was to Mariano Treviño, a Mexican American from a ranching family in Brownsville.²⁰² Francisca García Cavazos, the granddaughter of Ygnacia Hinojosa also married Juan Treanor, the son of an intermarriage couple.²⁰³ The children of intermarriage couples also married into Mexican landed families.

Land transactions within the Llano Grande indicate a low number of intermarriages among the land owners of the grant. The majority of marriages based on Hidalgo County warranty deeds were between Mexican Americans. Within the Llano Grande, for example, the daughters of Antonia Ballí Cavazos all married Mexican American men. Victoria Ballí Cavazos married Benigno Leal, who owned property within the third share of the grant.²⁰⁴ Most landed Mexican women married landed Mexican men, as was the case with and Manuela Ballí Cavazos who married Juan Villarreal.²⁰⁵ While marriage consolidated Mexican American ties and helped some families maintain control of the land, the transfer of land to Anglos continued throughout the region.

Although intermarriage did not affect land tenure in the Llano Grande significantly, *derechos* did mark the early transition of the Llano Grande to Anglo ownership. The right to the grant did not signify actual ownership, yet *derechos* were the first step taken by Anglos to gain property within the Llano Grande without marrying into Mexican American families. Anglos as early as 1848 began to acquire properties in the Llano Grande. Lawyers such as Elisha Basse, Robert H. Hord, and James B. Wells Jr. were among the first to buy *derechos* from Mexican

²⁰² Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 109.

²⁰³ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To The Capisallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said District* (Edinburg, TX: Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Co., 1920), 19-20.

²⁰⁴ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 5.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

Americans in the Llano Grande. This allowed Anglos to control land without having to purchase it outright initially.

Table 2: Anglo Purchases of *Derechos* in the Llano Grande

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Size	Price
Sirildo de Hinojosa, Doña Josefa de Hinojosa and Don Francisco Reyes	Elisha Basse and Robert H. Hord	1853	¼ right of the Llano Grande	\$500 Mexican Currency
Juan García Cavazos et al.	James B. Wells	November 24, 1884	Rights to the Llano Grande from Barlota Cavazos property	\$256 Mexican Currency
Blas María Cavazos de García	James B. Wells	July 21, 1887	Rights to the Llano Grande bordering “La Terra” and “La Blanca” properities.	\$10.00 United States Currency.

Source: Hidalgo County Clerk Deed Records on Sirildo de Hinojosa et al., Juan García Cavazos et al., and Blas María Cavazos de García.

Basse and Hord gained rights from Tirildo Hinojosa, Doña Josefa de Hinojosa, and Francisco Reyes in 1853 for \$500 dollars. In the legal description of the property, no details on the acreage are given only the general boundaries of the grant.²⁰⁶ Basse and Hord purchased one fourth of Petra Hinojosa’s *derecho* in the fifth share.²⁰⁷ James B. Wells, lawyer and resident from Brownsville, bought derechos from a conglomeration of owners led by Blas María Cavazos de García in 1884 and the syndicate of owners led by Juan García in 1887. Both properties sold for ten dollars each.²⁰⁸ The majority of *derechos* were sold for low prices on average around 300 to 500 Mexican pesos or U.S. dollars. *Derechos* continued to be sold up until, as land in other parts of the region was purchased by Anglos.

²⁰⁶ Deed, Tirildo de Hinojosa et al. to Elisha Basse and Robert H. Hord, 1853, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁰⁷ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To the Capisallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said District* (Edinburg, TX: Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Co, 1920), 20.

²⁰⁸ Deed, Juan García Cavazos et al. to James B. Wells, November 24, 1884, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

Anglos purchased *derechos* or rights of ownership that gave them access to the land, yet they used the courts to gain actual property. For example, after the Civil War, Richard King and Francisco Yturria purchased *derechos* in the San Juan de Carricitos which were sold by descendants of José Narciso Cavazos after his death in 1805.²⁰⁹ Within this grant, as the grandson of Francisco Yturria wrote, “Yturria, King, Stillman, and others would visit these *ranchos* and negotiate purchase of each individual *derecho* –a painstaking process– and take ‘ownership’ of the property.”²¹⁰ Once placing a foothold on Spanish land grants, such as the San Juan de Carricitos, lawyers with expertise in Spanish land grants filed suit in 1881. Ruling in favor of the Anglos and Yturria, the San Juan de Carricitos was divided. Richard King, Francisco Yturria, and Charles Stillman among others gained property within the San Juan De Carricitos.²¹¹ Although both of these grants were related, the Llano Grande did not suffer a similar fate as the Carricitos grant. The Llano Grande had previously been divided among the descendants of Hinojosa, and the Texas Courts did not require the owners to subdivide it.

In the course of twenty years, the Llano Grande was transferred to Anglo ownership. Out of the eight shares, the first share was owned by Anglo Americans shortly after 1848. Four years after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Julio Garza along with his wife Manuela Martinez and his mother-in-law Francisca Gómez sold the first share to John Young on June 15, 1852.²¹² John Young, born in Scotland, arrived in the Río Grande region in the pre-War period and quickly became a successful merchant.²¹³ This land purchase marked an important shift in the land

²⁰⁹ Frank Daniel Yturria, *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Extraordinary Times of Francisco Yturria* (Brownsville, TX: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2006), 151-153.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

²¹² Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 32-33.

²¹³ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 66.

tenure of the Llano Grande. Out of the 127,625 acres of the Llano Grande, the westernmost share of the Llano Grande was immediately transferred to Anglo hands.²¹⁴

The first share held 2,656.25 varas in width and extended the entire length of the grant bordering the “La Hara” grant six leagues to the north.²¹⁵ John Young purchased approximately 14,116 acres for \$1300 dollars, and paid less than ten cents an acre.²¹⁶ The property now belonged to him and his descendants. This acquisition of the first share of the Llano Grande, the entire one eighth, marked the first major land purchase by Anglos in the Llano Grande. Although within the Llano Grande land loss was a gradual process, in certain cases, such as the first share, the land was quickly transferred to Anglo hands. This type of land transaction was the exception rather than the rule in terms of land tenure in the Llano Grande.

While the first share was purchased within a few years after 1848, not all shares were outright bought by Anglos. In contrast, the second, third, and fourth shares of the Llano Grande were maintained by Mexican American land owners for a longer period of time. Within these shares the properties continued to be subdivided through the consecutive generations and Anglos purchased these smaller tracts. They then purchased additional land from the neighbors or family of the original property they purchased. Overall the majority of the properties within the grant were bought by Anglos in smaller increments throughout the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, after the death of John Young part of the property was sold by John McAllen with James B. McAllen and John Y. Young. John Young had married María Salome

²¹⁴ Greaser, *New Guide To Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 312.

²¹⁵ Deed, Julio Garza et al. To John Young, July 15, 1852, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Ballí de la Garza in 1853.²¹⁷ Later, after fifty years of owning the property under the Young/McAllen family ownership, 1600 acres (approximately 14,115.47 acres) were sold to A.F. Hester on March 5, 1902.²¹⁸ Soon, land purchases involved Anglo owners selling property to other Anglos. As such, out of the 1600 acres owned by Hester 500 acres were sold to J.B. Brooks on April 5, 1902. Property was held by Anglos by short periods of time, as the case with Hester and Brooks. J.B. Brooks, in turn, created the La Blanca Agricultural Company.²¹⁹ The changes in land tenure of the first share were a preview to the changes that were to ensue in the rest of the grant by the 1900s. Land companies became the next phase of land ownership in the Llano Grande.

Actual purchases occurred early in the modern land tenure history of the grant which added to the acreage owned by Anglo Americans. Many of the purchases by Anglos were dubious in nature because properties were sold at low values. On October 23, 1852, Ramon Cavazos Hinojosa, son of Matías Cavazos and Manuela Hinojosa, sold his inheritance to Edward Dougherty. Cavazos sold nine hundred varas of property fronting the Río Grande for \$500 dollars.²²⁰ This property was bought around the same time frame when John Young purchased the first share in the Llano Grande. Edward Dougherty, along with his wife Marcela Dougherty, sold the property originally purchased from Cavazos, to Edward Downey for \$500 dollars. On

²¹⁷ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 126.

²¹⁸ Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Company, *Abstract of Title to that Part of Beamer Syndicate and J.C. McDowell Properties*, 40-41.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

²²⁰ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio TX: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912), 19.

February 26, 1856 Downey paid \$750 dollars.²²¹ Profits were clearly being made by selling Llano Grande land and the land prices were increasing.

Anglos, in certain cases, concentrated on a certain tract of land or family when purchasing property. Richard King purchased property from the Cavazos family. On April 24, 1854 Francisco Cavazos y Cortina, son of Lino Cavazos, sold to King 150 varas (approximately 797 acres) out of the second share of the Llano Grande. For the price of \$120 dollars, King became a landowner in the Llano Grande, and continued to purchase more property from other members of the Cavazos family.²²² Also, John McAllen bought property from Lino Cavazos other son, Pablo, on January 30, 1856. The 150 varas purchased by McAllen were further sold to King in 1856. Furthermore, Henrietta M. King sold 300 varas approximately 1600 acres to James B. Wells, which spoke to the acreage King purchased in the Llano Grande.²²³ Anglos were consolidating property within the Llano Grande by purchasing land of neighbors and family of the original owners.

By the early 1860s, Edward Dougherty began to advertise the South Texas region. Through correspondence with Reverend Brother Patrick of the Protectory in Westchester, New York, Dougherty tried to persuade the Protectory to establish an academy in south Texas. The Reverend wished to inquire on the conditions of South Texas. Dougherty highlighted the ranching, farming, and manufacturing possibilities of the region. As with future advertisements of the “Magic Valley,” Edward Dougherty presented the region as a land filled with possibilities. He argued that within this region any type of enterprise could have yielded great rewards.

²²¹ Ibid., 19.

²²² Ibid., 25.

²²³ Ibid., 25-26.

Edward Dougherty, along with Leonardo Manso, was willing to sell property to make a project happen. Dougherty and Manso held property outside the Llano Grande close to the Nueces River and were willing to see the property for the Protectory. Dougherty stated that Manso “owns, and will sell at \$1.00 per acre, a tract of about 20,000 acres, eight miles above the tract I offer...of a tract of 22,000 acres lying about seventy miles back from the Río Grande towards the Nueces River.”²²⁴ Ultimately, the Catholic Church in New York declined the offer by Dougherty, as stated by Lucy H. Wallace.²²⁵ Both Daugherty and Manso were substantial owners in the Llano Grande, and were also large land owners throughout South Texas. Since prices were not steep, Anglo ownership increased during the 1880s. Land began to be seen as a commodity. Land speculation by Anglos became an important economic activity and marked the beginning of another shift in land tenure in the Llano Grande.

The transfer from Mexican American to Anglo ownership can be traced in the land records. Bernardo Yturria, a Mexican land owner, who previously consolidated property within the Llano Grande in the 1880s, sold part of his land to Anglos. On August 7, 1884 Yturria sold part of his property to Mrs. Pauline J. Wells, wife of James B. Wells, for “\$10.00 and other valuable considerations,” a low price for the property that extended the entire length of the Llano Grande.²²⁶ The size of the property was 475 varas (approximately 2,524.17 acres), and no longer were the huge acreages that once characterized property. The warranty deeds had vague terms in regards to the value and purchase price of the properties. The term “valuable considerations” was not specific enough to define what was transferred beyond the ten dollars Pauline J. Wells

²²⁴ Edward Dougherty, *Availability of the Counties of Cameron & Hidalgo on the Lower Rio Grande, Texas, for Agricultural, Stock Raising and Manufacturing Purposes* (Brownsville, TX: Sentinel Book and Job Printing Office, 1869), 4.

²²⁵ Lucy H. Wallace, “The Brothers Dougherty,” in *Roots by the River: A Story of Texas Tropical Borderland* by Valley By-Liners, book 2 (Mission, TX: Border Kingdom Press, 1978), 55.

²²⁶ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co*, 49.

paid. Pauline, niece of Stephen Powers, also purchased from Bernardo Yturria another property 249 varas for the same price of \$10.00 dollars.²²⁷ These tracts were substantial in acreages, yet they were being sold by Mexican Americans for very low prices, which in turn fostered Anglo-American land ownership.

While the eight shares in the Llano Grande no longer solely remained in the hands of Mexican Americans. Few Mexican Americans were able to maintain and even consolidate property. Florencio Sáenz, for example, gained ownership to the majority of the fourth share of the Llano Grande. Even so, Florencio Sáenz began to sell part of his property to Anglo Americans. In a court record Sáenz, who owned 100 varas in the second share, sold this property to Bloomberg & Raphael on April 11, 1891.²²⁸ By the 1880s and 1890s, Anglo names were part of the land transactions in larger numbers.

As land was being consolidated into Anglo ownership, disagreements emerged between land owners over boundary disputes. The first involved José María Mora and Rhodes. Mora had purchased his property from Francisco Reyes while Rhodes acquired land from Mrs. E.R. Hord, wife of Robert H. Hord.²²⁹ The dispute emerged over the boundary lines between both grants. In the agreement within the courts on August 5, 1876, the boundary line was established in the middle of both grants. Both Mora and Rhodes acquired sixty six varas on each side of the line.²³⁰ Matters were resolved within the courts and received a fair settlement, although continuing border disputes emerged. Mora was not dispossessed of his property and used the

²²⁷ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To the Capihallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said District* (Edinburg, TX: Hidalgo and Starr Counties Abstract Co, 1920), 10.

²²⁸ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 184*, 29.

²²⁹ Agreement, Thaddeus M. Rhodes and Jose Maria Mora, August 5, 1876, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²³⁰ Ibid.

courts to reach an agreement, arguing that Mexican Americans also used the courts to settle disputes.

Anglos were at the forefront in the institutionalization of the American form of municipal government along the northern bank of the Rio Grande. In Hidalgo County, Anglos control of the political offices aided their purchase and control of Llano Grande property. Anglos sought out properties that were behind on taxes or were county clerks and sheriffs that purchased land. Tax sale deeds will be covered later in this chapter.²³¹ Thaddeus M. Rhodes, an Anglo owner in the Llano Grande, was the first County Clerk when Hidalgo County was established in 1852.²³² Anglos controlled politics and slowly gained ownership in the grant throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Land, law, and politics intertwined to create a new profile of the Llano Grande owners.

Lawyers in the Llano Grande were agents as well as clients in the land ownership of the grant. As David Montejano stated, lawyers and merchants were the first to arrive in the Rio Grande, and were able to gain *derechos* and property within the grant. Lawyers were indeed “an integral member of the capital-based Anglo elite...who basically served to organize land market in the new territories.”²³³ Through lawyers and law firms Mexican American families were able to navigate the American legal courts. The early court records dealt with law firms from Cameron County receiving *derechos* as repayment for their legal services.²³⁴ Anglos also hired lawyers to gain property within the Rio Grande Valley. The lawyers were an essential part of the land tenure history of the Llano Grande.

²³¹ Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 177.

²³² Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert*, 90.

²³³ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 43.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

In certain cases, lawyers purchased property under their own name and transferred such property to Anglo clients. Stephen Powers, one of the most prominent lawyers and political boss in Cameron County, was King's lawyer. He gained land for King and other Anglos. Power's successor James B. Wells Jr. continued to serve King to acquire more land. Under the Bourland Commission a large number of land grants were validated in order for interested buyers to be able to purchase property.²³⁵ Many law firms and lawyers purchased property as agents for other Anglo Americans. Similarly, Elisha Basse from New England and Robert H. Hord from Mississippi had not only gained property representing Anglos and Mexican clientele, but were agents who purchased property for Anglos such as "Charles Stillman, Richard King, Sam Belden, and Edward Dougherty."²³⁶

Lawyers saw benefits to defending both Anglos and Mexican elite families in legal transactions. Powers of Attorney were granted to these law firms to sell property, to sue, to sell property, among other responsibilities. In 1904, Severa de Jesus Hinojosa appointed J.L. Hudson her "lawful agent and attorney in fact" to be her representative in all legal transactions as the "only living heir of Vicente Hinojosa."²³⁷ Elisha Basse and Robert H. Hord were employed by Mexican families for legal representation and through fees and purchases they gained "1,500 acres of the land [which] would ultimately end up [in] the property of the lawyers."²³⁸ Anglo lawyers sold property of Mexican Americans to other Anglos. Charles Schunior Sr. and Frank W. Kibbe were granted a Power of Attorney by Dolores Recendes García de Elizondo and the

²³⁵ Galen D. Greaser and Jesús F. de la Teja, "Quieting Title to the Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in the Trans-Nueces: The Bourland and Miller commission, 1850-1852," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 95, no. 4 (April 1992):449, accessed February 17, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3024200>.

²³⁶ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 67.

²³⁷ Deed, Severa de Jesus Hinojosa to J.L. Hudson, November 16, 1904, Hidalgo County Deed Record.

