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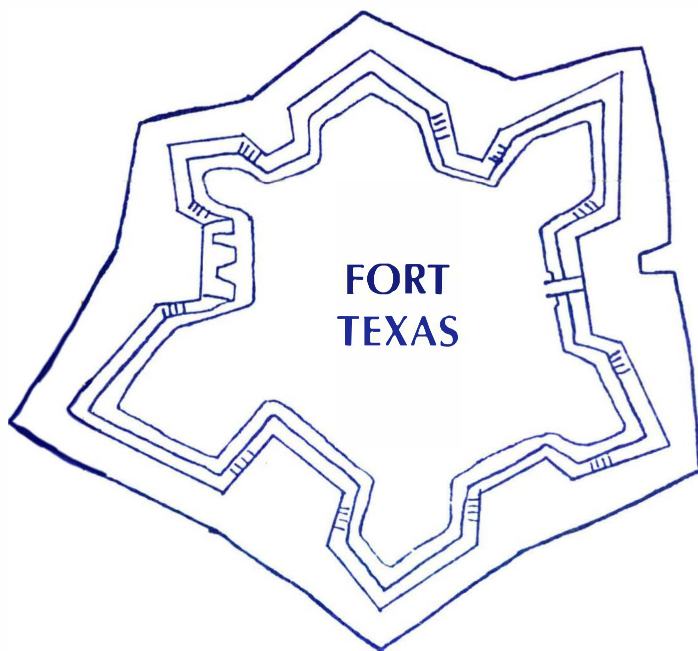
# STUDIES IN BROWNSVILLE HISTORY

## EDITED BY MILO KEARNEY



Celebrating One Hundred and Fifty Years — 1836 - 1986

# STUDIES IN BROWNSVILLE HISTORY

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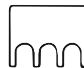
MILO KEARNEY



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## Acknowledgements

This project is the result of the decision of the President of Pan American University at Brownsville, Dr. Homer J. Peña, to sponsor academic projects appropriate to the celebration of Texas' Sesquicentennial. Thanks are due to Dr. Peña for his support of the project and to Peter Gawenda for his administrative coordination and helpful suggestions. Our staff member Tony Cordova and workstudy Lorna Chazco made a special effort in typing the project into the computer. Appreciation should also be expressed to David Graves for helping to move the computer work along and to my wife Vivian, my daughter Kathleen, and my son Sean for their cheerful assistance.

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Cynthia Dufour is completing work for a B.A. in literature at Pan American University at Brownsville. She has studied art at Boston University, at the University of Quebec in Montreal and at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. She has worked as a commercial artist in Montreal. Her forte is graphic arts. She has published illustrations in the Montreal Yellow Pages, in the *Monde au Bicyclette*, and in private poetry publications. She also won a prize in a Massachusetts state art scholarship competition.

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PROLOGUE

Certain U. S. cities capture one's imagination for their environmental color, charming the visitor with their blend of historical heritage, geographic setting, and folk tradition. Boston, New York, New Orleans, San Antonio, Santa Fe, and San Francisco especially come to mind. One of the best-kept secrets of American tourism is that Brownsville also belongs on this list. From its Charro Days celebrations to the Spring Break festivities on Padre Island, the local folk tradition runs rich, while the resacas lined with palm trees and lush sub-tropical vegetation provide an exotic natural setting. Over the city lies a romantic aura of historical experience ranging from major battles of the Mexican-American and Civil Wars to bold bandido escapades.

General lack of awareness of this historical heritage stems in large part from the relative neglect of research into Brownsville's records. Too few published studies have appeared. In 1893, Lieutenant W. H. Chatfield led the way with his _Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande_. In more recent years, the need has been addressed by Betty Bay's _Historic Brownsville: Original Town Site Guide_ (1980) and by Ruby Wooldridge and Robert Vezzetti's _Brownsville, A Pictorial History_ (1982). A pictorial history of Fort Brown by Bruce Aiken is also in the making. Hopefully the articles in this collection, Pan American University at Brownsville's contribution to the celebration of the Texas Sesquicentennial, will advance this budding interest.

27 February 1986

# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORY OF BROWNSVILLE AND THE ADJACENT AREA

by

George R. Gause, Jr.

This is an annotated bibliography of the history of Brownsville and the adjacent area. It attempts to be comprehensive by including all secondary sources which relate to the Brownsville - Matamoros region. A few selected titles are also listed which contain significant material on the general locale. Material in English and Spanish, as well as other languages, are listed. An effort has also been made to incorporate all theses and dissertations.

A special part of this bibliography is the list of newspapers printed in Brownsville and Matamoros (listed under "NEWSPAPERS - BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS" and "NEWSPAPERS - MATAMOROS, TAMAULIPAS, MEXICO". When known, their frequency of publication, the dates during which they were published and the dates of issues which exist today are shown. Sources used to obtain this information are: United States. Library of Congress. Catalog Publication Division. Newspapers in Microform: United States, 1948-1972. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1973; United States. Library of Congress. Catalog Publication Division. Newspapers in Microform: Foreign Countries, 1948-1972. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1973; Historical Records Survey. Texas. Texas Newspapers, 1813-1939: A Union List of Newspaper Files Available in Offices of Publishers, Libraries, and a Number of Private Collections. San Jacinto, Texas: San Jacinto Museum of History Association, 1941; Charno, Steven M. Latin American Newspapers in United States Libraries: A Union List. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1969; and from newspapers held by the Pan American University Library in microformat.

In addition, illustrations from Frank Leslie's Monthly and Harper's Weekly are given, although these listings do not claim to be comprehensive. An attempt to include a comprehensive listing of United States federal documents is also made and are found under "United States..." These documents generally contain detailed information on the subject/area covered.

Not found in this bibliography are magazine and journal articles as well as newspaper articles. The three volume index to Southwestern Historical Quarterly and the abstract America: History and Life are suggested beginning points for identification of material in this format.

Also, no effort was made to incorporate pamphlets, brochures and other ephemeral material. Generally, no manuscript material is included, however, some known significant material is listed. A source for relavant manuscript material is The University of Texas Archives: A Guide to the Historical Manuscripts Collections in the University of Texas Library compiled and edited by Chester V. Kielman (University of Texas Press, 1967). This source should be brought up to date by contacting the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Additional sources of manuscript material are the Stillman House Museum in Brownsville and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Collection at Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas. Maps of the area, although valuable when undertaking research on any area, also are not shown.

*A*

Alphabetical List of Graves in the Old Brownsville, Texas City Cemetery, Fifth and Madison. Brownsville, Texas: Cultural Awareness Program (CETA), 1982.

Compiled under the CETA Program, this listing is the most complete inventory available. Contains errors and ommissions.

Anders, Evan. Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Examines the mechanics of the Democratic machines in the South Texas counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Duval. Contains much insight into the Brownsville area.

Anders, Evan Marcus. "Bosses Under Siege: The Politics of South Texas During the Progressive Era." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1978.

Author's dissertation used as a basis for the preceding publication.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center.
J. Harbert Davenport. Papers, 1800 (1835-1836) 1923; 7 feet; MSS., typescript. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 562.]

Davenport, a Brownsville lawyer, writer and historian, deals primarily with the political and military events connected with James Walker Fannin, Jr. Papers relate to agriculture, commerce, cultural affairs, government, industry, military affairs, politics and social affairs.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. John Salmon Ford. Papers, ca. 1836-1892; 8 vols.; typescript. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 752.]