²³⁸ Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert*, 100.

other co-owners to sell a property to John Closner on March 10, 1908.²³⁹ Such a document gave lawyers a substantial amount of power over property belonging to landed Mexican families.

Anglo lawyers and law firms gained rights to Spanish land grants through *derechos*. Many of the purchases within the Llano Grande by Basse and Hord were in the form of *derechos*. Josefa Hinojosa sold her rights to “Las Mesteñas, Petitias, y la Abra” grant for \$1,000 dollars, a substantial amount of money for rights on April 27, 1854 to James Walworth.²⁴⁰ In the sixth share of the Llano Grande Josefa Hinojosa Garcia along with co-owners sold one fourth of their interest February 25, 1853 to Basse and Hord.²⁴¹ Lawyers outside their law firms also purchased *derechos* and acreage within the Llano Grande. For example, Bloomberg & Raphael purchased two hundred varas of property from Manuel Ballí March 28, 1889 for \$700.00.²⁴² Law firms were important agents to gain property within the Llano Grande.

Lawyers also engaged in land speculation and owned significant amounts of property in the grant. James B. Wells Jr., born in central Texas in 1850, received a law degree from the University of Virginia in and established a law firm in Corpus Christi.²⁴³ He moved to the Rio Grande Valley and associated with Stephen Powers. Following Powers death in 1882, he became the leading expert in land grants and a political leader in Cameron County. Wells represented both Anglos and Mexican clientele.²⁴⁴ In 1901, Wells represented many Anglos to confirm

²³⁹ Deed, Charles Schunior and Frank W. Kibbe (attorneys-in-fact) to Seferino Dominguez Villarreal et al. to John Closner, March 10, 1908, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁴⁰ Deed, Josefa Hinojosa to James Walworth, April 27, 1854, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁴¹ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 27.

²⁴² Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 22.

²⁴³ Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982) 4.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

seventeen land grants in Texas legislature.²⁴⁵ Wells and Powers helped to gain property for Anglo land owners many from disputed land grants.

James B. Wells Jr. bought *derechos* in the 1880s in the Llano Grande. In 1884, Wells purchased rights from a large conglomeration of owners including Juan Garcia Cavazos for \$265 in Mexican coin.²⁴⁶ By 1887, he gained the rights of Blas María Cavazos de Garcia to the Llano Grande for ten dollars. The price for this *derechos* was every low and the property gave access to the entire grant as stated in the following description

The said grant fronting upon, the Rio Grande River and bounded by is upon the south; bounded upon the north by the grant to Vicente Hinojosa called and, especially known as ‘Las Mesteñas’ on the East bounded by the grant to Rosa María de Ballí called and especially known as ‘La Terra’ and on the west bounded by the grant to Lino Cavazos called and especially known as ‘La Blanca’.²⁴⁷

The large majority of *derechos* descriptions are as vague as the one presented here. While described property included the entire grant, the rights he was granted were those allocated to Blas María Cavazos de García.²⁴⁸ These were the first few land transactions involving *derechos* for Wells; he began to purchase property in the Llano Grande in the 1880s and 1890s.

Much of the property owned by James B. Wells, the political boss of Cameron County was through land transactions in the late nineteenth century. First, he purchased *derechos* and later expanded his property by purchasing land from landowners in the grant. Unlike John Young who purchased an entire one eighth of the Llano Grande, Wells purchased property in

²⁴⁵ Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 146.

²⁴⁶ Deed, Juan García Cavazos et al. to James B. Wells, November 24, 1884, Deeds Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁴⁷ Deed, Blas María Cavazos de Garcia to James B. Wells, July 21, 1887, Deeds Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

smaller increments and amassed 44,000 acres.²⁴⁹ With his purchases he established the Campacuas Ranch. Wells was one of the land owners with substantial acreages within the Llano Grande.

Table 3: Land Purchases by James B. Wells Jr.

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Size	Price
Juan García Cavazos et al.	James B. Wells Jr.	Nov. 24, 1884	Rights to the Llano Grande and San Juan de Carricitos	\$256 U.S. Currency
William P. Dougherty	James B. Wells Jr.	June 18, 1887	1,437 acres	\$500.00 U.S. Currency
Blas María Cavazos de García	James B. Wells Jr.	July 21, 1887	Rights to the Llano Grande	\$10.00
Mary Concepción Leo. De Treviño	James B. Wells Jr.	January 19, 1889	2,244 acres	\$1.50 per acre/\$3,366 U.S. Currency
William P. Dougherty	James B. Wells Jr.	April 27, 1889	1,493 acres	\$1.50 per acre/\$2,239.50 U.S. Currency

Source: Hidalgo County Clerk Deed Records for Juan García Cavazos et al., William P. Dougherty, Blas María Cavazos de García, and Mary Concepción Leo de Treviño.

A new phase in land tenure emerged, Anglo to Anglo transactions in the warranty deeds of the Llano Grande by the late nineteenth century. From the children of Edward Dougherty, James B. Wells Jr. acquired 5,147 acres in the years of 1887 to 1889. William P. Dougherty sold on June 18, 1887 1,437 acres for five hundred dollars and two promissory notes worth \$827.75 dollars each.²⁵⁰ The property value had increased. Wells paid almost \$1.50 an acre for the property owned by William P. Dougherty. In comparison, Ramon Cavazos Hinojosa sold 900 varas to Edward Dougherty for \$500 in 1852.²⁵¹ Wells continued to consolidate property within the same general vicinity purchasing property from María Concepcion Leo de Treviño

²⁴⁹ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 44.

²⁵⁰ Deed, William P. Dougherty to James B. Wells, July 18, 1887, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁵¹ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 19.

Dougherty, along with her husband, on January 19, 1889. The property contained 2,244 acres and was sold for \$3,366.00 dollars, yet only \$1,122.00 was paid in cash while the rest were paid in promissory notes.²⁵² William P. Dougherty sold a second property to Wells on April 27, 1899 at \$1.50 an acre for 1493 acres with a sale price of \$2,239.50.²⁵³ Peter S. Champion was the county clerk at the time of Wells transaction 1889 and fellow Democratic Party member.²⁵⁴ Anglo Americans, such as Dougherty, previously purchased acreage in the grant and sold to James B. Wells.

Land, politics, and power were three factors that characterized a number of Anglo owners in the Llano Grande. As previously noted, James B. Wells Jr. was the political boss in Cameron County. In regards to political affiliation “the Democratic Party, or reds, included Thaddeus M. Rhodes, Ben Kidder, Peter S. Champion, and William P. and Jim Dougherty. The men leading the Blues, or Republican Party, were John McAllen and ...Dr. Alexander Manford Headley and Jesse Dennett.”²⁵⁵ A large number of Democrats were land owners in the Llano Grande. John McAllen was one of the few land owners in the Llano Grand who was part of the Republican Party in Hidalgo County.

A large number of Democrats were land owners in the Llano Grande. John McAllen was part of the Republican Party, which also owed part of the first share of the Llano Grande. The Anglos were influential people in regards to the political direction of Hidalgo County that affected the Llano Grande. Edward Dougherty, his brother, and his children, according to Lucy H. Wallace of the Valley By-Liners, held political offices such as “county judge, sheriff, district

²⁵² Deed, María Concepción Leo de Treviño to James B. Wells, January 19, 1889, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁵³ Deed, William P. Dougherty to James B. Wells, April 27, 1899 Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 310.

attorney, customs collector, judge, state representative, newspaper publisher-journalist and rancher.”²⁵⁶ Politics were controlled by political machines and in the case of the Hidalgo County was controlled by John Closner, another major land owner in the Llano Grande. Power and politics were major factors in land ownership that helped Anglos to gain property within the grant.

Due to the increased property values and local taxes among other economic factors, some Mexican Americans fell behind on taxes. Anglos easily gained properties that were sold off due to the lack of payment for taxes. The money was not loaned as evident in the records. Manuel Hinojosa, son of José Antonio Hinojosa and Gregoria Longoria, and grandson to Cypriano Hinojosa. He maintained substantial acreage within the Llano Grande, yet he had to take out loans and used his property within the Llano Grande as collateral. Francisco Yturria loaned him two hundred dollars in Mexican coin with a ten percent maturity and ten percent attorney’s fees which were to be paid within six months from the original date June 9, 1902. Four hundred acres were placed as collateral to be collected by Yturria if the loan was not paid.²⁵⁷ Although Manuel Hinojosa paid off his loan, the situation was risky. He could have lost his property if he defaulted on the loan. Hinojosa placed another 500 acres of his property as collateral for a \$440 loan from Frank W. Kibbe of Cameron, only a year after he finished paying Yturria’s loan. Interestingly, his neighbors at the time were still Mexican Americans such as Baltazar Rodriguez along with José María Cano, Dolores Solis, and others from the Tampacuas Lake on the west and James B. Wells and his wife on the east.²⁵⁸ Manuel paid off another loan from Frank W. Kibbe

²⁵⁶ Wallace, “The Brothers Dougherty,” 54.

²⁵⁷ Release of Mortgage, Francisco Yturria to Manuel Hinojosa, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁵⁸ Mortgage, Frank W. Kibbe to Manuel Hinojosa, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

and regained his five hundred acres.²⁵⁹ Manuel Hinojosa's property was not taken from him even though he used vast tracts of land for collateral in the short term loans he took out.

While Manuel Hinojosa was able to get mortgages on his property, a large number of Mexican American land owners were not so fortunate. Tax sale deeds were prevalent in the Llano Grande and were a strategy to gain large acreages for small amounts of money. Thaddeus M. Rhodes was one of the Anglos who most benefited from these types of sales and acquired substantial acreages from delinquent taxes within the Llano Grande. On June 5, 1877 María Josefa Hinojosa Cavazos, granddaughter of Ygnacia Hinojosa, lost her property to tax sale. A.J. Leo, son-in-law to Edward Dougherty, the Tax Collector of Hidalgo County, sold 3,027 acres out of the fourth share for the sum of fifteen dollars. The property was bought by Rhodes for less than one cent per acre.²⁶⁰ Again on March 5, 1878 Josefa Cavazos through Sheriff and Tax Collector of Hidalgo County sold 3,087 acres in a tax sale deed purchased by Thaddeus M. Rhodes for \$16.50 dollars. The delinquent taxes on the properties by Josefa Cavazos had been pending since 1874, meaning she had been behind for four years on her taxes. In Josefa's case, large amounts of property were sold to pay the taxes that amounted to \$15 and \$16.50. Leo and Rhodes were both in positions to supervise the Mexican land owners who were delinquent on their taxes and sell the lands to Anglo Americans. The lack of payment displaced many Mexican American landowners in the Llano Grande and provided cheap land for Anglo Americans.

Thaddeus M. Rhodes was involved in Hidalgo County politics and an Anglo owner in the Llano Grande. Rhodes first arrived in the Río Grande valley during the Mexican American War

²⁵⁹ Release of Mortgage, Frank W. Kibbe to Manuel Hinojosa, 1904, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁶⁰ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 11.

with Taylor's army.²⁶¹ Thaddeus M. Rhodes another early Anglo land owner in the Llano Grande established the Relámpago Ranch also in the vicinity of present day Progreso, Texas.²⁶² His name appeared in the court records as early as 1850's. Rhodes purchased a property from Francisco Solis for \$300 on November 23, 1857.²⁶³ Also, he was listed as a neighbor of the property that was sold by Tirildo Hinojosa to Antonio Cano on January 27, 1862.²⁶⁴ Rhodes purchased property within the grant, yet tax sale deeds garnered him the greatest acreages.

Rhodes used his connections to gain property in the Llano Grande. Rhodes was the first county clerk of Hidalgo County after the county was formed in 1852 and resumed the position after the Civil War.²⁶⁵ He continued his political office in Hidalgo County when "in 1876...Rhodes was elected county judge, despite his reputation as a horse and cattle rustler...and Alexander J. Leo Jr. was elected sheriff."²⁶⁶ On June 5, 1877 bought another property in a tax sale deed, from Sheriff Alexander J. Leo of Hidalgo County. A pattern emerges in which the sheriff, A. J. Leo, seized tax-delinquent property that was then bought by Thaddeus M. Rhodes. For example, Martin Washington a property owner in the Llano Grande failed to pay \$1.05 in taxes on 1876. A year later, Leo sold the property to Rhodes. For \$5.55 Rhodes thus was able to gain 175 acres.²⁶⁷ Both their names were present in the land transactions of tax sale deeds.

Unlike intermarriage, derechos, or purchases, tax sale deeds were a quick way for Anglo Americans to gain ownership of the Llano Grande for inexpensive prices. When taxes could not

²⁶¹ Frances Wyatt Isbell, "Thaddeus M. Rhodes: Political Leader," in *Rio Grande Roundup: Story of Texas Tropical Borderland* (Mission, TX: Border Kingdom Press, 1980), 57.

²⁶² Sánchez ed., *A Shared Experience*, 110.

²⁶³ American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 29.

²⁶⁴ Deed, Tirildo Hinojosa to Antonio Cano, January 27, 1862, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁶⁵ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 130, 181.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

²⁶⁷ Tax Sale, Alexander J. Leo (Martin Washington) to Thaddeus M. Rhodes, June 5, 1877, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

be paid, an announcement first had to be given at the county courthouse a few days before the sale as a fair way to inform the public. The tax sale deed prices covered the taxes and court costs, which did not exceed twenty dollars in most cases. For example, the 664 varas (approximately 3528.53 acres) was sold to Edison T. Peck by Sheriff A.J. Leo on May 7, 1878 for \$17.75. This property was originally owned by Barlota Cavazos in the fourth share of the Llano Grande.²⁶⁸ The property was sold for very cheap prices, usually covering the cost of the taxes owed and the court costs.

John Closner, who arrived in Hidalgo County in 1884, became one of the most important land developers in the Rio Grande Valley. As acting sheriff on October 2, 1894 he sold under Deed of Execution, Manuel Ballí's property to William H. Manson for the amount of \$2,147.70 dollars. The property contained 801 acres of property within the second share of the Llano Grande. William H. Manson sold the same property on August 7, 1895 to John Closner for \$1991.60.²⁶⁹ This property was sold at a higher value than previous deeds. Many members of Hidalgo County's political elite used their status to acquire property in the Llano Grande.

Properties previously held for years or decades, were now being sold quickly to Anglos in the Rio Grande Valley. The majority of the displacement of Mexican American land owners occurred from tax sale deeds through the Hidalgo County Tax Collection office. Sheriff A.J. Leo sold a large number of properties which were bought not only by Thaddeus M. Rhodes, but by other such as Closner, and Richard King. Thus, Anglos acquired substantial acres for very low prices, regardless of the property value. Rhodes consolidated a large portion of the fifth share in the Llano Grande.

²⁶⁸ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 14.

²⁶⁹ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 8.

Land ownership in the Llano Grande was not unilateral or uniform throughout the nineteenth century. Sections of the grant quickly sold out to Anglo Americans while other shares in the Llano Grande remained with Mexican American land owners. As late as October 23, 1914 Rafaela Hinojosa sold property to J.D. White which was located in Lot 14 of Block 37 of the subdivisions established by land companies.²⁷⁰ In comparison to other land grants, the Mexican American owners of the Llano Grande held on to much of their land for a longer period of time. Although Anglo Americans came to gain considerable acreages within the grant.

Warranty deeds and court records confirm that Anglo Americans gained ownership through intermarriage, purchases, and tax sale deeds. Understanding how Anglo Americans acquired land within the Llano Grande provides insight into the shift of power and politics with the grant. Their control of the land was gradual, first gaining political and economic power in Hidalgo County. Anglos acquired small properties in the Llano Grande and consolidated larger properties, while Mexican American land owners continued to subdivide their properties. Anglo to Anglo transactions became more common within the warranty deeds and court records. Prices were steeper than previous land transactions. Anglo acquisition of property completely changed the land tenure of the Llano Grande, which set the stage for future changes to occur.

By the early twentieth century, Anglos began to sell to Anglo investors creating land and irrigation companies that came to control the majority of the property within the Llano Grande. With the development of commercial agriculture and the arrival of the railroad, the Llano Grande was transformed once again. Land and Irrigation companies such as the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company came to own the majority of the land in the Llano Grande and sold forty acre farms to other recently arrived Anglos. It was this process of changing land ownership

²⁷⁰ Deed, Rafaela Hinojosa to J.D. White, October 23, 1914, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

from Mexican, Mexican American, and Anglos which formed the basis of the land tenure of modern-day Weslaco, Texas.

CHAPTER IV

THE ERA OF THE RAILROAD AND COMMERCIAL LAND TENURE

By the early twentieth century dramatic changes ensued within the Rio Grande Valley that marked the period of Anglo capitalism and innovation. The Llano Grande was no longer held under a single owner, and the property in the grant was transformed into blocks and subdivisions controlled by land and irrigation companies. Due to the arrival of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexican Railroad in 1904 and the development of commercial agriculture, the Rio Grande Valley was changing into the modern day Rio Grande Valley. Cities such as Harlingen, Mercedes, Donna, McAllen, were founded along with the railroad lines and started to grow and expand. As a whole, the Rio Grande Valley, including the Llano Grande, was slowly transforming into the “Magic Valley” given the shift from ranching to commercial agriculture was aided by the railroad and large-scale irrigation.

The Llano Grande grant was subdivided and changed in great part by land corporations with its success due to the arrival of the railroad and the development of commercial agriculture. These three factors intertwined to completely change the landscape and ownership of the Llano Grande. Properties began to resemble modern-day blocks and subdivisions which were first established by Midwestern land and irrigation companies in the early 1900s. Corporations, such as the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (ARGLIC), were at the forefront of the land tenure changes occurring in the Llano Grande and the rest of the Valley.

With the decline of ranching, the land and not the livestock became the main economic business in the region. As such, the county of Hidalgo was transformed into farming lands by the 1900s. Fields full of crops began to grow in the Llano Grande and across the Rio Grande Valley, where once the Spanish had earned their living off the cattle that roamed vast tracts of land. At a very basic level, the land itself became the commodity to sell and trade along the Rio Grande Valley and particularly within the Llano Grande.

Almost all of the Mexican Americans who had held on tenuously to their properties were eventually displaced by the second wave of Anglo migrants to the Valley. Land speculators and corporations purchased property from Mexican Americans and large Anglo owners in the Llano Grande, and sold farming properties to newly arrived Anglos. By the 1900s, newly arrived Anglo Americans became the majority of the land owners in the Llano Grande. As such corporations and large farmers became the major players in Llano Grande.

A large number of Anglos interested in the economic benefits of a railroad pushed for the construction of a branch to South Texas. The railroads were an important factor that allowed land corporations to break down the Llano Grande and gain a profit. Even so, by the turn of the twentieth century the Rio Grande had yet to gain a railroad. Previous to the arrival of the railroad in 1904, the majority of the transportation in the region was conducted by river or land. The steamboat trade was the dominant transportation in the Rio Grande Valley, yet its decline occurred by the 1890s. Only a few small railroad projects were successful in the Rio Grande previous to 1904, and the majority of these railroads were used for small commercial and

military purposes.²⁷¹ During the American Civil War, General Phil Sheridan and his troops built a rail line from Brazos Santiago to White ranch eleven miles away.²⁷² Another railway was built under the Rio Grande Railroad company, approved by Texas Legislature, with the involvement of Richard King, Mifflin Kenedy, Stephen Power, and other businessmen.²⁷³ This rail line was successful in running daily trains from Port Isabel to Brownsville throughout 1886, yet it declined after the 1890s and never recuperated.²⁷⁴ Major railroad corporations did not build lines into the Rio Grande Valley until 1904.

In the South Texas region, by the 1890s and early 1900s, Anglo businessmen and local corporations pushed for the construction of railroads for the Rio Grande Valley. On September 1, 1881, Laredo gained a railroad and developed quite rapidly due to its accessibility to international markets and Mexican railways.²⁷⁵ In contrast, the rest of the Rio Grande Valley entered a period of decline. Access to the Mexican markets occurred through the Brownsville-Matamoros region, yet Laredo's railroad captured the bulk of the trade. Seeking greater profits, Anglo businessmen fought for the construction of a railway into Brownsville.

²⁷¹ Mario L. Sánchez ed., *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: Los Caminos del Rio Grande Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1994).

²⁷² "The Rio Grande Railroad Company: 1870-1911 And Other Early Railroads Steam Ships, River Boats, Ferries and State Lines in the Lower Rio Grande Valley," *Journal of Texas Shortline railroads and Transportation* 1, no. 2 (August/September/October 1996): 10-13.

²⁷³ "The Rio Grande Railroad Company: 1870-1911 And Other Early Railroads Steam Ships, River Boats, Ferries and State Lines in the Lower Rio Grande Valley," *Journal of Texas Shortline railroads and Transportation* 1, no. 2 (August/September/October 1996): 14; Brian Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1985) 147.

²⁷⁴ Mary Margaret McAllen, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep In Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and The People of The Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association), 432.

²⁷⁵ J.L. Allhands, *Uriah Lott* (San Antonio, TX: The Naylor Company, 1949) 20-21.

Uriah Lott, born in Albany, New York, is credited for establishing a railway line into Brownsville.²⁷⁶ Lott first made his way down to Corpus Christi, and according to J.L. Allhands he saw the unlimited potential that the Rio Grande had and wished to open the region to the “outside world.”²⁷⁷ Benjamin F. Yoakum worked with Lott to secure a railroad for South Texas. With Lott’s connection to Anglo and elite Mexican Americans in South Texas, he was able to secure enough capital and land for the construction of a railroad.²⁷⁸ The railroad into the Rio Grande Valley changed dramatically the economy and land holding in the region.

As such, by January 12, 1903 a charter was issued for the creation of the St. Louis, Brownsville, Mexico Railway Company. Due to Lott’s involvement in the branch and as president of the railway company, the line was known as the “Lott Railroad.”²⁷⁹ Lott made several trips to the Rio Grande Valley to scout and choose locations for the railroad. After doing so, the Johnston Brothers company began the construction on July 1, 1903. The railway line was to connect Robstown and Brownsville. A second branch was to be constructed known as the Sam Fordyce or Hidalgo branch. This line was to extend west from present day Harlingen, Texas to the town, no longer in existence, of Sam Fordyce, west of present day Mission, Texas.²⁸⁰ The physical remnants of the railway lines are still a mark in present day Valley cities. This secondary branch directly impacted the land tenure in the Llano Grande in which land transactions accommodated the incoming railroad.

Anglo and Mexican American businessmen were the key players for the construction of the railroad into the Rio Grande Valley. For example, James B. Wells was involved in the

²⁷⁶ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 432.

²⁷⁷ Allhands, *Uriah Lott*, 1, 77.

²⁷⁸ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 432.

²⁷⁹ J.L. Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio* (Salado, TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1960), 49; J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 12.

²⁸⁰ Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 45.

railroad project as a member of the board of directors. Lon C. Hill was the leader for the “land-soliciting committee ... [which organized] the consolidation of the land bonus.”²⁸¹ Francisco Yturria was also involved in the railroad project. To begin the construction, Lott sought 12,000 acres and \$40,000 dollars, amongst other demands, that land owners in the region were able to provide.²⁸² Other individual names included “Mrs. Henrietta King, Robert Driscoll, John G. Kenedy, and Major John B. Armstrong [who] owned practically all of the land between Sinton and a point seventy-five miles from Brownsville, all whom donated liberally to the Brownsville Railway land bonus.”²⁸³ Such bonuses indicated the property owned by Anglo American land owners.

Many of the land owners within the Llano Grande were instrumental in gaining property and money for the construction the railway to Brownsville and the Hidalgo branch. James B. Wells on September 19, 1903 sold property to the syndicate managers of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico railway.²⁸⁴ Benjamin F. Yoakum, Samuel W. Fordyce, Edward Whitaker, Thomas L. West and Robert S. Brookings from St. Louis Missouri paid James B. Wells Jr. \$30,442.50 dollars for the property.²⁸⁵ The syndicate acquired 12,177 acres out of the San Juan de Carricitos grant at \$2.50 an acre. The value of the property increased from \$1.50 to \$2.50 an acre as a consequence of the impending arrival of the railroad. By 1882, the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad did not have access to state lands to build railways, and adhered to acquiring property from land owners such as James B. Wells. Yoakum, Hill, Closner,

²⁸¹ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*. 434.

²⁸² Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 39.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 40.

²⁸⁴ The Syndicate Managers included B.F. Yoakum, S.W. Fordyce, Thomas H. West, Robert H. Brookings, and Edwards Whitaker. As the managers they “entered into a contract” with the Johnston Brothers to acquire the donations and land for the construction of the railroad; Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 35.

²⁸⁵ Deed, James B. Wells to Benjamin F. Yoakum et al., September, 19. 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.; J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 35.

Wells, among others, who were the investors, promoters, and land owners connected to the railroad.

The few years before the coming of the railroad, the land value of the property increased and irrigation began to take off. Although irrigation projects in the Rio Grande Valley dated back to the times of Escandón, no large scale irrigation projects were successful until the 1900s. The first experiments in the valley were done by George Brulay. He purchased property on February 1870 in Agostadero del Espiritu and built a small pump for irrigating sugar cane fields.²⁸⁶ Farming was practiced in the Valley, yet the development of commercial agriculture was successful partly due to the access to outside markets via the railroad. The Anglo businessmen were beginning to set up the building blocks for the land and irrigation companies to take over the land of the Llano Grande. By creating the infrastructure for the irrigation facilities, the arrival of the railroad, and the business entrepreneurship led by Anglos in the region, the Llano Grande was completely broken down by the 1900s.

Land owners within Hidalgo County began to experiment with farming and the days of commercial cattle raising were long gone. As David Montejano stated, ranching receded to the northern counties and by the turn of the twentieth century farming had developed in Hidalgo, Starr, and Cameron Counties.²⁸⁷ Ranches were giving away to farmlands, and individual ranchers (Anglo and Mexican American) began to sell property to Anglos and land developers. John Closner, recorded frequently within land records in the Llano Grande, was able to develop an irrigation project in his San Juan Plantation. He was able to construct an irrigation pump that allowed for large scale irrigation. John Shary was also a leading pioneer in commercial

²⁸⁶ Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert*, 151.

²⁸⁷ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of South Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010) 13th print, 109.

irrigation, originally from Iowa, arrived in the Rio Grande years after Closner and was able to irrigate his Shary Plantation.²⁸⁸ Lon C. Hill, the founder of Harlingen, experimented with irrigation projects for his rice farms located close to Brownsville.²⁸⁹ The development of the commercial agriculture took hold by the turn of the twentieth century.

Although the Llano Grande did not have the large plantations of John Shary and John Closner, the grant was controlled by land and irrigation companies that purchased and sold to newly arrived Anglos, who then profited from such technology. The allure of commercial agriculture and the accessibility to the irrigation attracted new Anglo settlers to the Valley. Allhands, in his book *Uriah Lott*, states “[Closner] built a comfortable home, brought water from the Rio Grande to that extravagantly rich soil, and the desert became a productive garden.”²⁹⁰ The lands in the Rio Grande Valley were transformed by the construction of irrigation canals and water pumps that provided constant water for the raising of crops year round. Yet, the commercialization of not only agriculture but of the land occurred with the companies.

Although Mexican Americans were no longer the major land owners, they continued to be present in the land records. Mexican Americans sold property to Anglos in 1900s for \$1.50 to \$2.00 dollars an acre within the Llano Grande. This period marked an end to a long ownership of Mexican American families such as the Cano Cavazos, Ballí, and Hinojosas. Guadalupe Cano and Librada Lopez de Cano, husband and wife, sold their property to John Closner on June 11, 1903 for \$1.50 an acre. The property of 959.31 acres sold for a higher price than in the 1880s.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Mario L. Sanchez, *A Shared Experience*, 71.

²⁸⁹ Kate Adele Hill, *Lon C. Hill 1862-1935: Lower Rio Grande Valley Pioneer* (San Antonio, TX: The Naylor Company, 1973), 20-21.

²⁹⁰ J.L. Allhands, *Uriah Lott*, 103.

²⁹¹ Deed, Guadalupe Cano and Librada Lopez de Cano to John Closner, June 11, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

The majority of the land records indicate the property sold to Anglos were larger in size and the sale price was higher.

The price for individual sales varied in price, but there was a difference between Mexican American and Anglo transactions. For example, Pedro García Cavazos with a group of owners from Matamoros sold to Florencio Saenz 3,087.43 acres on May 1, 1886. The property extended from the river to the rear line of the grant that had the shape of a *porción*, and sold for fifty six cents an acre aggregating to \$1,743 dollars.²⁹² In comparison, transactions between Anglos, even as early as 1887, sold for \$1.50 an acre as was the case with William P. Dougherty. On June 18, 1887 Dougherty sold 1,437 acres to James B. Wells Jr. aggregating to \$2,155.50.²⁹³ The price of \$1.50 dollars an acre became a common denomination for the sale of property within the Llano Grande. A land value changed due to the arrival of the railroad and the corporations that emerged within the Llano Grande.

Previous to the arrival of the railroad, the property values increased within the Llano Grande evident in the land transactions from 1902-1904. The land speculation within the Rio Grande Valley was evident. Anglo land owners within the grant awaited a “full-scale real estate boom along the lower Rio Grande” and the land transactions were able to prove such a connection.²⁹⁴ As can be extrapolated from examining Thaddeus M. Rhodes property, the land prices increased a few years before 1904. Rhodes, along with his children, sold his deceased wife’s Rafaela Hernandez Rhodes property to John Closner. On December 20, 1902 Closner acquired 2,655 acres, each acre valued at \$1.50 aggregating to \$3,983. Closner only paid

²⁹² Deed, Pedro García et al. to Florencio Saenz, May 1, 1886, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas..

²⁹³ Deed, William P. Dougherty to James B. Wells, June 18, 1887, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

²⁹⁴ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 400.

\$1991.50 in cash and the rest was paid within six months.²⁹⁵ By May 20, 1903 Closner purchased another property, yet he paid \$2.00 an acre instead of \$1.50. Sostenes Cano de Saenz and Florencio Saenz sold to Closner 1,466.42 acres for a total of \$2,932.84 dollars located at the Llano Grande Lake.²⁹⁶ Prices were to increase after the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico railroad arrived in the Valley and the land and irrigation companies were founded in Llano Grande. As it was, the sale prices were higher than in previous decades.

Entrepreneurs affected the development within the Llano Grande. Anglo Americans were involved in the construction for the railroad, developed commercial agriculture and gained the financial backing to create land and irrigation companies. Names such as John Closner, Lon C. Hill, J.P. Withers, and B.F. Yoakum were among these Anglo entrepreneurs. The land records indicate that Anglos were using the land beyond personal property. A commercial and capitalistic view on land tenure began to take shape in the Rio Grande and specifically in the Llano Grande.

When the railroad reached Brownsville, the Hidalgo Branch began construction on April 20, 1904 and was to extend west beginning at the junction between Brownsville railroad and the newly founded city of Harlingen. The modern day Rio Grande Valley was taking shape, and was in part due to the arrival of the railroad. Among this rail line, the modern cities of Harlingen, La Feria Mercedes, Weslaco, Donna, Alamo, San Juan, Pharr, McAllen and Mission were established throughout 1904-1920.²⁹⁷ As historian Evan Anders stated, with the arrival of the railroad “almost immediately, development companies purchased ranchland, subdividing it into

²⁹⁵ Deed, Thaddeus M. Rhodes et al. to John Closner, December 20, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas..

²⁹⁶ Deed, Sostenes Cano de Saenz and Florencio Saenz to John Closner, May 29, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas. The lake lies in present day Weslaco and Progreso, Texas within the Estero Llano Grande State Park.

²⁹⁷ Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 121-130.

ten-to-forty acre tracts, installing irrigation pumps along the Rio Grande, and digging drainage canals for the new farm sites.”²⁹⁸ The Anglo businessmen took advantage of the opportunity and began to sell ready-to-move in farms. As such, the infrastructure of the Rio Grande Valley was constructed through the land and irrigation companies who surveyed and created the forty acre farms. In the Llano Grande the dominant company was the American Rio Grande land and Irrigation Company (ARGLIC).

Anglo businessmen such as Lon C. Hill, John Closner, and Tom Hicks, guaranteed the land bonus required for the Hidalgo Branch. This accounted for the large number of transactions under these names in the year 1902-1903.²⁹⁹ Since the branch was to pass through the boundaries of the Llano Grande, Anglos secured property for the railroad. Others such as Benjamin Yoakum saw the potential for the success of selling land as small farms to newly arrived Anglo Americans and purchased extensive property in the Llano Grande. In combination with the railroad and the creation of companies, Anglos were able to change the landscape of the Rio Grande Valley and the Llano Grande.

Land became the key for the railroad and land companies success. Anglo Americans used land to develop the Llano Grande and gain a profit. Anglos such as Lon C. Hill, John Closner, and J.P Withers purchased large tracts of land from Mexican Americans and Anglo land owners in the Llano Grande from 1902-1903 to accommodate the railroad and companies as business ventures. Tracts of over 1,000 acres were sold for \$1.50 an acre and further displaced the Mexican American land owners in the grant. Many land transactions involved properties of

²⁹⁸ Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 139.

²⁹⁹ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 120.

over 10,000 acres or more. The purchase of these large tracts occurred throughout 1900-1904. Anglos gained the land to aid the construction of the railroad and land and irrigation companies.