Papers relating to agriculture, commerce, cultural affairs, education, genealogy, government, military affairs, politics and

social affairs.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. Gilbert D. Kingsbury. Papers, 1855-1874; 4 inches; MSS., typescript. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 1185.]

Material relating to agriculture, commerce, education, genealogy, government, military affairs and politics.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. Matamoros Archives, 1811-1859; 7 feet; photocopy. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 1404.]

This collection relates primarily to administrative actions of the municipal governments of Matamoros and Ciudad Victoria. Numerous documents relate to customs and shipping activities, the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War. Copies of many newspapers from Matamoros and other areas are included.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Calendar of the Matamoros Archives.

A finding guide to the collection cited above.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. Jose San Roman. Papers, 1823-1934; 21 feet; MSS., typescript, printed. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 1886.]

A Brownsville - Matamoros area merchant, banker and importer, San Roman's papers reflect area agriculture, commerce, education, government, military affairs, politics and social affairs.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. Francis William Seabury. Papers, 1714-1946; 11 feet, 3 inches; MSS., typescript, printed. [Keilman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 1913.]

Seabury, a Brownsville attorney and legislator, collected an assortment of material on the area including information pertaining to agriculture and genealogy. Genealogical outlines on area families gathered for and by Seabury are invaluable.

Austin, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin. Barker Texas History Center. James B. Wells. Papers, 1863-1926; 72 feet, 11 inches; MSS., typescript, printed. [Kielman, The University of Texas Archives, Number 2312.]

Material relating to commerce, cultural affairs, government, industry, military affairs, politics and social affairs were gathered by Wells, an area attorney.

*B*

Barasorda, Panfilo. Pedimentos...Don Marcino Arista, Por la Perdida de las Batallas de Palo-Alto y la Resaca de Guerrero. Mexico: [no place], 1849.

First hand report on the opening of the Mexican-American War in South Texas. A rare attack on Arista.

Basse, E. and Robert H. Hord. To the Public. A Brief Description of the Title to the Lands Upon Which the City of Brownsville is Situated. Brownsville, Texas: [no publisher], 1853?.

Traces Spanish land grants in the Brownsville area. Primary account.

Baulch, Joe Robert. "James B. Wells: South Texas Economic and Political Leader." Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1974.

Detailed examination of an important South Texas figure.

Bay, Betty. Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide. Brownsville, Texas: Brownsville Historical Association, 1980.

Excellent guide to historic structures in old Brownsville with short general text. Contains large map of city.

Beasley, Ellen. Architectural Historical Survey and Preservation Plan. Brownsville, Texas: Brownsville Historical Association, 1975.

Guidelines for building preservation in Brownsville.

Bond, Clell L. Palo Alto Battlefield: a Magnetometer and Metal Detector Survey. Report, Cultural Resources Laboratory, No. 4. College Station, Texas: Cultural Resources Laboratory, Texas A and M University, 1979.

Detailed, scientific study of the area.

Boundary Study: Palo Alto Battlefield: National Historic Site. United States. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1980.

Detailed, scientific apprasal of the area.

A Brief History of the First Presbyterian Church. Brownsville, Texas: First Presbyterian Church, 1950.

Item not available to compiler.

Browne, Agnes. Agnes Browne as interviewed by Ruby Wooldridge,. Brownsville, Texas, 1981.

Covers Steven Powers, John Butler, area politics and laws of land.

Browne, Agnes. "Peopling the New Town." [Unpublished Brownsville Historical Association radio script.] Brownsville, Texas, 1954.

Item not available to compiler.

*Brownsville Historical Association Walking Tour Number One.* Brownsville, Texas: Brownsville Historical Association, 1981?.

Popular, yet detailed, on-your-own tour guide.

Brownsville, Texas. Citizens. *Report of the Permanent Committee, Appointed at a Meeting of the Citizens of Brownsville, Texas, April 17, 1875....* Brownsville, Texas: J. S. Mansur, Printer, 1875.

Buckley, Kellis G. "Brownsville's Role in the Early Development of the Pan American Airways System." [Unpublished manuscript.] Brownsville Historical Association, 1960.

Item not available to compiler.

*C*

*Campana contra los americanos del norte. Primera parte. Relacion historica de los cuarenta dias que mando en gefe el Ejercito del norte el E. Sr. general de division Don Mariano Arista; escrita por un oficial de infanteria. Linares, junio de 1846.* Mexico: Impr. de I. Camplido, 1846.

Contemporary Mexican view of Battle of Palo Alto.

Canales, Jose Tomas. "History of the Episcopal Church in Brownsville." [Unpublished records of the Church of the Advent, Episcopal.] Brownsville, Texas, 1950.

Item not available to compiler.

Canales, Jose Tomas. *Juan N. Cortina Presents His Motion for a New Trial.* [An address before the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society at San Benito, Texas - October 25, 1951.] San Antonio, Texas: [Printed by Artes Graficas], 1951.

A thorn in the side of the Americans during the Civil War period, this interesting Mexican patriot had a great influence in the Brownsville area during this time. [Reprinted in *Selections from the Collected Papers of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society, 1949-1979*, volume 1, pages 77-84.]

Canseco Botello, Jose Raul. *Historia de Matamoros.* Second edition. Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico: Talleres Tipograficos de Litografica Jardin, 1981.

Although not without errors, this heavily illustrated history is the best presently available.



11

Centenary Souvenir of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament: 100 Years of Service. Brownsville, Texas: [no publisher], 1953.

Item not available to compiler.

Centennial Souvenir Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Texas. Brownsville, Texas: [no publisher], 1949.

Item not available to compiler.

Charro Days [Portraying Life in Brownsville and Matamoros, Twin Cities of the Rio Grande Valley]. Brownsville, Texas: [n.p.], 1949.

Reflects social events of the area.

Chatfield, W. H. The Twin Cities (Brownsville, Texas: Matamoros, Mexico) of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande. New Orleans, LA: Printed by E. P. Brandao, 1893.

Important primary account of the Brownsville area. Use Isbell, Index to Twin Cities... to facilitate usage.

Chatfield, W. H. The Twin Cities (Brownsville, Texas; Matamoros, Mexico) of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande. New Orleans, LA: Printed by E.P. Brandao, 1893; reprint ed., Brownsville, Texas: Reprinted by the Harbert Davenport Memorial Fund, Brownsville Historical Association, Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society, 1959.

Reprint of above.

Cowling, Annie. "The Civil War Trade of the Lower Rio Grande Valley." Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1926.

Contains peripheral information on the area including border conditions, military operations, occupations of Brownsville, cotton trade and other related topics.

Cruz, Gilberto Rafael and Martha Oppert Cruz. A Century of Service: The History of the Catholic Church in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Harlingen, Texas: United Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1979.

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Scholarly treatment of Civil War era.

Daddysman, James William. The Matamoros Trade: Confederate Commerce, Diplomacy, and Intrigue. Newark, Delaware: University of



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Dillman, Charles Daniel. "The Functions of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas: Twin Cities of the Lower Rio Grande." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968.

Adaptation of author's dissertation.

Domenech, Emmanuel Henri Dieudonne. _Journal d'un Missionaire au Texas et a Mexique._ Paris: Gaume freres, 1857.

Original French edition of 1858 English translation. Has large-scale map of Texas showing route of the author.