Anglos involved in the railroads were active members in the Llano Grande and the Rio Grande Valley. John Closner was the forerunner in commercial irrigation and one of the largest land owners in Hidalgo County. Apart from his political involvement, he was involved in the land speculation business in which he purchased substantial acreages in the Llano Grande.³⁰⁰ Leonidas Carrington Hill, also known as Lon C. Hill, was born on July 31, 1862 to William Hickman Jr. and Minerva Frances Vernon Hill. Hill's parents had arrived in Austin by 1852 from Tennessee.³⁰¹ Previous to his arrival in the Rio Grande Valley in 1903, Hill received a similar education to James B. Wells. As a lawyer, he received a degree from the University of Texas, the State of Virginia, and by 1891 he received his license to practice law in Texas.³⁰² J. P. Withers arrived in the Rio Grande Valley from "Beaumont and Sherman, Texas," and began purchasing extensive acreages in the Llano Grande.³⁰³ Benjamin F. Yoakum was born in Limestone County on August 1859 from European immigrants who first traveled to the Mississippi region and later the Rio Grande Valley.³⁰⁴ Through his railroad connection and land companies he was one of the leading investors and founders of the ARGLIC. These names were to change the land tenure of the Llano Grande.

Even though Closner was involved in his San Juan Plantation, he was part of the land sales and transactions within the Llano Grande. Not only was he purchasing property from Mexican American land owners but of previous Anglo proprietors as well. He purchased

³⁰⁰ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 379.

³⁰¹ Hill, *Lon C. Hill*, 1.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 3-5.

³⁰³ Quotation from Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 173.

³⁰⁴ James N. Krug, "Benjamin Franklin Yoakum and The St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad," Master's Thesis, Texas A&M University Kingsville, 1999), 5.

property from Thaddeus M. Rhodes and his children (December 20, 1902), Sostenes Cano de Saenz and Florencio Saenz (May 29, 1903), Guadalupe Cano and Librada Lopez de Cano (June 11, 1903), and Gumercinda Cano de Champion and Peter S. Champion (June 11, 1903). Closner gained 5,764.98 acres of property for a price of \$9396.17.³⁰⁵ Geographically, these properties, with the exception of Thaddeus M. Rhodes, extended from the center of the Llano Grade Lake to the rear line of the grant. The frequency and number of these land transactions indicated that Closner had the capital to purchase land. Since these properties were located above the Llano Grade Lake, they are associated with the construction of the railroad, the depots, and other related infrastructure.

Closner began to purchase other properties for considerable prices within the 1902-1904 years. By May 29, 1903, Closner purchased 12,501.99 acres from Florencio Saenz and Sostenes Cano de Saenz for \$25,000. This property was also located north of the Llano Grande Lake.³⁰⁶ From James B. Wells and his wife Pauline J. Wells, Closner purchased their property located in fourth share of the Llano Grande on August 27, 1903 for \$10.00 and “other valuable considerations”. The land sale involved property originally owned by the descendants of María Ygnacia Hinojosa who was purchased by *derechos* by Bernardo Yturria in the 1880s.³⁰⁷ In another land transaction, Closner also purchased property from Mariano Perez and his wife

³⁰⁵ Deed, Thaddeus M. Rhodes et al. to John Closner, December 20, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas; Deed, Sostenes Cano de Saenz and Florencio Saenz to John Closner, May 29, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.; Deed, Guadalupe Cano and Librada Lopez de Cano to John Closner, June 11, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas; Deed, Gumercinda Cano de Champion and Peter S. Champion to John Closner, June 11, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas..

³⁰⁶ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To the Capisallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said* (San Antonio, TX: Passing Show Printing Co, 1913) 16.

³⁰⁷ Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc., in the Llano Grande Grant, Hidalgo County, Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick-Clarke Litho Co, 1926), 57-58, found in Llano Grande Tract-Abstract, “Plantation Company”, Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

María Olivarez Fuentes de Perez, 875 acres in the second share sold for \$1312.50 on October 10, 1903.³⁰⁸ As presented, John Closner was extremely active in the Llano Grande.

Lon C. Hill was connected to the railroad and land speculation in the Llano Grande. He first traveled to Brownsville on March 29, 1901.³⁰⁹ Not only was he a successful lawyer in South Texas, but he was heavily involved in land speculation in the Llano Grande. Hill purchased property from James B. Wells's Capisallo Ranch within the grant, and chartered the Lon C. Hill Improvement Company on August 10, 1903.³¹⁰ In order to accomplish such feat he purchased substantial acreages within the Llano Grande. From John Closner, Hill purchased 801 acres located north of military road for \$1201.50 on May 2, 1902. Payment was through two installments, the initial payment of \$600.75 and the second payment due within the year. The grantor, Closner, maintained a Vendor's Lien on the property until it was paid in full.³¹¹ In addition to this property, Hill gained ownership of 6510 acres for \$3662.25 from Eugenie R. Raphael on April 12, 1902.³¹² A large majority of the grantees of property within the Llano Grande paid partial amounts of the total price.

Anglos not only gained land for the railroad, but for their own personal profit. J.P. Withers purchased over 65,000 acres within the Llano Grande, and "as soon as construction of the railroad seemed assured, he sold off much of his raw land, retaining only about 9,000

³⁰⁸ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio, Texas: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912) 10.

³⁰⁹ Hill, *Lon C. Hill*, 20.

³¹⁰ Hill, *Lon C. Hill*, 34, 47-48; J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 121.

³¹¹ Deed, John Closner to Lon C. Hill, May 2, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³¹² Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 23.

acres.”³¹³ His purchases were not done in a single land transaction, but through several. From John Closner on September 4, 1903 Withers purchased 13,806.23 acres. The sale value of the land increased to \$2.50 an acre. Closner gained substantial profit, while at the same time continue to purchase property within the Llano Grande. Higher prices and more extensive properties marked the land record in the Llano Grande in the early ears of the 1900s

Certainly, a pattern emerges within the Llano Grande as the prices for land sales increase to prices not seen before in the land transactions in the Llano Grande. By September 4, 1903 John Closner sold to J.P Withers, through an agreement, 13,806.23 acres. The acreage was not part of a single property, but was collected by Closner and sold to Withers for \$2.50 per acre. The properties acquired were valued at \$34515.54 dollar, a substantial amount of money and property.³¹⁴ Within the second share of the Llano Grande, Withers bought John Closner’s ownership of Refugia Balli’s strip on June 19, 1903 for \$17,163.55 dollars, with two vendor’s lien. The sale value was high, yet the property only accrued to 875 acres.³¹⁵ Hill also sold to J.P Withers 500 acres on March 9, 1904 for \$9,759.20 dollars in the Llano Grande.³¹⁶ Withers was the legal owner of these shares, yet he in turn became part to the land and irrigation companies. In another example, John H. Broocks, Lon C. Hill, and M. L. Broocks sell a property of 6,510 acres for the price \$36,555.35. Each acre was valued at over \$5.60.³¹⁷ J.P. Wither garners a substantial amount of land from Hill and Closner among other land owners that end up in land corporations.

³¹³ Amberson, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas*, 399; Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 173. Both sources use different names “L.J. Withers” and “J.P Withers” yet it is deduced that both are the same person.

³¹⁴; Deed, John Closner to J.P. Withers, Sept. 4, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³¹⁵ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 10.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

A vast majority of the property owned by J. P. Withers was transferred to trustees and then land corporations. The Llano Grande was a reflection of the land tenure of the Rio Grande Valley as a whole. Land corporations are to purchase extensive properties within the Llano Grande and sold to newly arrived Anglo Americans. The property acquired by J.P. Withers sees this transition from individual Anglo Americans to land corporation ownership of the Llano Grande. J.P. Withers in a deed of trust to Wm. F. Woods, a trustee, provides capital of \$224,382.90, and through this connection Woods in turn gains shares within the Llano Grande Land and Irrigation Company valued at \$162,382.90.³¹⁸ The companies mark the next phase of the Llano Grande land ownership. Large sums of money are placed in corporations who sought to create farms and irrigation infrastructure for profit. As is any indication, land became the means to establish corporations for profit.

Through the warranty deeds examined, the transactions are business oriented. Anglos such as Closner, Hill, and Withers purchased the properties and sold them in fairly short amount of time, gaining profit from sales, and aiding the railroad, investments, or the creation of irrigation companies. The land was exploited for commercial means, and completely deteriorated land ownership for majority Mexican Americans. Corporations created plots, lots, blocks, and subdivisions, neatly cutting the grant into small squares sold to Anglo farmers.

Although ARGLIC is one of the most notorious companies in the Llano Grande, other corporations such as the La Blanca Agricultural, Llano Grande Land and Irrigation, and the Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company were a few among the corporations that were established within the Llano Grande. A large number of these corporations or Anglos involved in such transaction had the monetary banking of St. Louis financial corporations. Properties are being

³¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

sold at astounding prices above \$100,000 or more and included investors to start up the land companies. Such land transactions exemplify the corporate partition of the Llano Grande.

The properties were delineated and broken down into squares and subdivisions, changing the ownership of the Llano Grande. The blue prints established by ARGLIC remain part of the land tenure until present day. For example, in 1907 the CapiSallo Town and Improvement Company sold to I.M Hinds, Lot 4 in Block 15, Lots 3 and 4 in Block 22, and Lots 7 and 8 in Block 27.³¹⁹ Hinds in turn sold to Oliver Mulley for \$2400 dollars of which Hinds had previously purchased for \$825 dollars. This property was held under Vendor's Lien, retaining title to the land until the owner pays the full amount, which was sold to Mulley to L.N. and Fay Booth.³²⁰

Mercedes, Texas was first established when the Hidalgo branch was built and was one of the most important cities in the Llano Grande vicinity. Lon C. Hill on May 5, 1904 established the CapiSallo Town and Improvement Company and had plans to create a town name Losboro. He is bought out by ARGLIC and the city of Mercedes is founded on July 8, 1904 within the property they acquired from Hill.³²¹ Mercedes became the headquarters for the ARGLIC corporation in the Llano Grande.³²² In the CapiSallo Town and Improvement Company, land was being sold to incoming Anglos. For example, in the town of Mercedes building restrictions were set in place for businesses located in the center of town. Building materials for the

³¹⁹ "CapiSallo Town and Improvement Company to I.M. Hinds", pg. 1-4, Abstract of Title, Box 7, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

³²⁰ "I.M. Hinds to Mulley to Booth, pg. 6-7, 11-12, Abstract of Title, Box 7, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

³²¹ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 121-122.

³²² *Ibid.*, 121.

properties needed to be higher than three thousand dollars, and interestingly local businesses could not sell liquor within the properties.³²³

The Llano Grande was divided into blocks and subdivision under the general management of the corporations. The Llano Grande is an indication of how valley cities formed within land corporations. Not only were crops commercialized but also the land itself. Land became the commodity in which to make profit, and Anglo corporations sought to control and exploit those profits.

As previously addressed the Land and Irrigation companies within the Llano Grande had first garnered the land for the corporation via Anglo land owners. Large tracts of land and large amounts of money were seen with the creation of these land corporations. J.P. Withers was closely associated with the Llano Grande Land and Irrigation Company, one of the predecessors of ARGLIC. As the predecessor to ARGLIC, the Llano Grande corporation was chartered on August 23, 1903 amassed large amounts of property.³²⁴ Benjamin F. Yoakum outside his railroad career exploited the benefits of the railroad and helped to create ARGLIC. Yoakum was one of the investors in the company along with names such as Sam W. Fordyce and Thomas West.³²⁵ The Llano Grande Corporation transferred to Yoakum, as the trustee, for \$195,000 to create the ARGIC Corporation on December 5, 1905.³²⁶ By the time the ARGLIC was

³²³ "Capisallo Town and Improvement Company to I.M. Hinds", pg. 1-4, Abstract of Title, Box 7, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

³²⁴ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 174.

³²⁵ James N. Krug, "Benjamin Franklin Yoakum and The St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad," Master's Thesis, Texas A&M University Kingsville, 1999), 18, 25.

³²⁶ Deed, B.F. Yoakum to American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company, December 5, 1905, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

established, 30,000 acres were transferred to the company which had been acquired previous to 1905.³²⁷

ARGLIC became the largest proprietor in the Llano Grande and continued to acquire property after 1905. The owners of ARGLIC also purchased property as was the case with Yoakum who purchased “39,000 acres off of the west side of Wither’s holdings, with the inclusion of an additional block to the east. Thomas W. Carter, a former grain merchant of St. Louis, had bought considerable acreage” as well.³²⁸ T.W. Carter on December 5, 1905 sold 186 acres to the ARGLIC Corporation for \$2608.00 (\$14.02 per acre), land out of the lands that once belonged to Manuel Ballí.³²⁹ Out of the 30,000 acres that Yoakum transfers to this company were purchased from Closer, Guillermo Cano and Santos Treviño de Cano, Peter S. Champion and his wife, a total of thirteen tracts were sold to ARGLIC for \$195,000.00.³³⁰ From Clayton L. Carter, the ARGLIC “conveys” 15,000 acres out of the fourth and fifth shares of the Llano Grande, as well as the property owned by Mauricia Cano, Solis, and Thaddeus M. Rhodes.³³¹ Through the consecutive years, ARGLIC continued to buy property and amass large amounts of property. Baltazar Rodriguez with a group of owners sold to ARGLIC 132.61 acres for the price of \$928.27 on January 12, 1906.³³² According to J.L. Allhands, the company through a large number of transactions “had an immediate block of 104, acres, a tract ten miles wide east and

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 174.

³²⁹ Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 17.

³³⁰ Deed, B.F. Yoakum to American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company, December 5, 1905, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³³¹ American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Co., *Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of The Dupouy Partition of 1848*, 32.

³³² Ibid., 37.

west extending for a distance of eighteen miles from the river.”³³³ ARGLIC became the dominant land owner within the Llano Grande as any indication of these land transaction.

In the process of acquiring property ARGLIC changed the landscape and the use of land was evident. The main goal of the corporation was to make money by selling farms with access to the canals and waterways, for a price, to irrigate their farmlands. For the Irrigation companies, Mexican labor was used to clear the land to be sold. Farming was the main incentive to create an attraction to these tracts of land offered by land corporations.

The tracts purchased by ARGLIC were regulated by the company even though they were sold off to incoming Anglos. The company built the infrastructure of the Llano Grande and maintained the waterways, canals, the roads among others. The Capisallo Town and Improvement Company in a transaction to the public,

express reservation in the Capisallo Town & Improvement Company, of the right to occupy and use said streets, avenues, alleys and roadways, and the space beneath them, for the purpose of constructing, erecting and operating plants, pipe lines, poles and lines of wire for the distribution and sale of water, heat, light and power, and for telephone and telegraph lines, and for the purpose of operating lines of transportation for the carriage of freight and passengers and for the construction and operation of sewer and drains within the said town of Mercedes, and to construct and maintain pipelines, canals and ditches and their appurtenances for irrigation and drainage purposes...³³⁴

This document was dated on February 15, 1907 after a few years after the property had been sold to Anglo farmers. As it was, these corporations laid the foundation of the Rio Grande Valley.

³³³ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 174.

³³⁴ “Capisallo Town and Improvement Company to The Public”, Abstract of Title, Box 7, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

The blue print of the Llano Grande was established by the Capisallo, later purchased by ARGLIC, which was established to control and maintain the proprieties within the grant.

In a similar manner, ARGLIC allowed the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway company to maintain its railroad in the Llano Grande. In the Warranty Deed it stated that ARGLIC “here by retains the right and easement, without other payment than the consideration herein named, to construct, maintain and operate at any time, over and across the lands herein conveyed and under railroad tracts therein.”³³⁵ ARGLIC granted the railway depots access to the Llano Grande. On a record dated November 7, 1924, ARGLIC gave the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway Company “absolute right of way” to maintain the railway and that passed through “lands of said grantor company”.³³⁶ On May 25, 1906 was able to guarantee access to its railroad depots and station throughout the Llano Grande. In a similar transaction, ARGLIC on November 7, 1924 gives St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway the rights to Lots No.6 and 7 out of Block 104. The railroad and the corporations continued to be closely connected to change the land ownership of the Llano Grande. ARGLIC was able to maintain the rights to the Llano Grande well into the 1920s, and as such controlled the land tenure and accessibility to the grant. ARGLIC was a powerful company within the Llano Grande and had a hand on almost everything relating to the Llano Grande.