Domenech, Emmanuel Henri Dieudonne. _Missionary Adventures in Texas and Mexico. A Personal Narrative of Six Years' Sojourn in Those Regions._ [Translated from the French under the author's superintendence.] London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858.

In the author's first journey, 1846-50, various points in Texas were visited; on his second sojourn, 1851-52, he made his headquarters at Brownsville, with visits to neighboring places in Texas and Mexico.

Dougherty, Edward. _The Rio Grande Valley, A Lecture Delivered Before the Lone Starr Literary Association of Brownsville, Texas, by Hon. E. Dougherty, Wednesday Evening, May 29, 1867._ Brownsville, Texas: Ranchero Book and Job Printing Office, 1867.

Personal reflections on the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Dougherty, Edward. The Rio Grande Valley, 1867. Brownsville, Texas: Runyon Brothers, 1955.

Reprint of above.

Doyon, Bernard. The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande, 1849-1883. Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Press, 1956.

Reflections on South Texas area.

Doyon, Bernard. Centenary Souvenir of the Arrival of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Brownsville, Texas: [no publisher], 1949.

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Valuable reflection of Ford and his contemporaries from Brownsville and other areas.

Ford, John Salmon. Rip Ford's Texas. Edited by Stephen B. Oates. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1963.

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Fort Brown Memorial Center Dedication Booklet. Brownsville, Texas: Springman-King Company, 1954.

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1863 - December 5, page 796 - Brownsville, Texas
1863 - December 16, page 173 - Brownsville, Texas
1864 - February 13, volume 17, number 437, page 1 - Point Isabel
1864 - June 11, page 188 - Fort Brown, Texas

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Garcia, Clotilde P. Captain Alonso Alvarez de Pineda and the Exploration of the Texas Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. Austin, Texas: Jenkins Publishing Company, San Felipe Press, 1982.

Examination of Pineda stone found at mouth of Rio Grande River.

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Includes article by Lucy Wallace "Drums at Border Forts are Stilled."

Goldfinch, Charles W. "Juan N. Cortina 1824-1892: A Reappraisal." Master's Thesis, The University of Chicago. Brownsville, Texas: [Privately printed by J.T. Canales], 1949.

A Mexican hero and an American revolutionary, Cortina spent much of his life in the Brownsville-Matamaoros area.

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Gunning, M. Patricia [Mother]. To Texas With Love. Austin, Texas: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1971.

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1865 - December 16, page 796. Elizabeth Steet, Brownsville,

Texas
1867 - January 5, page 12. Pontoon Bridge, Brownsville, Texas

Hildebrand, Walter W. "The History of Cameron County, Texas." Master's Thesis, North Texas State College, 1950.

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Hoekstra, S. Robert. "A Historical Study of Texas Ports in the Civil War." Master's Thesis, Texas College of Arts and Industries, 1951.

Contains Brownsville area information (Chapter 8, pages 86 through 99) including Confederate occupation, subsequent Federal invasion of the Valley and Battle of Palmetto Ranch.

Holcomb, Gertrude Barrett. "Early Transportation in the Brownsville, Texas Area: With Historical Background." Master's Thesis, Texas College of Arts and Industries, 1948.

Good overview of topic including military transportation, steamboats, ferries, the Rio Grande Railroad and the Port of Brownsville.

Holworthy, Mary Xavier [Sister]. <u>Diamonds for the King.</u> Corpus Christi, Texas: [Privately Printed], 1945.

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Hunter, John H. <u>The Civil War Years in the Valley.</u> (Manuscript). 1960.

Brief examination of the Brownsville area during the Civil War period. Delievered as speech.

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International Boundary and Water Commission (United States and Mexico). <u>Proceedings, Monumentation of the Railroad Bridges Between Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas; and Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.</u> Washington, DC: American Section, 1912.

Insight into turn of the century trade development.

Irby, James A. <u>Backdoor at Bagdad: The Civil War on the Rio Grande.</u> Southwestern Studies, Monograph No. 53. El Paso, Texas: Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1977.

Cotton trade in the Brownsville-Matamoros area during the Civil War period.

Irby, James Arthur. "Line of the Rio Grande; War and Trade on the Confederate Frontier, 1861-1865". Ph.D. dissertation, University

of Georgia, 1969.

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Isbell, Frances W. Index to Twin Cities of the Border by W. H. Chatfield, 1893. Edinburg, Texas: Hicalgo County Historical Society, [no date].

Facilitates use of this important primary account of the Brownsvlle area.

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Lane, Ann J. "The Brownsville Affair." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1968.

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Lane, Ann J. The Brownsville Affair: National Crisis and Black Reaction. Series in American Studies. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971.

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Lusk, Wynema Magzeliea. "A Calendar of the Stephen Powers and James B. Wells Papers: 1875-1882." Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1938.

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McKenna, Verna Jackson. Old Point Isabel Lighthouse, Beacon of Brazos Santiago. Port Isabel, Texas: Printed by Port Isabel Press, 1952.

Popular history of this important historic structure.

McKenna, Verna Jackson. Old Point Isabel Lighthouse, Beacon of Brazos Santiago, and Padre Island, Whose Past Lives on in Its Legends, Its Restless Winds, and Its Shifting Sands. Harlingen, Texas: [no publisher], 1956.

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Marcum, Richard T. "Fort Brown Texas: The History of a Border Post." Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1964.

Excellent detailed examination of subject from 1848 through 1946.

Maria y Campos, Armando de. Matamoros, teniete general insurgente. Coleccion Mexico heroico, no. 28. Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1964.

Maril, Robert Lee. Texas Shrimpers: Community, Capitalism, and the Sea. College Station, Texas: Texas A and M University Press, 1983.

Economic and social investigation of one of Brownsville's main industries.

Miller, Michael V. Economic Growth and Change Along the U.S. - Mexico Border: The Case of Brownsville, Texas. San Antonio, Texas: Human Resources Management and Development Program, College of Business, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1981.

Recent economic study of Brownsville area.

Miller, Michael V. Economic Growth and Change Along the U.S. - Mexico Border. Austin, Texas: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas at Austin, 1982.

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Neale, William. Century of Conflict, 1821-1913: Incidents in the Lives of Willaim Neale and William A. Neale, Early Settlers in South Texas. Edited by John C. Rayburn and Virginia Kemp Rayburn with the assistance of Ethel Neale Fry. Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1966.

Impressions of early settler who lived in Tampico and Matamoros, Mexico and Brownsville.

Neale, William. Century of Conflict, 1821-1913. Edited by John C. Rayburn and Vriginia Kemp Rayburn with the assistance of Ethel Neale Fry. Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1966; reprint ed., New York, NY: Arno Press, 1976.

**NEWSPAPERS - BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS**

American Flag. see American Flag, Cameron County and Matamoros Advertiser.

American Flag, Cameron County and Matamoros Advertiser. (semi-weekly, weekly) 1847?-1858? Continues American Flag, Matamoros, Mexico. Title varies: American Flag, American Flag Weekly.

Existing issues from 1847, 1848, 1852, 1853, and 1855 through

1859.

American Flag Weekly. see American Flag, Cameron County and Matamoros Advertiser.

La Bandera. (weekly) 1848? Published in Spanish and English. Titles varies: Fort Brown Flag, 1862? through 1863. Printed on back of Fort Brown Flag.

Existing issues for April 1, 1862, July 31, 1862 and September 4, 18 and 25, 1863.

Brownsville Daily Herald. (daily) 1900 through 1910. Title varies: Daily Herald, 1892 through 1899; Brownsville Daily Herald, 1900 through 1910; and Brownsville Herald, 1911 to date.