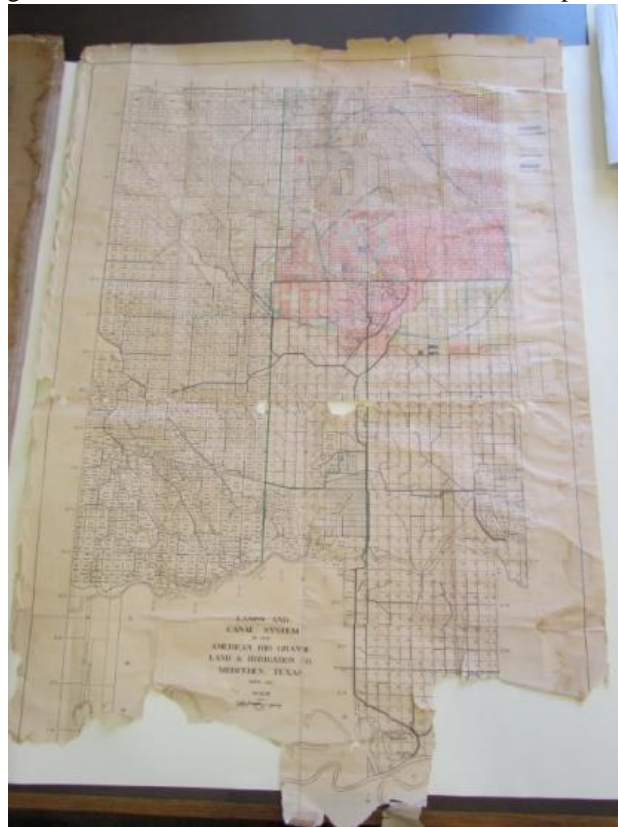
Anglos were arriving in large numbers during this second influx into the Rio Grande Valley. ARGLIC, one of the most extensive corporations in the region, was vital to understanding our modern-day land tenure. ARGLIC, and in a similar fashion the other

³³⁵ Docket #121 [1924], American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company to St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company, November 7, 1924, Property Files, Boundary Realty Office, International Boundary and Water Commission: United States Section.

³³⁶ Docket #121 [1906], American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company to St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company, May 25, 1906, Property Files, Boundary Realty Office, International Boundary and Water Commission: United States Section.

corporations, sought out to commercialize land. It surveyed acquisitions and created subdivisions to administer. The Capisallo District was formed and dated in the Deeds Records of Hidalgo County on February 15, 1907. The Campacuas subdivision was added on January 13, 1913. The West Tract and Subdivision was formed April 1, 1913 and the North Capisallo subdivision was formed on April 20, 1920.³³⁷ The Llano Grande as a whole was broken down into these subdivisions which were split into blocks. The blocks were composed of sixteen lots. Over 170 blocks marked the Llano Grande under ARGLIC, which began on the southeast corner of the grant and extending to the northwestern corner.

Figure 1: Plots and Subdivisions for the ARGLIC Corporation



Source: Lands and Canal System of the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (1923), Map Collection at Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas Pan American.

³³⁷ Folder, 18, B.6, L.5 +12, Box 5B(1), American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

The Anglos arriving in the Llano Grande purchased land from corporations, particularly the ARGLIC Corporation. The irrigation infrastructure was one of the main projects to make the corporation a success. The corporation not only sold tracts of land but also the irrigation water to the Anglo farmers who owned Lots in the Llano Grande. Water contracts signed by the new owners indicated the ARGLICs agreement to provide water for the developing of farming enterprises. ARGLIC and Robert H. Maddox, from Kentucky, signed Water Right Agreement on June 1, 1909. Under this contract Maddox was to receive water from the Rio Grande via the Company's canals to his property located on Block 43 and half of Lot 14. The property encompassed twenty acres which Maddox had purchased on February 17, 1908 in the Capisallo Subdivision.³³⁸ Similarly, on December 1910 J.N. Kilgore made the same contract with ARGLIC to supply his farm with irrigation. His property was more extensive than Maddox which included Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 located within Block 5. In a total 240 acres were under Kilgore's property, and was irrigated by the company.³³⁹ The Water contract specified rules and regulations from the payment, use of the water, the quantity of water to be granted to owners such as Maddox and Kilgore.³⁴⁰ ARGLIC in their building of irrigation infrastructure was able to provide irrigation to the recently developed farms and gain profit from this business practice.

The ARGLIC Corporation continued to expand and profit into the 1910s even after suffering a few setbacks. The irrigation that developed in the Llano Grande had been gravitational, letting the water flow from the river into the canals. ARGLIC wanted an irrigation

³³⁸ "Water Contract," [Maddox] Folder 1, Blk 43, Lot 14, Block 43, Booklet 6, Box 2A, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

³³⁹ "Water Contract," [Kilgore] Folder 17, Blk 5, Lots 2,3,4,5+6, +7, Block 5B (1), American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

³⁴⁰ "Water Contract," [Maddox] Folder 1, Blk 43, Lot 14, Block 43, Booklet 6, Box 2A, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

pump station along the Rio Grande “which were to installed engines and other mechanical appliances necessary to draw and lift into its canal system from the Rio Grande.”³⁴¹ The location chosen for the irrigation pump became a problem for the company when the river began to diverge from the station. ARGLIC took measures to prevent the movement of the river channel, yet they created and “artificial cut-off” to supply water to the pump and changed the direction of the river.³⁴² The irrigation was a vital character to the corporation that the corporation managed to break international laws regarding the boundary between the United States and Mexico. In the ruling of the court case *United States et al. vs. The American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company* on December 5, 1911, the corporation was made to pay the affected parties involved in the diverging of the Rio Grande, and to the United States \$2,000 dollars for surveying the property, \$200 for court expenses, and an additional \$10,000.³⁴³ Through this ruling, ARGLIC was punished for diverging the Rio Grande, yet their need for irrigation for farming plots was in great demand.

Figure 2: Mercedes Irrigation Pump



³⁴¹ “The Horcon Ranch Case” *The American Journal of International Law* vol. 6, no. 2, (April 1912) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2187467> (accessed 18 November 2013) 479.

³⁴² “Department of State: Proceedings of the International Boundary Commission United States and Mexico: Relating to the Diversion of Rio Grande By American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company near Horcon Ranch, Tamaulipas, Mexico” Folder 1, American R.G. Land + Irrigation Co.- Various Documents, Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American, Page 3.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 55-57.

Source: 95-657, Main Pumping Plant on the Rio Grande, Mercedes, Archives-Alert collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

The corporation exploited the use of the irrigation and their ownership of the grant.

Allhands stated that in total out of the entire Llano Grande that ARGLIC had control

irrigation is now being furnished to about 90,000 acres, over 80,000 of which are under intensive cultivation...at present there are some 110,000 acres in this project, and this along with the United Irrigation Company in Mission is the only privately owned irrigation system of any size in the Valley.³⁴⁴

The ARGLIC Corporation transformed the Llano Grande and in consequence the Rio Grande Valley. ARGLIC built the infrastructure and organized the Llano Grande into subdivision, of which are still the legal descriptions of titles today.

Anglos arrival in the Llano Grande increased with the coming of the railroad in 1904, yet these corporations advertised and began the “Magic Valley” propaganda to sell more property.

ARGLIC also encouraged settlement via booklets and propaganda in the 1920s, where it stated

“to you, a man of wealth, who desires a winter home; to you, of average means, who in a citrus farm, sees the means of future independence... The lands of the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company, in the fertile Rio Grande Valley, offer you incomparable advantages... these land are... supplied by the largest privately owned irrigation system in the world.”³⁴⁵

AGLIC offers the commodities and prices, according to its advertisement, that is available for all to take advantage from. Through these advertisements, corporations sought any type of settler as long as long as they could pay for the land and the irrigation provided for them.

Advertisements in the local papers were a means to garner interest in the Rio Grande Valley. In 1911 the *San Antonio Express* offered an entire section titled the “Lower Rio Grande Valley Department” advertising the region and its farming qualities. On March 5, 1911 in one of

³⁴⁴ J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 176.

³⁴⁵ “The American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company: Irrigated Lands in Lower Rio Grande Valley Mercedes, Texas,” Folder 42, The American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company [1923], John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 4, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

its advertisements titled “There Was Never a Time When Real Estate Was in Greater Demand at Constantly Increasing Values-Investors Come” that attracted within the promise of land and profits to the Mission District. The article exulted the development and creation of cities and land companies to sell lots and subdivisions.³⁴⁶ The influx of Anglos into the region was aided by such advertisements.

By the 1920s the “Magic Valley” was in full swing, and advertisements by Missouri Pacific Lines, railroad that bought out St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway, sought make the Rio Grande Valley an enticing location. In a booklet titled “The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas” it stated

Down at the very ‘Tip o’ Texas’ is a section known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley, which has had more remarkable growth and development in the last score of years...From a cactus covered desert it has been converted into an evergreen garden. Today it is one of the most thickly populated, most intensely cultivated and the most progressive communities of its size in the country. Often referred as ‘the Magic Valley’...There is something very akin to magic in the way transportation has sped development and there is, seemingly, a trace of magic in the transformation wrought by the application of irrigation water to the fertile lands of the Valley.³⁴⁷

The Southwestern Land Company offered land “that combines all the features that makes your dreams come true” for cultivating orchards by the time of the citrus boom in the 1920s.³⁴⁸ The Rio Grande garnered mystifying qualities that continued the purchase and development of the region including the Llano Grande.

Land loss did not happen rapidly after the Mexican American war; however, Mexican American were no longer the owners of vast tracts of land. Anglos had previously displaced

³⁴⁶ “Mission Realty, Records are Broken, Transfers Many,” *San Antonio Express*, March 5, 1911, page 4.

³⁴⁷ “The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas” booklet, Folder 33, The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 4, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American..

³⁴⁸ “Land”, Folder 6.1- Newspapers [1927-1933] John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 8, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.,.

Mexican Americans as the majority in in the political and social sphere, yet by this second wave, they were bought out by corporations. As a group they were withdrawn from the land tenure in the Llano Grande, although their presence was still a small part of the land transactions in the Llano Grande.

Using the accessibility of transportation, the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company offered newly arrived Anglos with properties equipped for farming. Irrigation allowed for the development of farming at a commercial level and ARGLIC sold tracts of land ideal for raising crops. As a whole, farming dominated the region's economy in a similar fashion that ranching had previously done in Starr, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties.³⁴⁹ Land corporations were in the business of purchasing property, establishing irrigation canals, and selling property for a profit. The blocks and subdivision were created by ARGLIC which became the established lines of demarcations and legal descriptions of modern-day properties. As a corporation, ARGLIC was one of the most successful and extensive land and irrigation corporations in the Rio Grande Valley. By the 1920s the Llano Grande was marked by modern-day cities and the city of Weslaco is a product of the land corporations who changed the landscape of the Rio Grande. The following chapter will address the formation of the city of Weslaco and the impact it had on the land tenure.

³⁴⁹ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in The Making Of Texas*, 125,134.

CHAPTER V

WESLACO: THE LEGACY OF THE LLANO GRANDE

An overview of the city of Weslaco provides an insight into how the land tenure dynamics evident by the turn of the twentieth century continued to effect the land within the old boundaries of the Llano Grande. By the 1920s, when Weslaco is founded, the Rio Grande Valley was overtaken by land corporations who broke down grants even further. The properties in Weslaco were broken down even further than the forty-acre plots sold by land companies such as the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (ARGLIC). Through an analysis of the city patterns and changes land ownership in the post-1910 period, reveals how Anglo controlled corporations continued to break down the old *porciones* creating small plots and now make up Weslaco.

The cities of Mercedes and Donna were founded within a few short years after the arrival of the railroad in 1904, yet Weslaco was founded over a decade after on, December 10, 1919.³⁵⁰ Weslaco name is derived from the land corporation established by W.E. Stewart Land Company. Anglo newcomers and Anglo-controlled corporations continued to further transform the Llano Grande creating smaller plots. Focusing specifically on the James B. Black Subdivision, located on the northern tracks of the Hidalgo railroad branch, land ownership shifted back to Mexican American by the early 1960s, in the form of small plots and subdivisions.

³⁵⁰ *Weslaco: 1919-1969: 50th Anniversary Celebration December 4-7, 1969* (Weslaco, TX: Official Historical Booklet, 1969), 5.

The Rio Grande Valley began a quick transformation after the arrival of the railroad and the expansion of the success of commercial agriculture. Land corporations such as the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (ARGLIC) had subdivided the Llano Grande into blocks and subdivisions that characterized the Rio Grande Valley. Although ARGLIC controlled the vast majority of the Llano Grande, other land companies began carve out subdivisions from the grant. The W. E. Stewart Company was founded by W. E. Stewart who had arrived in the Rio Grande Valley “from Tyler by way of Kansas City and began to develop the mid-Valley area...”³⁵¹ The company acquired property from the West Tract Subdivision in the easternmost section of the Llano Grande, where the city of Weslaco was founded.

ARGLIC had platted the subdivision in 1913 and by December 14, 1917 sold to W.E. Stewart’s company “30,000 acres at ninety dollars an acre.”³⁵² By 1918, Stewart continued to purchase properties within the West Tract subdivision. He purchased two tracts from W. T. Johnson located in the West Tract Subdivision. The first, dated on March 11, 1918 sold to Stewart 209.7 acres for \$13, 106.25. For \$62.50 an acre, Stewart acquired Lots 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, and 160.³⁵³ The sale values were higher than previously transactions for smaller properties. On the second property, Stewart purchased Lots 159,161, of the “Block 179 containing 49.05 acres” was valued for \$3,065.62.³⁵⁴ Similar to other Anglos who purchased property before ARGLIC, W.E. Stewart purchased large tracts of property to sell to incoming

³⁵¹ Brian Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1985) 190.

³⁵² Alicia A. Garza, "WESLACO, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hew04>), accessed December 03, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

³⁵³ Deed, W. T Johnson to W.E. Stewart, March 11, 1918, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Anglos as exemplified in the land transactions. As such, ARGLIC still maintained control of the irrigation system that watered the properties located within these two transactions.³⁵⁵

Although W. E Stewart is assumed to be the founder of Weslaco, it was in fact Edward C. Couch and his family who established it. Ed C. Couch along with Dan R. and R.C. Couch and Robert L. Reeves purchased property out of the West Tract Subdivision owned by Stewart for the townsite of Weslaco.³⁵⁶ The Couch family, along with Reeves, by September of 1919 made an agreement to “purchased the original townsite for some \$250,000, each putting up a quarter of the necessary money,” for 320 acres to be acquired from Stewart.³⁵⁷ The townsite for the city of Weslaco, was strategically located within the Hidalgo branch of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway which provided the benefits of transportation to the area. By 1920, after the foundation of Weslaco, W.E. Stewart sold 1.40 acres to E.C. Couch for \$ 280 dollars located on the block of 163 of the ARGLIC subdivision map.³⁵⁸ Such a section was located on the north eastern section of the city of Weslaco, an extension of the townsite. The region was developing and changing even more the land tenure of the Llano Grande.

Research shows the values of property kept increasing and continued to do so. In the land transaction between Stewart and Couch on May 19, 1920, each acre was valued at \$200.³⁵⁹ In contrast, acreage was being sold for \$1.50 in 1902 in the Llano Grande..³⁶⁰ Within the tax records of the city of Mercedes on October 1, 1930, the land value continued to increase. For

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ *Weslaco 1919-1969: 50th Anniversary Celebration, December 4-7, 1969* (Weslaco, TX 1969), 7.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 7; Karen Gerhardt and Blanca E. Tamez, *Images of America: Weslaco* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1990), 15.

³⁵⁸ Deed # 106, W. E. Stewart to E. C. Couch, May 19, 1920, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Deed, John Closner to Lon C. Hill, May 2, 1902, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

block 129, Lot 11, which contained 5.70 acres, the land was valued at \$570. The properties within the Llano Grande were structured and no longer exceeded 40 acre plots throughout the subdivisions in the grant.³⁶¹ The growth of commercial agriculture and the railroad increased land values.

Since Weslaco was one of the later cities established in the Llano Grande, Mercedes had been the main city within the grant. Mercedes was established immediately after the arrival of the railroad in 1904, and was the headquarters for ARGLIC. As such farming was the main economic enterprise in the Rio Grande Valley and within the Llano Grande as well. The townsites for these cities were founded by Anglos or corporations who sought to establish settlements within the Valley. Most were around and connected with the railroad and its depots located within. In terms of Weslaco, when the railroad was built in 1904, mile nineteenth was the designated stop that was to become the city of Weslaco.

As plans were being set up for the creation of the city, many settlers had already established roots in the area. In the interviews collected by the Pioneer Committee of Weslaco, we learned that Pablo, husband of Demetria Vallejo, a land surveyor, moved into the general vicinity by 1915. Four years previous to the actual formation of the city of Weslaco, Mexican Americans were living in the region of Weslaco.³⁶² Similarly, Filiberto Cavazos along with his wife Herlinda Garza moved to a ranch known as “Los Helotes” in 1917 that within two years “became part of the Weslaco townsite.”³⁶³ Even though the Rio Grande was becoming modernized, a large section of the valley was still in need to be cleared for the constructions of

³⁶¹“Bond Tax Statement,” Folder 32, Blk 129-Lots 11 +12, Box 2A, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American.

³⁶²“Vallejo 1915” in *Pioneer’s Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer’s Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

³⁶³“Cavazos 1917” in *Pioneer’s Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer’s Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

many of these cities. Mexican labor was used to clear the majority of the land. Juan García Cano arrived in Weslaco by 1918 and was closely associated with the irrigation companies building canals. He moved to Weslaco with the promise of work in clearing the land for the townsite of Weslaco.³⁶⁴ The area where Weslaco was to be established was not empty of settlers, many as seen above, settlers such as Cano arrived in the region in search for work.

Anglos also had moved into the region previous to the sale of the town lots in 1919. Nicholas Perkins Robertson along with his wife settled in the Weslaco vicinity by 1916.³⁶⁵ The Schwindt family arrived in the Valley by November 1918 from Hiawatha, Kansas due to the father's asthma illness.³⁶⁶ As was common among many Anglo families that migrated to the valley during this time, the region of South Texas was advertised as a means of a better life for those with illnesses such as asthma. Arriving by train, the Schwindt the family purchased 40 acres from the W.E. Stewart Land Company. By the actual survey of the townsite both Anglos and Mexican Americans were living in the area that was to become Weslaco.

Land corporations such as the W.E. Stewart Land Company sought to bring in more settlers into the region via trips into the Valley. Such trips allowed the settlers to see the region and allowed settlers to purchase land.. As presented in the earlier chapter, the Rio Grande Valley was advertised as the land of paradise where anything was possible, and such trips consolidated this notion. H.B. Gilmore and his wife Anna Gilmore arrived in the Valley in 1918 and through a similar excursion purchased 25 acres "at mile 8 north and 3 west... [from] W.E. Stewart Land

³⁶⁴ "Cano 1918" in *Pioneer's Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer's Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

³⁶⁵ Brian Robertson, *Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1985) 190.

³⁶⁶ "Schwindt 1918" in *Pioneer's Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer's Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

Company.”³⁶⁷ Others such as Luther O Garrett from Illinois, James E. Clark, Anthony N. Vos purchased property in such land excursions by the W.E. Stewart Land Company.³⁶⁸ Companies were able to entice Anglo Americans that Rio Grande Valley farmlands offered endless possibilities for future success. Corporations such as ARGLIC and W.E. Stewart Land Company sought to take advantage from these trips to sell land.

In a ledger by the W.E. Stewart Company there is a record of the Anglos who signed up for land excursions. This sort of trip was a monetary benefit for many of these Anglo corporations. Agents were used to recruit people to take excursion trips to the Valley. The ledger dated July 9, 1920 included names of agents, which included L.N. Olmsted who was not for his trips. The majority of the “guests” stated his residencies in the states of North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Montana, and Texas. These trips ranged from \$33-66 dollars, and from the ledger it is evident that the majority were coming from Midwestern states.³⁶⁹ Attracting settlers to the region was the main objective for corporations to garner the interest of possible buyers of valley properties.. J.P. Withers, who bought property in the years prior to the railroad, was also part of the land development of the region. Withers within the property he owned in the Llano Grande, built the “Casa Blanca Hotel” used to “entertain potential buyers of farmland.”³⁷⁰ Similarly, W.E. Stewart also built an extravagant home for the same reason as Withers which was located on the Llano Grande Lake. Stewart’s home was used as advertisement for these

³⁶⁷ “Gilmore 1918” in *Pioneer’s Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer’s Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

³⁶⁸ “Garret 1918,” “Clark 1918,” “Vos 1918,” in *Pioneer’s Breakfast: All Roads Lead To Weslaco* by Pioneer’s Committee (Weslaco, TX: Pioneer Committee, 1994).

³⁶⁹ “Trip Report July 9th., 1920: W.E. Stewart Land Company”, Folder 12, Ladd-Barron Land Company, John Shary Publications, Box 4, Shelf 333, Folders 1-64, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

³⁷⁰ Karen Gerhardt and Blanca E. Tamez, *Images of America: Weslaco* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, Inc., 1999) 10.

“land excursion parties” that were hosted by Withers and Stewart.³⁷¹ Anglos such as Withers and Stewart changed the land ownership through these excursion parties garnering interest and investment by Midwestern citizens who purchased property within the general vicinity of Weslaco.

Actual plans for the foundation of Weslaco began in the summer of 1919. By September, Dan R. and R.C. Couch gave up on the investment and returned home, while E.C. Couch and R.L. Reeves continued with the townsite project.³⁷² The Weslaco Townsite Company was the corporation that was directly involved in the land tenure of Weslaco. Under its president E.C. Couch and his secretary Mamie Siler “authorized by the Trustees” requested a survey for the Weslaco townsite. H.E. Bennet, the engineer and surveyor, plotted the town for the Weslaco Townsite Company in September of 1919, a few months before the town lots were sold on December of that year. Bennett surveyed the property and “blocks lots, streets, avenues, alleys, and roadways were surveyed and platted.”³⁷³ The blue print of the city of Weslaco was established through this survey and map of Weslaco. Even in modern times the outlines and streets first constructed though the original survey can still be discerned.

Once the surveying was complete in September, the town lots were put for sale December 10, 1919. Weslaco Townsite Company was in charge of the city’s streets and providing electricity and water for the lots. The company was to be in charge of providing the basic utilities for the properties purchased within the site. As the company provided the utilities, it also prohibited mining in the city of Weslaco Within the plat record, it was stated that residents are

³⁷¹ Ibid., 15.

³⁷² *Weslaco 1919-1969: 50th Anniversary Celebration, December 4-7, 1969* (Weslaco, TX 1969) 7.

³⁷³ “Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas,” November 24, 1919, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

forever prohibited from operating in or under said streets, avenues, alleys and roadways in said town of WESLACO any machinery or by hand for the purpose of mining or drilling for minerals or oil; all of said rights, privileges and franchises in said streets, avenues, alleys and roadways aforesaid, are and shall be the property of and shall be used and exercised by the said Weslaco Townsite Company or any other person or persons, corporation or corporations to whom such rights, privileges, and franchises may be respectively assigned by it.³⁷⁴

The Weslaco Townsite Company held control over any possible finds of oil or other minerals within the property purchased in Weslaco. The benefits of such finds were to go to the corporation and not the property owners. Companies sold to newly arrived Anglos property, yet they granted access to the road and other infrastructure while retaining rights to any type of mineral resources.³⁷⁵

Residents purchased these lots with this clause, was still an issue in the 1920s. In a court record on April 23, 1927 involving the Weslaco Townsite Company to The Property Owners of Weslaco was a release and disclaimer addressing mineral rights. Previously, proprietors were discouraged from digging for minerals within their properties and if there was as a violation the property was to be void and returned back to the company. Yet, this 1927 court record removed the penalty from the legal record.³⁷⁶ Weslaco residents were to remain land owners and the company could not take away their property regardless of the mineral rights found upon their lands.

By the 1920s the land values increased considerably, yet prices for lots varied in price. Lots sold from fifty dollars up to four hundred dollars, and these properties were small town

³⁷⁴ "Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas," November 24, 1919, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas.

³⁷⁵ "Abstract of Title to West ½ of Lot 12, Block 31, Weslaco Townsite" Weslaco Townsite Co. to The Property Owners of Weslaco, April 23, 1927, page 2-3, Box 7, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

lots.³⁷⁷ Weslaco was located between the blocks 163, 164, 141, 142 established by the ARGLIC blueprints of the Llano Grande. By 1929, ten years after the foundation of Weslaco a town lot numbers 15 and 16 of Block D, located between Texas Boulevard and Second Street, was sold by Antonio G. Guerra and Catalina K. Guerra, a couple, to Luis S. Krummel. Although the property was sold for \$10.00, three promissory notes were signed in which Krummel was to pay \$3330 within three years with the interest on “10% per annum, interest payable semi-annually.”³⁷⁸ A second set of promissory notes were to be paid by Krummel for \$4,000 dollars to be paid the fourth thorough the seventh year. In total the property was sold for \$7,330 dollars for a town lot on June 20, 1929.³⁷⁹ Prices for property were no longer \$2.00 an acre seen in land transactions from Sostenes Cano de Saenz and Florencio Saenz to John Closner on May 29, 1903. Closner gained 1466.42 acres for the amount of \$2932.84.³⁸⁰ The land value of the city of Weslaco was higher by the 1930s than previously seen in 1903. The prices continued to increase accounting not only for inflation but the higher land value within the city limits of Weslaco.

Even though Stewart, Couch, and Withers exulted the “magical” properties, the landscape that met the incoming owners was nothing compared to what was promised. The majority of the land speculators and promoters for the city of Weslaco had lived in the closes cities of Donna and Mercedes. Land owners had to clear the brush from their individual plots purchased from the companies. The water was delivered by wagons to the homes, and proprietors were charged

³⁷⁷ “Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas,” November 24, 1919, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas.

³⁷⁸ Deed, Antonio G. Guerra and Catalina K. Guerra to Luis S. Krummel, June 20, 1929, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁷⁹ Deed, Antonio G. Guerra and Catalina K. Guerra to Luis S. Krummel, June 20, 1929, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁸⁰ Deed, Sostenes Cano de Saenz to Florencio Saenz to John Closner, May 29, 1903, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

from ten to cents for the service.³⁸¹ The landscape desolate, yet through time lots were purchased and the city of Weslaco kept expanding to its present-day geographical boundaries.

Land companies transformed administered the a conglomeration of properties in the Llano Grande. The waterways, roads, railroads among other utilities were administered by land companies. As such, the corporations further subdivided the Llano Grande at the smallest level. First major division of the Llano Grande occurred in 1848 when the Dupouy Partition divided the grant into eight shares. Secondly, the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company broke down the into blocks and lots within subdivisions. Within the West Tract Subdivision E.C. Couch and his family purchased 302 acres from W.E. Stewart's property, establishing the city of Weslaco. The city encompassed one small section of the entire grant from blocks 141,142, 163, and 164. Each lot measured "one quarter of a mile and contain forty acres," yet Weslaco was further subdivided into smaller lots numbered 1-61 (see appendix).³⁸² Remnants of the vast tracts of land disappeared in Weslaco, although on outskirts of the city citrus and other farms remained the dominant economy. Even in present day, traveling from the city of Weslaco north, the landscape gives away to farm tracts and larger properties.

Out of the West Tract Subdivision, a Civil Engineer F. F. Fiend surveyed the blocks 175, 176, and 177 located south west of the city of Weslaco. Similarly, the ARGLIC expressed in the court document that the company had

all the right to use and occupy said roads and highways for the purpose of constructing, erecting and operating plants, canals, drains and pipe lines, polies, and lines of wire for the distribution and sale of water, heat, light and power, and for drainage, and for

³⁸¹ *Weslaco 1919-1969: 50th Anniversary Celebration, December 4-7, 1969* (Weslaco, TX 1969), 7.

³⁸² "Map of Blocks 175, 176, and 177 of the West Tract Subdivision," February 15, 1920, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas; "Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas," November 24, 1919, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

the purpose of operating lines of transportation for the carrying of freight and passengers within the said subdivision of land, and to cross said roads and highways with bridges, canals, and laterals.³⁸³

Similar to present-day companies, the land was a commodity that many Anglos and American corporations sought. The land companies controlled the basic utilities for the settlers in the Weslaco townsite that had not changed from the first establishment of land corporations in the Llano Grande. Both the Weslaco Townsite and the ARGLIC corporation controlled the land and the sold of property, and were the land owners of the Llano Grande within the same timeframe.

Interestingly, the streets on the southern side of the rail lines were named after states such as Indiana, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, Kansas Illinois, and Iowa. The streets north of the railroad tracts had Hispanic names such as Calle de Hidalgo, Calle de Palmas, and Calle de Pino.³⁸⁴ Although previously not addressed, the town became divided between the Anglo side and the Mexican side. Segregation between Anglo homes and Mexican homes was established along the railroads tracts in Weslaco. By 1921, Anglos resided on the southern side of the tracks, while Mexican Americans lived on the northern side. Through city legislation the city was subdivided to accommodate “industrial complexes and Mexican residences” to the north, and Anglo housing and businesses to the south.³⁸⁵ The townsite lots on the southern section of Weslaco were more extensive than the lots on the northern section deduced from the original plat for the city.³⁸⁶ The southern side had paved streets and nice homes while the north side had

³⁸³ “Map of Blocks 175, 176, and 177 Of the West Tract Subdivision.” February 15, 1920, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁸⁴ “Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas,” November 24, 1919, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁸⁵ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans In The Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 13th print, 167.

³⁸⁶ Plat of Weslaco Hidalgo County, Texas,” November 24, 1919, Plat records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

“corrugated tin shacks, dirt roads, and outdoor privies.”³⁸⁷ The vast majority of Mexican American and Mexican populations worked clearing the land for the incoming Anglo settlers. The segregation was part of Weslaco and a norm in valley towns. The land tenure reflected the differences in the social hierarchy and how both groups were classified. Such structural differences can still be discerned in present day times.

The city of Weslaco continued to grow throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and became an economically viable region. Weslaco established its first Newspaper by October 29, 1920 less than a year after the foundation of the city. Electricity reached the city by December 21, 1920. Slowly, Weslaco was gaining all the amenities associated with prosperity in the 20th century. The center of economic business was located on Fifth Street, yet because of a fire on October 10, 1921 was moved to Texas Boulevard.³⁸⁸ The business district was built in the Spanish-revivals style architecture.³⁸⁹ Weslaco businesses established such as Security State Bank was opened seven months after the town lot sale, and had E.C. Couch as its president.³⁹⁰ Yet, in 1928 there was a fight over the city elections between the Good Government League (GGL) and the democratic political machine that controlled politics in Hidalgo County. The political officials, part of the machine, were removed because of fraudulent practices and new recently arrived Anglos took over.³⁹¹ Through the good and bad times, Weslaco continued expanding and growing.

By the 1940s and 1950s Anglos were selling properties to Mexican Americans in Weslaco. Soon the Mexican American population became substantial land owners again due to

³⁸⁷ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 168.

³⁸⁸ *Weslaco 1919-1969: 50th Anniversary Celebration, December 4-7, 1969* (Weslaco, TX 1969) 14, 16, 19.

³⁸⁹ W. Clyde Norris, “History of Hidalgo County,” (Master’s Thesis: Texas College of Arts and Industries, 1942) 50.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁹¹ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, 147-148.

their numbers. An examination of on the James M. Black subdivision, located east of the original plat for the city of Weslaco, this will address the changes in land ownership once more. The James Black Subdivision was platted on January 14, 1948 and began to be sold to Mexican residents soon after. The subdivision derived from the name from the owner, James M. Black, and consisted of four sections each having 32-40 individual lots a total of 160 lots.³⁹² The majority of the owners located in this subdivision stood on more than one lot. As a whole, Farm Tract 54, where the Black subdivision is located, measured 44.09 acres.³⁹³ One property owned by the author is located within the James M. Black subdivision encompasses three lots that still make up the property today.

James M. Black acquired property within the vicinity of Weslaco and subdivided the property for profits. Black followed the patterns of land tenure previously established by the ARGLIC and other corporations. First by purchasing extensive tracts and broke them down into lots and sold for profit. Even after the plat of the James B. Black subdivision was done, Black continued to purchase property located southwestern from the townsite of Weslaco. From W.H. Peck and Lucile Peck, couple, Black purchased twenty acres of Farm Tract No. 693. The property was sold for \$12,000 on December 22, 1950 where Black paid \$600 for each acre.³⁹⁴ The value of property continued to rise by the 1950s as is exemplified by the previous land transaction.

³⁹² "James M. Black Subdivision," January 14, 1948, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁹³ "Lands of the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company" Mercedes, Texas, Map Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American; "James M. Black Subdivision" January 14, 1948, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁹⁴ Deed # 374, W.H. Peck and Lucile Peck to James B. Black, December 22, 1950, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

Through this court record we see that Anglos from the Midwest were still part of the land transactions such as the Peck's from Arkansas.³⁹⁵ Also from Arkansas, C. R. Thornton and Agnes M. Thornton, sold to Black 6.60 acres out of Farm Tract No. 684 located on Block 141 on the southeastern of Weslaco. In contrast this property was sold for \$10.00, and gave one-half of rights to Black if any minerals, oil, and gas were found on the said property.³⁹⁶ From the Carolyn E. Owen and J.L Owen from Denver, Colorado James B. Black purchased five acres for \$10.00 out of Farm Tract 690. The Owen's had given Black five acres out of the 26.03 acres out of Farm Tract 690.³⁹⁷ James M. Black was accumulating property under his name in the vicinity of Weslaco.

With the construction of the James M. Black Subdivision, Black continued to purchase property from Mexican Americans. By January 22, 1957 Ascencio Hinojosa sold to James B. Black for \$10.00 Lot 10, Block three, in the James M. Black subdivision. This sale is of interest due to the fact that Ascencio is selling back to Black a lot within his own subdivision.³⁹⁸ Black also sold property to Mexican Americans, as was the case of the land purchase by Guadalupe B. Martinez who gained Lots 24 out of Block three in the James M. Black Subdivision on June 27, 1958. The property was purchased for \$10.00 yet Black maintained rights to any oil, gas, or minerals found in the property.³⁹⁹ The lots being sold and purchased by Black were fairly small and the prices were extremely small as well, contrasting to other previous land transactions.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., # 374.