Existing issues for 1900 through 1910.

Brownsville Herald. (daily) 1911 to date. Title varies: Daily Herald, 1892 through 1899; Brownsville Daily Herald, 1900 through 1910; and Brownsville Herald, 1911 to date. Occasionally published partially in Spanish. Title varies: El Heraldo de Brownsville, 1935 through 1940.

Existing issues for 1911 to date.

Brownsville Journal. (weekly) 1864+

Existing issues for April? through July 1864.

Brownsville Weekly Herald. (weekly) 1892 through 1918?

Existing issues for 1904 through 1911

Centinela del Rio Grande. see Rio Grande Sentinal.

Correo del Rio Grande. see Rio Grande Courier.

Le Courrier du Rio Grande. see Rio Grande Courier.

El Cronista del Valle. (daily, weekly) 1917 through 1930. Published in Spanish.

Existing issues for 1924, 1927 through 1930.

Daily Cosmopolitan. (daily) 1876 through 1893?

Existing issues for 1881, 1883 through 1885, and 1891 through 1893.

Daily Herald. (daily) 1892 through 1899. Title varies: Daily Herald, 1892 through 1899; Brownsville Daily Herald, 1900 through 1910; and Brownsville Herald, 1911 to date.

Existing issues for 1892 through 1899.

Daily Lower Rio Grande. (daily) 1893 through 1896?

Existing issues for 1893 through 1896.

Daily Metropolitan. (daily) 1893?

Existing issues for 1893.

Daily Ranchero see Ranchero.

Daily Ranchero and Republican. see Ranchero.

Daily Republican. (daily) 1884?

Existing issues for 1884.

Democrat and Ranchero. (semi-weekly) 1879 through 1880? see also El Democrata for Spanish edition.

No issues known to exist.

El Democrata. (semi-weekly) 1875 through 1880? Spanish edition of Democrat and Ranchero.

Existing issue for February 28, 1880.

Evening Republican. see Ranchero.

Fort Brown Flag. see La Bandera.

El Heraldo de Brownsville. see Brownsville Herald.

Loyal National Union Journal. (weekly) 1864+

Existing issues for March through July 1864.

Modern Americans. 1852

Existing issue for May 15, 1852.

El Mundo. (semi-weekly) 1885 through 1887 Published in Spanish.

Existing issue for March 7, 1886.

Ranchero. (weekly, twice weekly, daily) 1859? through 1879? Title varies: Published in Corpus Christi, 1861 as Ranchero War Extra and Ranchero Extra; published in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico , 1862? through 1865? as Weekly Ranchero; published in Santa Margarita, 1863 and 1864 as Corpus Christi Ranchero (?); published in Brownsville, 1865 through 1870 as Ranchero. Merged with Rio Grande Democrat to form Democrat and Ranchero. Title varies: Daily Ranchero; Daily Ranchero and Republican; Evening

Republican. Frequency varies: daily, 1871 through 1876.

Existing issues from 1859 through 1872.

Ranchero Diario. / Daily Rancher. (daily) Established 1865. Published in Spanish and English.

Existing issues from 1865 through 1866.

Republican. El Republicana. (semi-weekly) 1865 through 1867?

Existing issue from September 20, 1865 and 1867

El Republicana. see Republican.

Rio Bravo. (weekly) 1851 through 1852+? Published in Spanish and English.

Existing issue for May 19, 1852

Rio Grande Courier. (daily) 1866 through 1868? Published in English, Spanish, and French. Title varies: El Correo del Rio Grande; Le Courrier du Rio Grande.

Existing issues from 1866 and 1867.

Rio Grande Democrat. (semi-weekly) 1875 through 1879? Merged with Weekly Ranchero to form Democrat and Ranchero.

Existing issues from 1875 through 1879.

Rio Grande Sentinel. (weekly) 1850?- Also published in Spanish? Title varies: Centinela del Rio Grande.

Existing issue for November 27, 1850 and June 26, 1861.

Sentinel. (daily, weekly) 1868 through 1876?

Existing issue for August 8 and 9, 1870.

Sentinel. (daily, weekly) 1910 through 1924?

Existing issues from 1916 through 1920.

Weekly Ranchero. See Ranchero.

Weekly Ranchero and Republican. (weekly) 1874. See also Ranchero.

Existing issue for March 22, 1874

El Zaragoza. (weekly) 1865?+ Published in Spanish.

Existing issues for December 20 and 27, 1865.

El Aguila del norte. (weekly) Established January 21, 1846. Title varies: El Aguila mexicana, January 21, 1846; El Aguila del norte, after January 28, 1848.

Existing issues from January through April 1846.

American Flag. (semi-weekly, irregular, and 3 times per week) Established June 1846. [Published in Spanish and English. Continues Republic of Rio Grande and Friend of the People (in English) and Republica de Rio Grande y amiga de los pueblos (in English and Spanish), June - July 3, 1846; the American Flag, July 4, 1846 - January 12, 1847; American Flag, after January 13, 1847. Continued by American Flag, Cameron County and Matamoros Advertiser (one title). See also American Flag under "NEWSPAPERS - BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS".

Existing issues from 1846, 1847, and 1855.

El Ancla. (weekly) Established October 7, 1837.

Existing issues from 1837 through 1841.

El Argos de Matamoros. Existed 1833.

Existing issues from April and July 1833.

La Bandera mexicana. (weekly) Established ca. December 1849.

Existing issues from January 1850.

La Bandera nacional. (weekly) Established 1864.

Existing issues from May through August 1864.

El Bien publico. (weekly)

Existing issues from 1848 through 1851.

Boletin de la Division del Norte. Established 1846.

Existing issues from April 1846.

Boletin Extraordinario. Published at various times in Brownsville and Matamoros.

Existing issues from August 29, 1855 and November 1865.

Boletin oficial de la Comandancia militar de la linea de bravo y del districto del norte de Tamaulipas.

Existing issue from August 21, 1867.

La Brisa. (weekly) Established August 30, 1839.

Existing issues from August 30 through November 22, 1839.

El Cronista. (Three times weekly)

Existing issue from January 9, 1895

Daily Rancher. See Ranchero diario. / Daily Rancher. under "NEWSPAPERS - BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS".

La Diana de Matamoros. (semi-weekly) Established June 24, 1846. Supplemented by Matamoros Reveille.

Existing issues from June 1846.

Eco del norte de Tamaulipas. (semi-weekly, weekly) Established March 3, 1845. Published periodically from March 3 through August 31, 1845 semi-weekly; after September 1, 1845, weekly.

Existing issues from 1845 through 1846.

El Honor nacional.

Existing issue for December 27, 1841.

El Justo medico. (weekly) Established 1843.

Existing issues from January through June 1844.

El Latigo de Tejas. (semi-weekly)

Existing issues from October 1843 through December 1844.

Matamoros Reveille. (semi-weekly) Established June 24, 1846. Supplement to La Diana de Matamoros. Published in English.

Existing issues from June 1846.

Mercurio del puerto de Matamoros. (weekly) Established November 11, 1834.

Existing issues from 1834 through 1838.

El Procurador de Puebla. (weekly)

Existing issues from July 1832 through July 1834.

Progreso. (Three times weekly)

Existing issues from 1881.

El Ranchero. (weekly) Established February 25, 1857.

Existing issue from February 25, 1857.