³⁹⁶ Deed #5994, C.R. Thornton and Agnes M. Thornton to James B. Black, April 1, 1953, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁹⁷ Deed #19005, Carolyn E. Owen and J.L. Owen, June 16, 1956, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁹⁸ Deed #1818, Ascencio Hinojosa to James B. Black, January 22, 1957, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

³⁹⁹ Deed #9481, James M. Black to Guadalupe B. Martinez., June 27, 1958, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

Since this was part of the northern section of town, the Mexican American side, it can be speculated that the land values were not as high as the southern section.

Apart from the initial sale for the Black subdivision, the properties within continued to be sold to Mexican American land owners. L. R. Shearer and Maria de Jesus Shearer, formerly Maria de Jesus Ramirez, by October 22, 1956 sold to Samuel Peña and Eduarda M. Peña. The property in question was Lot 25 and 26 out of Block one of the James M. Black subdivision. The Peñas also purchased this property for \$10.00 as previously seen in the other land transactions throughout the 1950s.⁴⁰⁰ Shearer's also sold to the Peña's Lots 27 and 28 within the same block and subdivision a year later on March 19, 1959 for \$10.00 in the exchange along with "other good and valuable consideration."⁴⁰¹ It is unclear as to what those considerations might imply, or simply if the lots within the Black subdivision were sold for ten dollars.

Samuel Peña and his wife Eduarda M. Peña sell part of their property by 1960 to Inez Ruiz and Juana Marcias Ruiz. This involved Lot 28 out of Block one of the Black subdivision.⁴⁰² This subdivision is part of an addition to the Weslaco due to the expansion of the city decades after its foundation in 1919. Samuel Peña along with his wife Eduarda M. Peña in turn sold the rest of their holdings in the James. M. Black Subdivision to Dora P. Albizu and Jose Albizu from Fresno County, California. The Albizu gained lots 25, 26, 27 out of block one of Black subdivision, which dated to February 21, 1973. Again, the property was sold for \$10.00

⁴⁰⁰ Deed #17613, L.R. Shearer and Maria de Jesus Shearer to Samuel Peña and Eduarda M. Peña, October 22, 1956, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

⁴⁰¹ Deed #5519, L. R. Shearer and Maria Jesus Shearer to Samuel Peña and Eduarda M. Peña, March 19, 1959, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

⁴⁰² Deed #21074, Samuel Peña and Eduarda M. Peña to Inez Ruiz and Juana Marcias Ruiz, January 14, 1960, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

with other valuable considerations.⁴⁰³ In turn, a year later Jose Albizu and Dora P. Albizu sold to Enriqueta Cabrera by December 5, 1974. This land transaction is interesting, due to the fact that the property was sold for \$2,000 dollars.⁴⁰⁴ The same property purchased by Albizu for \$10.00 was sold for a large sum of money just a year later. This property was in turn maintained by Cabrera/Vallejo family until present day.

By examining land transactions, it is evident that the Llano Grande ceased to be the vast expanse of property under Juan José Hinojosa. In studying the city of Weslaco we can see how the land tenure broke down in the West Tract Subdivision. Weslaco had followed the pattern of its foundation, where large tracts were purchased and then sold to incoming settlers. This pattern continued until the blocks and lots contained less than an acre. The James M. Black Subdivision is an example of how land was subdivided and eventually purchased by Mexican Americans. Through time, the land was subdivided to their present day sizes. Land owners have sold and purchased lots within the subdivision, yet the sizes have remained a constant since the 1950s when the subdivision was established. The land development and creation of Weslaco was the last transitional step to the modern-day transformation of what was once one of the largest Spanish land grants in the region.

⁴⁰³ Deed #4338, Samuel Peña and Eduarda M. Peña to Dora P. Albizu and Jose Albizu, February 21, 1973, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

⁴⁰⁴ Deed #27214, Jose Albizu and Dora P. Albizu to Enriqueta Cabrera, December 5, 1974, Deed Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The land ownership in the Llano Grande is a reflection of the Rio Grande Valley as a whole. From the Spanish colonization period in 1749 to present-day, the land ownership of the Llano Grande experienced a transformation that altered the land that was once 127,625 acres.⁴⁰⁵ Through the course of over a century from 1749 to 1910 the changes in the land tenure were significant, and this thesis has addressed this profound transformation. This work is a micro-history of a single land grant tracing the land ownership to uncover the factors that led to its breakdown that allows us to understand the greater development of the Rio Grande Valley.

This thesis seeks to understand how a vast land tract ended up being farm tracts and eventually subdivisions. The issue of land loss is associated with the annexation of the Rio Grande Valley to the United States. Mexican Americans, who had maintained ownership of the grant, lost their property and with the arrival of the railroad and commercial agriculture, they were finally displaced.

The shift from Spanish, to Mexican, to Mexican American, and finally to Anglo ownership was a slow process that developed over decades. Juan José Hinojosa gained the official title to the Llano Grande in 1790, yet with his death the property was maintained under descendants for almost fifty years. Previous to the Dupouy Partition in 1848, the descendants

⁴⁰⁵ Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin, TX: Texas General Land Office, 2009), 312.

had transferred rights or *derechos* to relatives or non-family Mexicans. Spurred by the Mexican American War and internal issues, the land was subdivided into eight shares. This was considered the first major land tenure change in the Llano Grande. From then on, the eight shares were continuously subdivided through inheritance practices, the sale of *derechos*, amongst other factors.

The breakdown of the grant allowed for a majority of Anglo Americans to own property in the Llano Grande in the 1850s to 1890s. The first influx of Anglos occurred after the Mexican American war, many of whom had participated in the war. In the Llano Grande, only a select number gained property from the Mexican American land owning families. The vast majority purchased *derechos* as their first step to gain ownership in the grant.

Valley politics and the local economy allowed Anglos to acquire property in the Llano Grande Grant. The economy, politics, and land tenure were interconnected. Land owners such as Thaddeus M. Rhodes purchased numerous properties through tax sale deeds from Mexican American families who fell behind on their taxes. Anglo owners in the Llano Grande were lawyers, politicians, and local merchants. A large number of the Anglo lawyers, gained property in the Llano Grande as payment for their services by Mexican American families. With the establishment of the American government in the Rio Grande Valley, the land tenure shifted to incorporate Anglo ownership.

By the 1900s, the land transactions and the use of land had changed. The property purchased by Anglos during this time as a business transaction. A large number of Anglos, such as John Closner, J.P Withers, and B.F Yoakum, acquired property for railroad land bonuses and for the creation of land and irrigation companies such as the American Rio Grande Land and

Irrigation Company. Such companies completely changed the land ownership of the Llano Grande. Through these companies the Llano Grande was divided into Subdivisions, blocks, and lots advertised to Anglo Midwestern farmers.

From then on, the sizes of individual properties kept getting smaller and smaller following the same pattern of land distribution. The pattern involved the purchase of extensive properties and selling them to incoming Anglos. By the foundation of the city of Weslaco the pattern was continued. Ed. C. Couch purchased acreage out of the West Tract Subdivision from W.E. Stewart, and through his company, the Weslaco Townsite Company, divided the property and sold small town lots. By the 1950s and 1960s Weslaco saw a resurgence of Mexican American ownership, yet the properties were miniscule compared to the entire Llano Grande.

This thesis builds upon never before used land records to recreate the story and the decline of the Llano Grande. This thesis uses new and different sources than previously used by historians. Though these legal documents the land tenure can be discerned indicating when land was transferred, sold, or lost to both Mexican and Anglo land owners. As such, the majority of the literature available does not focus on an individual land grant, which this thesis does, and examines these warranty deeds in depth. Also, the collection by the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company was indispensable as a resource to understand the role of land and irrigation companies.

So much can be discerned from the study of land tenure on individual land grants, that more research is necessary to fully comprehend the history of land tenure in the Rio Grande Valley and its associated consequences. The thesis stands alone as one of the few sources that discuss the Spanish land grants in detail and will add to the historical literature available. The

thorough research is based on new and different sources that previously used. As such, the research on this thesis can be expanded to include the third wave of Anglo migration into the Rio Grande Valley. A lot more can be done based on this thesis, and as a researcher I will continue to expand the parameters of this research.

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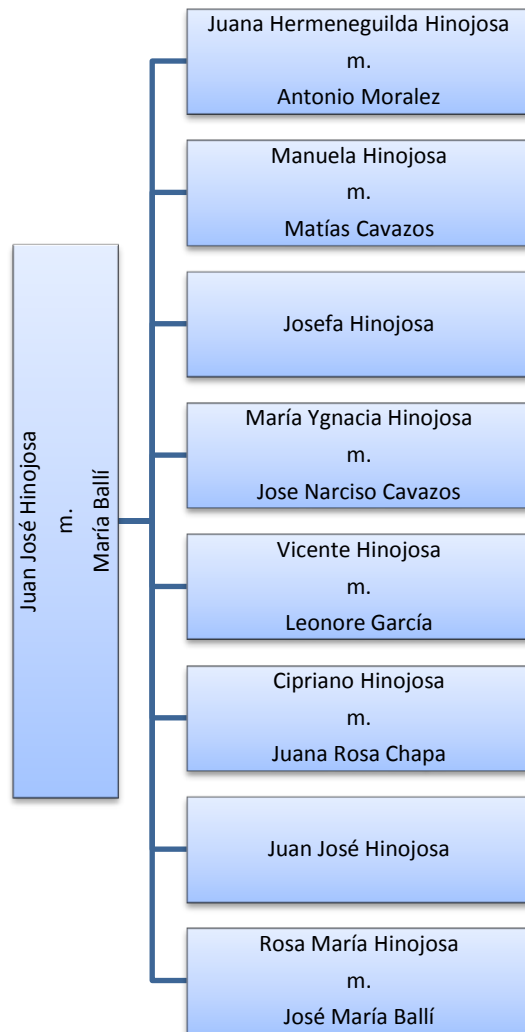
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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

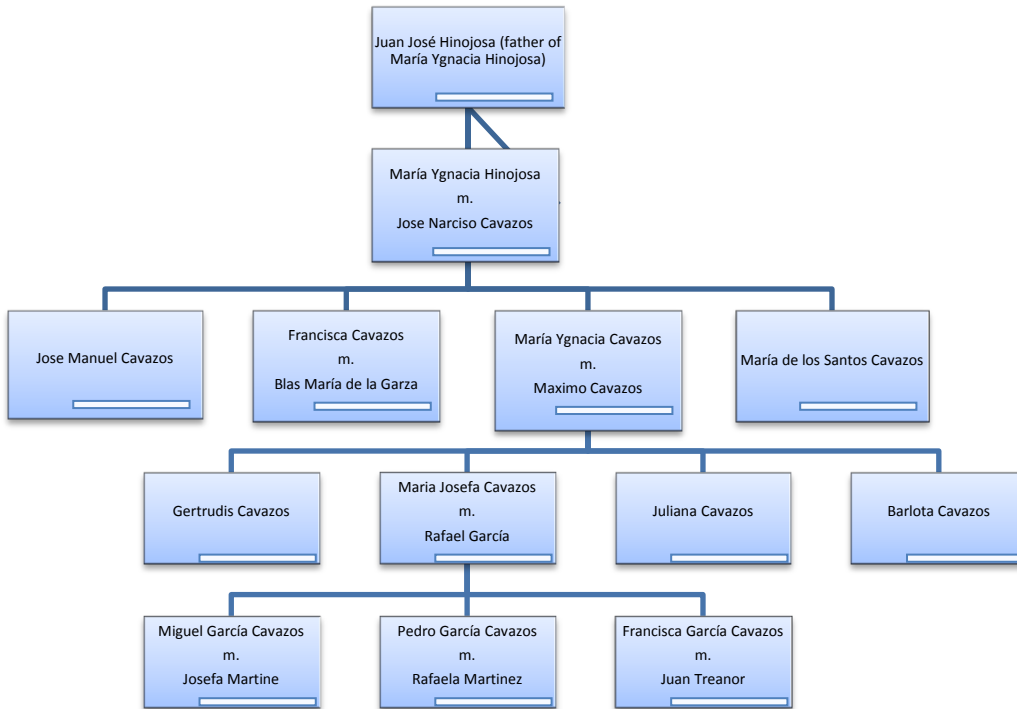
JUAN JOSE HINOJOSA FAMILY TREE



Source: Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc., in the Llano Grande Grant, Hidalgo County, Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick-Clarke Litho Co, 1926), 12-13, found in Llano Grande Tract-Abstract, “Plantation Company”, Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

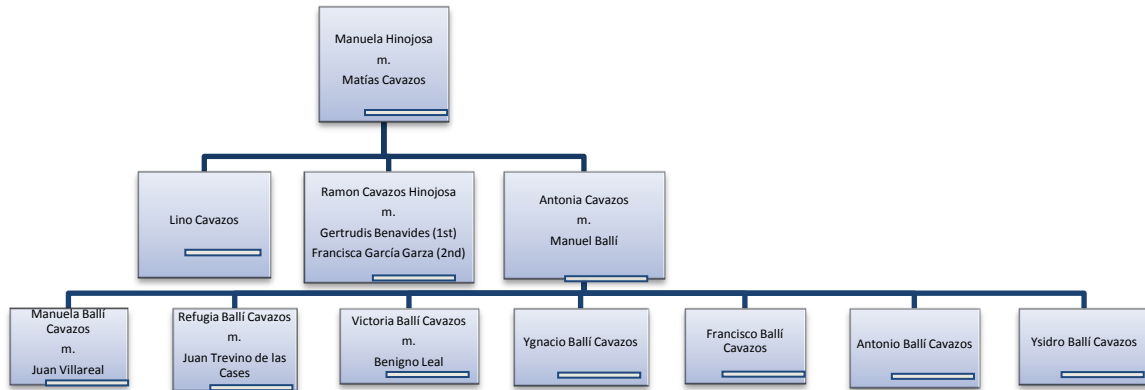
FAMILY TREE TO MARIA YGNACIA HINOJOSA CAVAZOS

The family tree to Ygnacia Hinojosa’s family related to the Llano Grande land tenure. This is a visual representation of the family of Hinojosa presenting owners of the Llano Grande.



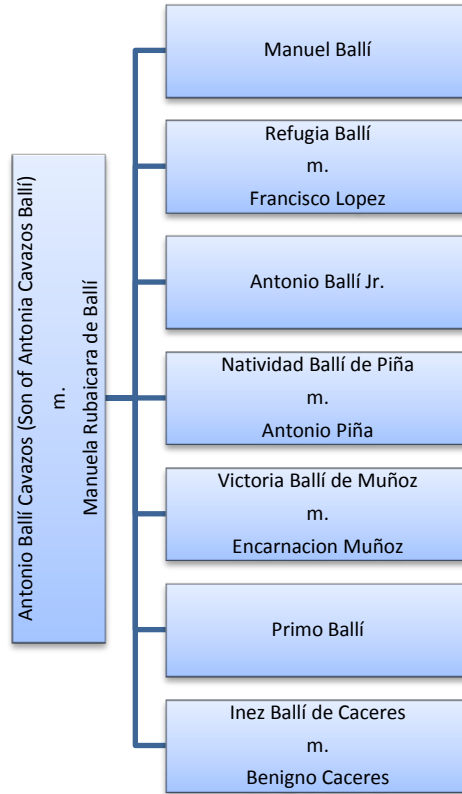
Source: Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc., in the Llano Grande Grant, Hidalgo County, Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick-Clarke Litho Co, 1926), 12, found in Llano Grande Tract-Abstract, “Plantation Company”, Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American and Duval West, Esq., *Chain of Title List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848. Including the Campacuas Addition (Palm Gardens) To the Capisallo Land District, A Subdivision of Said Grant and Said District* (San Antonio, TX: Passing Show Printing Co, 1913) 5-6, 12.

FAMILY TREE FOR MANUELA HINOJOSA



Source: Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio, Texas: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912) 4-5

FAMILY TREE OF ANTONIO BALLI



This family tree is a continuation from Matías Cavazos and Manuela Hinojosa’s family tree.

Source: Duval West, Esq., Attorney-At-Law, *Chain of Title: List of Recorded Instruments of Title to Lands in the Llano Grande Grant in Hidalgo County, Texas, Out of the 2nd and 3rd Shares of the Dupouy Partition of 1848* (San Antonio, Texas: Passing Show Printing Co., 1912) 7.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

MEASUREMENT UNITS

The measurement for the *vara* is not unilateral. There are different measurements for the Spanish, Mexican, and Texas *varas* which vary by millimeters. The Texas *vara* is the measurement used in this thesis which was established after 1830. Each *vara*, within the Texas unit, has the equivalency of 33.33 inches.