Reconstruccion; organo oficial del gobierno de Tamaulipas. (semi-weekly)

Existing issues from 1880 through 1881.

Republic of Rio Grande and Friend of the People. (weekly) Published in Spanish and English. Title varies: Republica de Rio Grande y amigo de los pueblos. Continued by American Flag. See also American Flag.

Existing issues from June through July 1846.

Republica de Rio Grande y amigo de los pueblos. see American Flag.

Sol de mayo. (Three time per week) Established 1890

Existing issue from August 3, 1898.

Weekly Ranchero. See Ranchero under "NEWSPAPERS - BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS".

Existing issues from 1862 through 1870.

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Paredes Manzano, Eliseo. Breve resena historica y estadistica de la H. Matamoros, Tam., Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico: H. Ayuntamiento de Matamoros, 1982.

Overview, both historical and contemporary, of Matamoros.

Paredes Manzano, Eliseo. La Casa Mata y fortificaciones de la heroica Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico: [no publisher], 1974.

History of this important northern Mexico fort.

Paredes Manzano, Eliseo. Conmemoracion de CXXV aniversario de los honrosos titulos, de heroica, leal e invicta. Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico: [no publisher], 1976.

Overview of Matamoros history.

Paredes Manzano, Eliseo. Homenaje a los fundadores de la heroica, leal e invicta Matamoros en la sesquicentenario de su nuevo nombre. Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico: [no publisher], 1976.

Overview of important Matamoros citizens.

Paredes Manzano, Eliseo. Profesionales de la medicina y la enfermeria de H. Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas,

Mexico: Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas, Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas, 1981.

Scholarly study of medicine in as practiced in Matamoros.

Parisot, Pierre Fourier. The Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary. San Antonio, Texas: St. Mary's Church [Johnson Brothers Printing Co.], 1899.

Covers Brownsville (Chapters 3 through 6, pages 97 through 120) as seen by this oblate priest.

Payo, Manuel. El puerto de Matamoros en 1844. Biblioteca de historiadores mexicanos. Mexico: Vargas Rea, 1951.

Pierce, Frank Cushman. A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, 1917.

Early Twentieth Century history of Brownsville/South Texas area.

Pierce, Frank Cushman. A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Brownsville, Texas: Rio Grande Valley Historical Society, 1962.

Reprint of 1917 edition.

Pipkin, Maurice S. "An Early History of Cameron County." Master's thesis, Texas A & I University, 1940.

Provides both peripheral and specific information on Brownsville.

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Ranson and Company, Inc. Facts About Brownsville, Texas. Prepared by the financial advisors to the City, Ranson and Company, Inc. San Antonio, Texas: [privately printed], 1968?.

Item not available to compiler.

Rayburn, John C. and Virginia Kemp Rayburn. see Neale, William.

Rio Grande Roundup: Story of Texas Tropical Borderland. Sponsored by the Valley By-Liners. Mission, Texas: Border Kingdom Press, 1975.

Includes articles by Minnie Gilbert ("Build Me Tall-Masted Ships: The Story of Humphrey E. Woodhouse"), Dorothy Abbott McCoy ("James B. Wells: Eminent Brownsville Attorney"); Minnie Gilbert ("Joseph Kleiber of Alsace-Lorraine") and other material.

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Saldivar, Gabriel. Historia compendia de Tamaulipas. Mexico: Editorial Beatriz de Silva, s. de r. l., 1945.

Important overview of Tamaulipas history, including Matamoros area.

Scanlan, Salome McAllen. "The Beginning of Brownsville." [Unpublished Brownsville Historical Association radio script.] Brownsville, Texas, 1954.

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Schmeling, Ralph C. "Papers on Historic Events and Important People of Brownsville." [Unpublished manuscript.] Brownsville, Texas. [no date.]

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Schuler, Louis J. *The Last Battle in the War Between the States, May 13, 1865; Confederate Force of 300 Defeats 1,700 Federals Near Brownsville, Texas.* [Brownsville, Texas: Springman-King], 1960.

Overview of Battle of Palmetto Hill.

Scott, Florence Johnson. *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande: Historical Record of Spanish Exploration, Subjugation and Colonization of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the Activities of Jose de Escandon, Count of Sierra Gorda, Together With the Development of Towns and Ranches Under Spanish, Mexican and Texas Sovereignties, 1747-1848.* San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1937.

Classic history of pre-Anglo intervention into South Texas area.

Scott, Florence Johnson. *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 Jose de Escandon, Count of Sierra Gorda, Together With the Development of Towns and Ranches Under Spanish, Mexican and Texas Sovereignties, 1747-1848.* Revised edition. Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1966.

Scott, Florence Johnson. *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 Jose de Escandon, Count of Sierra Gorda, Together With the Development of Towns and Ranches Under Spanish, Mexican and Texas Sovereignties, 1747-1848.* Reprint of 1937 edition. Garden City, Texas: La Retama Press, 1970.

Scott, Florence Johnson. *Old Rough and Ready on the Rio Grande.* San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1935.

Examination of General Zachary Taylor's stay in South Texas including Fort Brown area.

Scott, Florence Johnson. *Old Rough and Ready on the Rio Grande.*

Revised edition. Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1969.

Selections From the Collected Papers of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society, 1949-1979, Volume 1. Harlingen, Texas: Lon C. Hill Memorial Library, [1981].

Contains much otherwise difficult to obtain information on the Brownsville area as well as other Lower Rio Grande Valley Areas. Includes "The Neale Family of Brownsville" The Brownsville Herald (pp. 45-46); "The Life and Background of William Neale" Harbert Davenport (pp. 47-50); "Dedication of the Port Isabel Lighthouse" Mariano S. Garriga (pp. 71-72); "Cotton and Guns: Brownsville During the Civil War" J. T. Canales (pp. 93-96); "Early Days at the Mouth of the Rio Grande: The Story of Clarksville and Bagdad" Audrey Simmons (pp. 97-100); "The Fall of Brownsville on the Rio Grande, November 1863" Virgil N. Lott (pp. 121-130) and much other useful information.

Sexton, Harry. "Historical Sketch of Brownsville, Texas." [Unpublished paper.] Brownsville, Texas, 1924.

Item not available to compiler.

Sides, Joseph Calvin. Fort Brown Historical. San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Co., 1942.

Military history of Brownsville area.

Snyder, Laura. "The Blockade of the Texas Coast During the Civil War." Master's Thesis, Texas Technological College, 1938.

Includes trade between Brownsville and Matamoros (Chapter 5, pages 89 through 113).

Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot: Historic Structures Report and Preservation Plan for the City of Brownsville, Texas. By Richard Mycue and Associates. San Antonio, Texas: Richard Mycue and Associates, 1981.

Preservation-feasibility study of architecturally significant structure presently being readapted to serve as local museum.

Stambaugh, Jacob Lee and Lillian J. Stambaugh. The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Co., 1954.

Classic history of South Texas including coverage of Brownsville area.

Stambaugh, Jacob Lee and Lillian J. Stambaugh. The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Reprint of 1954 edition. Austin, Texas: Jenkins Publishing Co., San Felipe Press, 1974.

Stillman, Chauncey Devereux. Charles Stillman, 1810-1875. New York, NY: Printed for C. D. Stillman, 1956.

Historical and genealogical examination of the founder of Brownsville. Contains information on early Brownsville. Based on the research of H. M. Pitman and W. L. Holman.

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Texas Economic Development Commission. _General Community Profile on Brownsville._ Austin, Texas: Texas Economic Development Commission, 1984.

Detailed economic data based on 1980 U. S. Federal Census and other data.

Texas Industrial Commission. _General Community Profile on Brownsville._ Austin, Texas: Texas Industrial Commission, 1974.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Historic Sites and Restoration Branch. _Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Structure, Port Isabel, Texas: Preservation Plan and Program._ Austin, Texas: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 1984.

Detailed investigation of structure with historical summary, archeological evaluation, planning considerations and plans for development. Includes architectural plans, photographs, and maps.

Thomason, Keith J. "A Historical Study of Confederate Trade With Mexico During the Civil War." Master's Thesis, Texas A & I Univeristy, 1968.

Contains peripheral Brownsville information.

Thompson, James Heaven. "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County, Texas". Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1965.

Contains useful peripheral information on the Brownsville area.

Tilley, Nannie M., editor. _Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864._ Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1963.

Brownsville is covered in detail (Chapter 3).

Tipton, Margaret Puckett. [Unpublished Brownsville Historical Association radio script.] Brownsville, Texas. 1954.

Item not available to compiler.

Torrea, Juan Manuel. _Diccionario geografico, historico, biografico y estadistico de la Republica Mexicana: estado de Tamaulipas._ [no place, no publisher], 1940.

Geographical, historical, biographical and statistical information for Tamaulipas - Matamoros area.

Torrea, Juan Manuel. Diccionario geografico, historico, biografico y estadistico de la Republica Mexicana: estado de Tamaulipas, Apendice no. 1. [no place, no publisher], 1940.

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Part 4: Hearings, vol. 1. [following page 248] [Volume 21, Serial 5254]
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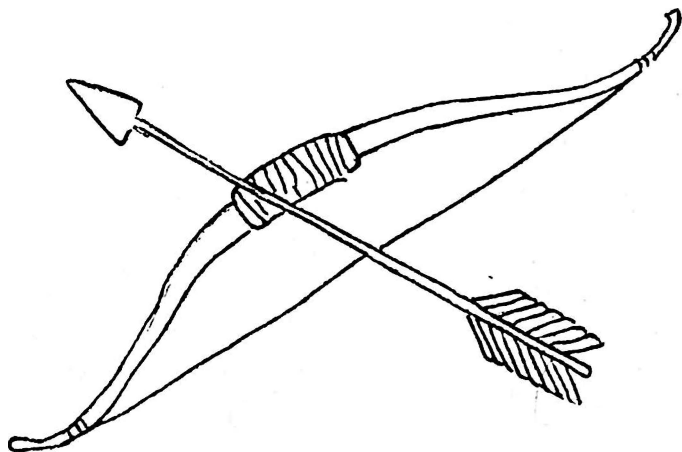
# HERITAGE OF THE INDIAN PERIOD



# THE COAHUILTECAN LEGACY OF SOUTH TEXAS

by

Roberto M. Salmón and Juanita E. Garza

As we celebrate Texas' 150th anniversary, it is admittedly difficult to contemplate more than a thousand years of human history in the state prior to 1836. The sesquicentennial, although a rememberance of the last 150 years, should also be a celebration of all the people of Texas past and present. But how much do we really know about the Indians of South Texas? Does their presence relate to the sesquicentennial? If so, what is their relationship to the present generation? These questions may seem like science fiction because of their remoteness in time. But consider that centuries before 1519 when Alonzo Alvarez de Piñeda explored the Río Grande, and prior to Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's odyssey of 1528, there were some twelve distinct tribal groups living in and around what has been called the Western Gulf Culture Area of Texas. No wonder it is a challenge to examine one of these groups, the Coahuiltecans, and draw on their strength over time as a related people--ourselves--for meaningful celebration.

Historic lands of the Coahuiltecan Indians of South Texas extended from as far south as the Río Pánuco of Mexico and as far north as the San Antonio River of Texas. The Coahuiltecans were a nomadic hunting and gathering society. The habitat they exploited, which today includes the Lower Rio Grande Valley, was a fragile environmental zone. From the high forests of the Sierra Madre Oriental, Coahuiltecan bands roamed to the lesser canyons of Coahuila, to the plains of Nuevo León, and the tidewater country of Tamaulipas and Texas. The climate was generally hot and humid, but Coahuiltecans clung to the vicinity of waterways to avoid its ecological hazards. Flora in the semi-arid environment was characterized by two general features: mesquite, chaparral and other thorny brush, along with grasses and prickly pear in the uplands; the coastal plain was characterized by a prairie grassland with mesquite thickets and oak, ash, hackberry, and pecan growing along streams and river areas. Regional fauna included whitetail deer, _javalí_, rabbit, turkey, hawk, and quail, reptilian species of land turtle, lizards and snakes, and a great variety of sealife.[1] Indeed, that a population however sparse could sustain itself and survive in such a formidable landscape says much in respect to the theory that man adapts to an environment, but in the very process of such adaptation the environment is itself altered and thus reacts on man.[2]

To be sure, there is a lesson here, for the South Texas environment reacted on Indian culture to somehow maintain an ecological balance in numbers. John Swanton's interpretive report of more than two hundred bands in this area is solid estimation of what the environment itself could accommodate.[3] Considering that a typical Coahuiltecan band consisted of eight to ten families and each family could support six members on the average, that is an estimate of some 12,000 people seeking an adaptation to their environment.

The environmental connection is not only logical, it is of utmost importance, especially during Spain's presence in Mexico. Prior to 1519, Coahuiltecans had satisfactorily maintained a balanced system. Between 1519 to 1821, a number of changes occurred which greatly altered life in the Rio Grande Valley. The rate of change depended upon ecological factors, intertribal warfare, and European activity. All three factors were interrelated, one working on the other, causing disruption to the balance maintained by Indians over many centuries. Still, Coahuiltecans endured the changes, at times reluctantly, and adapted as best they could.

There is no question that in pre-Hispanic times the Coahuiltecan subsistence pattern was predominantly based on hunting and gathering. Survival was a major family activity, and families tended and cared for mesquite thickets in areas like the Upper Valley, where the highly nutritious beans were harvested. This preference was due to the difficulty of cultivating South Texas soils--which presented a serious obstacle to their wooden "rabbit sticks." The Indians could not destroy the web of grass roots in the soil. Not until Spanish missionaries introduced the plow did the area become accessible to cultivation. Before this happened, the harvesting of mesquite beans was mostly men's task. The duty of the Indian male was to maintain his own mesquite field, to hunt deer or smaller game, and fish whenever necessary. Women, in this division of labor, prepared the flours and foods, made the necessary utensils, carried water and firewood, gathered sotol bulbs and fruits, and helped keep the mesquite thickets clear of weeds. It was a simplified existence, tied to a lifeway of "independent self-sufficient individualism."[4]

The Coahuiltecan diet was specifically geared to the regional ecology. Native crops accounted for some three-quarters of all food consumed. The basic foodstuffs were the staple combination of mesquite beans, wild vegetables, fruits, fish, and small game. The Indians depended mainly on the beans from their cultivated mesquite thickets for preparation of a staple flour which Spaniards called <u>mesquitamal</u>. Since pre-Hispanic times the Indians would dig a hole in the earth, throw in a quantity of mesquite beans and mash them into a course flour. Special spices were added and the mixture was then placed in a

container and covered with water. The resulting flour was allowed to sit for a few days before being used for a varity of cooking processes. Other vegetation was also added to this staple diet: wild onions, *chile*, *tomatillo*, pigweed, purslane, cactus and its fruit, and various other succulants. Cultivated foods such as corn were obtained through trade to make *tortillas* and a gruel called *atole*. Wild honey served as a mixing agent for mesquite and corn flour. The combination was ideal for a nomadic people since *pinole* could be compacted into small squares without much bulk or weight. Protein came from game and sealife.[5]