(1 unit)	Spanish/Mexican	American
<i>Vara</i>	1 <i>vara</i>	33.33 inches
<i>Caballeria</i>	609,408 <i>varas</i>	105 acres
<i>Sitio Ganado Menor</i>	11,111,088.89 square <i>varas</i>	1,968.18 acres
<i>Sitio Ganado Major</i>	25,000,000 square <i>vara</i>	4,428.4 acres
Labor	1,000,000 <i>varas</i>	177.1 acres
Legua	5,000 <i>varas</i>	2.6 miles
Acre	5645.4 square <i>varas</i>	1 acre
Mile	1,900.8 <i>varas</i>	1 mile

Sources: Galen D. Greaser, *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas* (Austin, TX: Texas General Land Office, 2009)9-10, 179-181; "VARA," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pfv02>), accessed November 30, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

PERCENTAGE OF LAND OWNERS IN HIDALGO COUNTY

The following table demonstrates the changes in land ownership within Hidalgo County and reflected the same land tenure in the Llano Grande. The decline of Mexican American land owners is evident by the 1895.

Year	Mexican	Anglo	European
1852	83.5	6.1	10.4
1880	73.7	20.5	4.5
1885	40	38	19.7
1890	38.5	38.2	22.2
1900	29.0	57.5	7.4

Source: Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacies: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998)163. Only the years of 1852, 1880, 1885, 1890, 1900 for the Mexican, Anglo, and European ethnicities are derived from Alonzo's table. The table titled "Table 6.2 Percentage of Land Held in Hidalgo County, by Ethnicity of Landholders, 1852-1900." Alonzo garnered his source from Hidalgo County Tax Rolls.

LAND AND IRRIGATION COMPANY ADVERTISEMENT

This is one of the advertisements that the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company produced to attract Anglo Settlers.

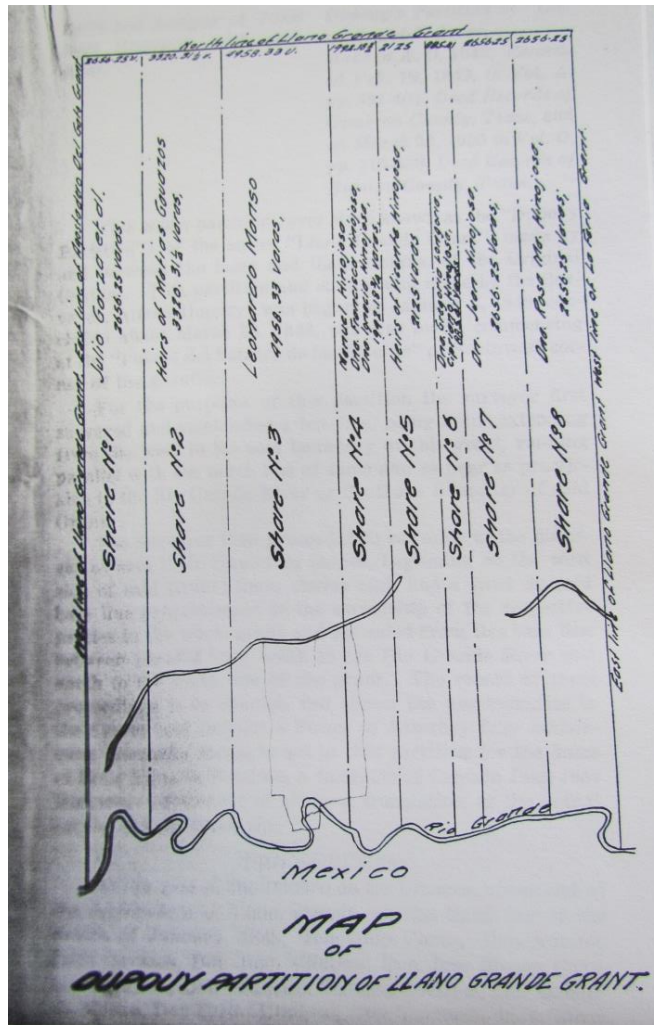


Source: Folder 42-The American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company [1923], Publications, Box 4, John Shary Collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American.

APPENDIX C

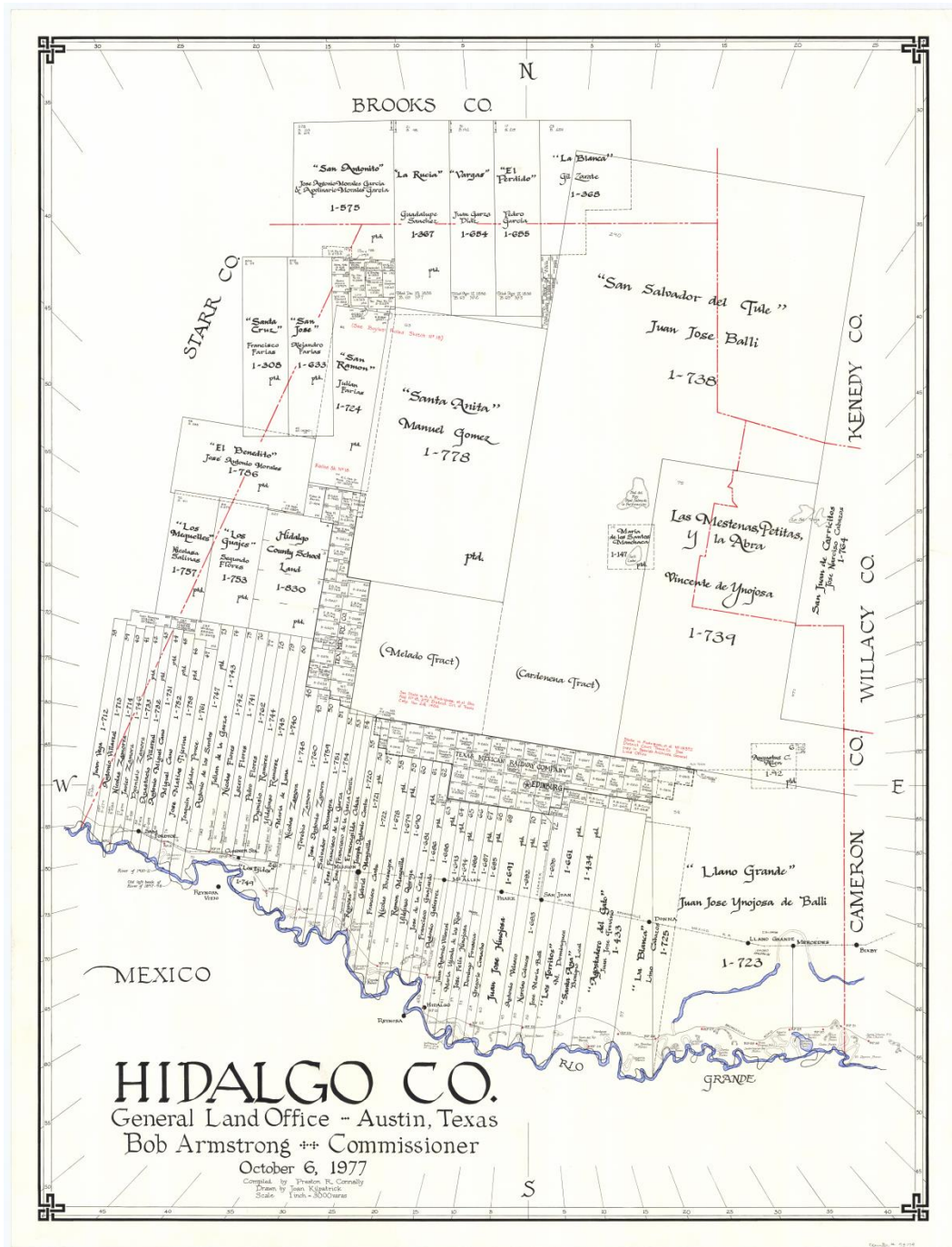
APPENDIX C

THE DUPOUY PARTITION OF 1848



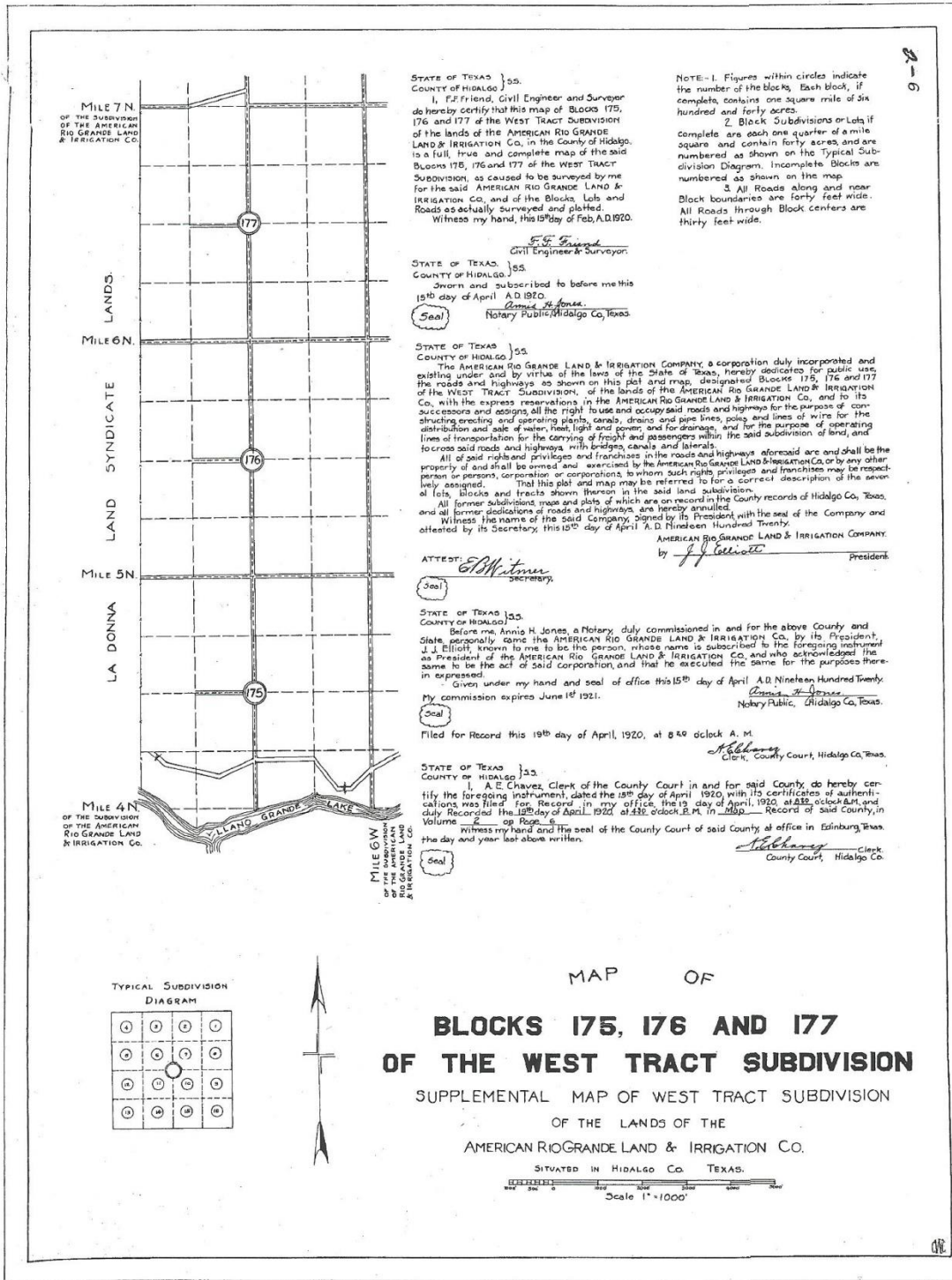
Source: Rentfro & Cole Attorneys-At-Law, *Abstract of Title of Lands of the Llano Grande Plantation Co., Inc., In The Llano Grande Grant, Hidalgo County, Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick-Clarke Litho Co., 1926), found in Llano Grande Tract-Abstract, "Plantation Company", Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z collection, Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX.

THE SPANISH LAND GRANTS IN HIDALGO COUNTY



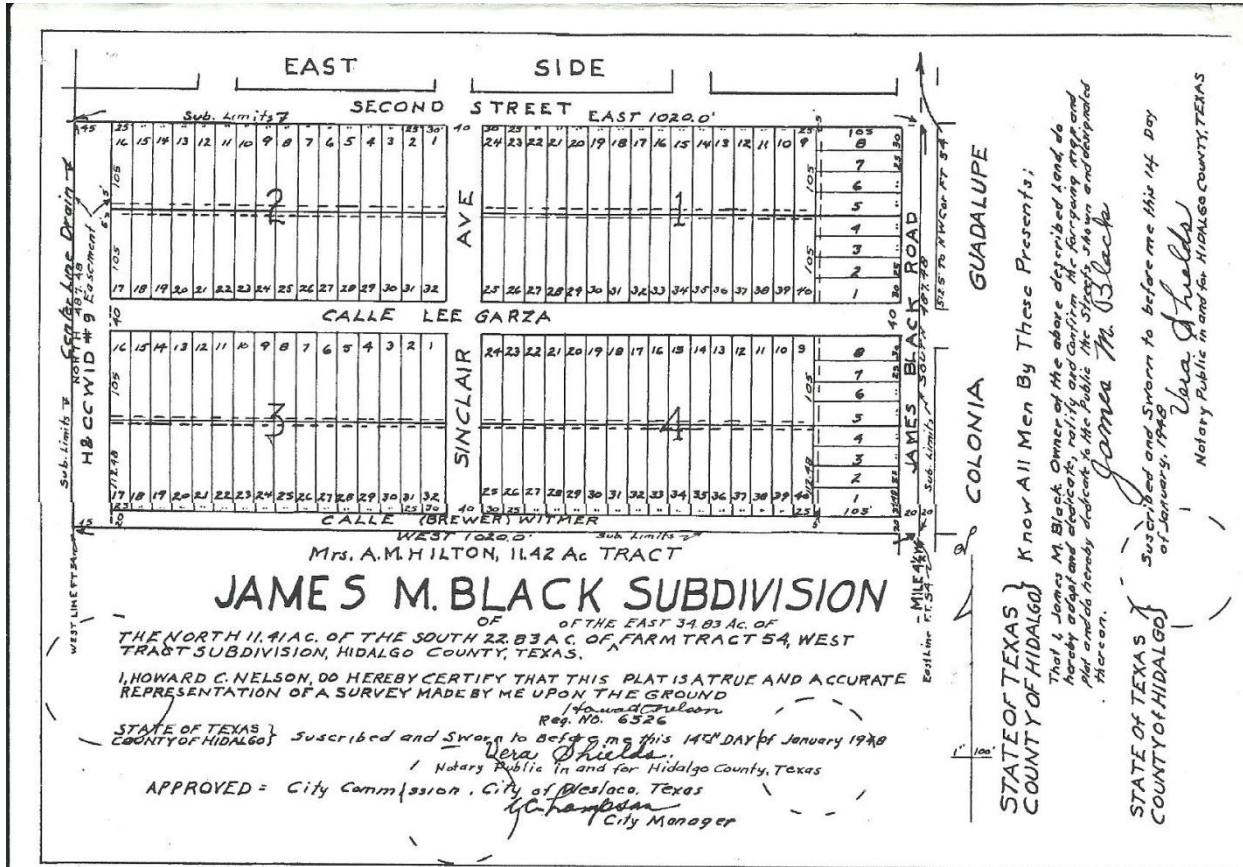
Source: Hidalgo County [Map], Preston R. Connally, compiler, Joan B. Kilpatrick, draftsman, October 6, 1977. #73179. Courtesy of the Texas General Land Office, Austin.

PARTIAL MAP ON WEST TRACT SUBDIVISION



Source: "Map of Blocks 175, 176 and 177 of the West Tract Subdivision," February 15, 1920, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

THE JAMES M. BLACK



Filed Feb 20, 1948 2:45 P.M.

Source: "James B. Black Subdivision," January 14, 1948, Plat Records, County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Edinburg, Texas.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Maria Guadalupe Vallejo received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Texas-Pan American on December 2009. From then on, she continued her education attaining her Master of Arts from UTPA in December of 2013. She was president of both the Anthropology Club and the Phi Alpha Theta chapter at the university. As a graduate student, she gained experience in the profession by being Teaching Assistant to various professors in the history department. As a Graduate Assistant to the Community Historical Archaeological Project with Schools (CHAPS), a program that aims to highlight the importance of local history and archaeology in the public schools. She is part of two publications under the CHAPS program on the Norquest family of Edinburg, Texas. Also, she published a piece in the Journal of South Texas titled "Nuevo Santander: Its History and Life." She participated in the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies in the Tejas Regional Conference held on February 21-23, 2013. She will seek to pursue a PhD in History and expand on her Master's thesis work.