Coahuiltecans migrated as vegetation became ripe for harvest. They lived in unfortified camps which permitted a nomadic existence. In the summer and fall Indians concentrated their camps around well-watered and favored ceremonial sites. In winter, they moved the camps to more interior areas. It was during this season that hides and furs were especially used for clothing as well as for shelters. Hides wrapped around reeds and saplings, easily dismantled and carried to the next camp, met most housing needs. Occasionally a *jacal* of mud and reeds would be erected at a yearly site. Grinding utensils, such as lava stone *metates* obtained through trade, were left at these sites because of their size and weight.[6]

As Spanish missionaries moved into this area, they learned that settlement patterns of Coahuiltecan bands allowed enemy tribes to raid almost at will. Known hostilities between Indian tribes account for much of the population decline during the Spanish period of South Texas history. The Coahuiltecans, for example, were bordered on the south by enemy Huastecas, on the east and north by the not so friendly Karankawas and Atakapans, on the northwest by hostile Lower Lipàn Apaches, and on the west by marauding Conchos and Tobosos. Even though Coahuiltecans guarded against intrusion, their unfortified camps were fair game for invaders. Ethnohistorian Albert H. Schroeder argues convincingly that continuing environmental adjustments and intertribal enmities played a far greater role in affecting native populations than did pressures from Europeans.[7] Indeed, it appears that intertribal tensions greatly impacted the Indians of South Texas.

In the 1670s, Coahuiltecan emissaries visited Spanish Saltillo to plead for mission protection against the Lower Lipàn Apaches who were devastating their homeland. In response, the Archdiocese of Guadalajara wisely chose to divide the then Coahuila frontier into four mission zones running north and south across the Río Grande.[8] But by the time Spanish missions could serve as protection, the Apache menace had already forced drastic changes on Coahuiltecan culture. As the Apache was being ousted by northeastern Comanches, forced to move by encroaching English settlements,

the Lipån in turn displaced others. The Coahuiltecans were forced to contract their territory, and several bands from the Upper Valley abandoned their campsites and took refuge among their kinsmen in the Saltillo-Parras area.

By 1675, the Spaniards had learned that Coahuiltecans avoided the missions even when they offered food and protection. Indians preferred to remain in traditional encampments where the community was the autonomous unit. Ties were kept with other communities and these were based on alliances and commercial contacts. Trade extended widely throughout the region and there was a system of markets to encourage individual or local specialization. Trade goods included flour, mesquite beans, dried fish, ant eggs, deer dung, peyote, prickly pear, maguey, and sotol bulbs.[9] Other exchange items centered around ceremonial articles such as paints, feathers, shells, and other handicraft items. Trading, the Spanish discovered, was a lucrative large-scale enterprise--an enterprise that apparently the Lipån Apache were seeking to control.

Another factor strongly influencing the Indians away from mission life was the Coahuiltecans' adverse reaction to change. Coahuiltecans valued conformity to the extent that a man or woman was judged largely according to his or her ability to live up to unchanging ideas of appropriate behavior. Idiosyncratic behavior was strongly discouraged, except in a few restricted and well-defined social contexts. Coahuiltecans greatly feared dishonor and reproach, hence gossip and public criticism were strong factors making for conformity in Indian life. But it would be wrong to equate intolerance or nonconformity with a lack of respect for individual dignity. The Coahuiltecans strongly objected to individuals or groups overtly trying to coerce someone to behave contrary to his or her own wishes. If such coercion came from outside the community, it was an affront to the individual's neighbors as well as to himself. Mission efforts to assimilate surviving Coahuiltecan bands, mixed with gifts and free rations of food, served as coercion and worked against Coahuiltecan lifestyles.[10]

Coahuiltecans faced devastation from all sides. As Spanish settlement advanced toward Texas, Indian groups escaping the dreaded congrega system of forced labor also moved into the area. This overcrowding from opposite directions altered the ecological system, taking a toll on the Coahuiltecans. Spanish settlement in South Texas became yet another factor in the dramatic changes. As Spanish Mexicans established towns and ranches, they occupied known Coahuiltecan campsites. The Indians not only became victims of the diseases spread by Europeans, they also , like any other people, were prone to accept the useful baggage of the Spanish Mexicans. Utensils, food, metal knives or axes, and other tools of so-called civilization gave them strong

incentives to acquire such goods through trade or plunder.[11] This led to considerable strife among the Coahuiltecans. Some bands sought to resist much of the Spanish cultural baggage, others were strongly influenced by it. In short, this one new dimension of their culture increased the already explosive tribal friction.

If the Coahuiltecans had been a single nation, perhaps their differences could have been resolved. But they had never known any state organization. Neither of the more than 200 separate bands recognized a general government; and although some bands south of the Rio Grande were somewhat cohesive, even they broke up into virtually autonomous groups. None of the Indian communities at the time of Spanish settlement in Texas maintained any military or administrative control over any other community. They were not yet subordinate to an authority which had its seat outside their territorial limits. Though some bands came forward to make formal submission to community life, the majority remained economically independent and dissolved into isolated camps whenever convenience dictated.[12]

In pre-Hispanic times, Coahuiltecan bands had flexible territorial limits. Bands restricted membership to people born and raised within their boundaries, but the rule of males seeking a marriage partner outside the community extended in migration of new band members. Community affiliation was noted by distinguishing markings on the body. During his wanderings, Cabeza de Vaca remarked that Coahuiltecan men and women tattooed their flesh and painted their faces, arms and legs with chalk and red earth.[13] On an inspection tour of the Texas mission in 1768, José Gaspar de Solís also reported that Coahuiltecans tattooed their bodies for the purpose of tribal affiliation.[14] The designs were constantly renewed to maintain a vivid effect.

Membership in the community was also demonstrated by participation in religious rituals conducted by the local shaman. In the Indian world, each community maintained the proper relations with its spirits and with nature. The rituals which served this function could not be performed by the individual. Each year the land was ritually purified, the community spirit was feasted, and offerings were made to souls of the dead. Religious leaders, sometimes headmen but usually male and female shaman, were considered personifications of the spiritual relationship of the Indian to his environment.[15]

Coahuiltecans believed that everything, including man-made objects, had soul. The concept of soul, especially misunderstood by mission friars, was the center of their religion. Animal spirits that resided in the earth, rivers and celestial bodies exerted control over the environment, trade, war, disease, and other aspects of human life.[16] The

wind was obviously represented as both a good and evil spirit, at times causing illness in the form of *mal aire*, or it could also banish other evils; the rainbow was perhaps sent by evil underground sorcerers; and a shooting star might have been a witch flying to seize souls. In this framework Coahuiltecan ceremonials generally kept the world in harmony.

The "old ones" were especially suited to maintain this harmony. Coahuiltecans were convinced that elders were the earthly representatives of the spirit world and it was only natural that they serve as intermediaries. Their duties included tending the sick, believed to be afflicted by evil spirits. Healing took place with the use of herbs and magic. By using sleight-of-hand, a shaman assured patients that a foreign object had been removed from the body and that a cure would then be effected. Herbs, both for internal and external use, were extensively utilized. Limbs were rubbed with ointments to increase strength and specific rituals removed evil spirits from ailing bodies. Chanting and blowing on an affected area, followed by teas or applied medications were integral to the healing ritual. To prevent illness, the shaman placed dry branches around a campsite and set them ablaze. The smoke, according to Coahuiltecan belief, would frighten the spirits of death and destruction. If preventive measures were not sufficient to control the spread of illness, camps were abandoned, never to be occupied again.[17]

Besides caring for the sick, the shaman also supervised ritualistic festivals called *mitotes*. Because Coahuiltecans believed that food production depended on the benevolence of the spirits and nature, they tried to assuage these forces through rituals. The symbolic entities of Coahuiltecan *mitotes* included the souls of the dead who were greatly feared and given rich ceremonial recognition. Rituals were held before a harvest to ensure a good season, after the bountiful crop, and to perform rites of passage. Neighboring related groups were invited to attend the ceremonies and share food, peyote, and the intoxicating beverage made from maguey to appease the spirits. The religious experience was heightened by recalling great deeds of ancestors. The Shaman was in charge of telling stories of their common past, revealing details of battles and victories. The shaman's memory served as the official record of Coahuiltecan history.[18]

*Mitotes* were extremely significant to Coahuiltecan life. They not only involved necessary rituals that maintained natural harmony, they also solidified family ties and created alliances. Marriages were often arranged at gatherings; wrestling matches, racing and ball games also offered competitive entertainment; a rich oral tradition developed through the retelling of past histories; and stability prevailed among neighbors.

Essentially, after 1750 with the expansion of Spanish Mexican culture, Coahuiltecan religion became both a compartmentalization and a blending of Spanish Catholicism with native polytheism. The first was based on the official church-fiesta cycle; the second, on the shaman-band setting. The Christian elements were heavily overlaid with Indian cultural elements of dance and ritual technique, and despite introduction of the Catholic calendar, the resulting ceremonies integrated and reconciled two religious philosophies. Mitotes, for example, remained clearly Indian. Anthropologist W. W. Newcomb, Jr., believes that Coahuiltecan supernaturalism was "probably not an entirely coherent or explicit mass of beliefs and practices."[19] Yet Newcomb goes on to acknowledge the intertribal aspects of mitotes. "They were, after all, one of the few occasions during the year when people could see their friends and relatives from other lands. No wonder a feeling of festivity filters down to us across the chasm of time."[20]

To Spanish officials, rituals, whether healing sessions or religious occasions, were only one more proof that Coahuiltecans were not promising mission converts. They thought the Indians to be a hopelessly superstitious people, addicted to paganism, and continually at war with neighboring tribes or one another. Still, the Coahuiltecan plea for mission protection, their decimation in ranks by intertribal warfare, compounded by the spread of smallpox, led to further expansion of the mission field.[21] In 1700 the mission of San Francisco Solano was established on the Río Grande near present Eagle Pass. In response to foreign intervention it was moved twice, where in 1749 opposite Goliad, the mission served some 400 Coahuiltecan and Karankawa converts. On the coastal settlements established by José de Escandón after 1749, Indians joined settlements as food became scarce. It is significant that in campaigns against the hostile Apaches and Comanches, a strong contingent of mission Indians fought alongside the Spaniards.[22]

Life became more and more difficult for the Coahuiltecans after the Escandón settlements. Spanish Mexicans cleared brush for roads, towns, and ranches. In the southwestern coastal areas, settlers became mezcaleros, cutting the maguey for distilling. It was three to five years before plants regenerated.[23] In the process, Indians were left without adaquate sustenance. In all other areas of the Coahuiltecan habitat, the mesquite thickets and vast grasslands were converted into grazing pastures for the thousands of roaming cattle and mustang. As livestock thrived on the plentiful cactus and mesquite, the multiplying herds and flourishing ranches quickly finished off the fragile balance so long guarded by Coahuiltecans. These proud, tenacious people managed to precariously sustain themselves until after 1848, when South Texas joined the

state of Texas. Between 1749 and 1848, those Coahuiltecans who had accepted mission life became settlers themselves, learning ranching and agricultural skills.[24] For others, life became even more challenging, but they still held on to ancient traditions. By the end of the Spanish period, Coahuiltecans had left their influence on the Gulf coast. They were a complex people who left few material remnants as evidence of their existence, but their traditions are still visible in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Above all, Coahuiltecans left sound proof of the hardiness and value of their culture. Spanish Mexican settlers learned many survival techniques, especially in the use of natural resources, from the Coahuiltecans. Settlers occupied Indian camps, knowing that these were adaquately watered areas; they used similar housing, jacales, provided by native brush, stones and earth; they learned to eat favorite Indian dishes of local vegetation, many of which remain in Valley diets; settlers also used hides for bedding and clothing; and local medical practices, in the form of herbal teas, ointments, and the use of curanderos, were also maintained.

The feelings that Spaniards, Mexicans, and Indians had about one another were influenced by their awareness of physical and cultural differences between them. Physical dissimilarities seem to have impressed the Spaniards more than they did the Indians. Coahuiltecan men and women were well-proportioned, robust and, on the average, taller than most neighboring tribes. They were trained from youth to endure hardship and misfortune with patience and fortitude. In dealings with one another, they were gentle and considerate. This obvious self-control may account for Cabeza de Vaca's comment that people were of remarkable vigor and stamina.[25] Cabeza de Vaca found few other distinguishing characteristics. This appears to have been a false impression that arose from the comparison he was trying to make with neighboring Karankawas, not to mention his own Western ethnocentrism. In contrast to this view, de Solis reported that both men and women were proud of their appearance. Coahuiltecans spent much time caring for their hair; women dressed modestly in skins, with a short skirt tied at the waist and loose at the knees, and soft fiber sandals; men dressed in deerskin loincloth and sandals; they adorned themselves with strings of animal teeth, shells, fish spines, and fragrant roots around their necks and arms. But, as is common among conquerors, Solis found the women "comely and very graceful."[26]

Coahuiltecans, like other American Indians, simply did not have the expertise to stop their own destruction. They were at a level of organization which allowed European activities to overwhelm them, other tribes to overrun and destroy many of their people, and the resulting ecological imbalance to change their environment. Their simplified centeof one's birth, with religious concepts geared to the

cycle of hunting and gathering. These were basic stabilizing units of Coahuiltecan society. But it was not enough to combat all the forces beyond their control. After 1848, the Coahuiltecans disappeared; their culture , however, remains rooted in South Texas. The cultural legacy of the Coahuiltecans can still be traced in the Valley's religious practices, in folk healing methods, the rich folklore, and its foodways.

Such were the Coahuiltecans of South Texas. What Europeans saw on this Texas frontier, and how they interpreted what they saw, depended on the minds of the observers and their range of vision. Mission fathers, ranchers, miners, mezcaleros, soldiers, and royal officials all had a system of values and moral judgements totally unlike that of the Coahuiltecans. For instance, before they had ever set foot in Coahuiltecan country, Spaniards and Mexicans had many preconceptions concerning its nature. But how much did they really know? Like us, they may have learned that the Indians of South Texas were a unique cultural group and that their lifeway showed a wide spectrum of accomplishments. Most certainly, the Coahuiltecans have contributed a great legacy to the sesquicentennial of Texas.

ENDNOTES

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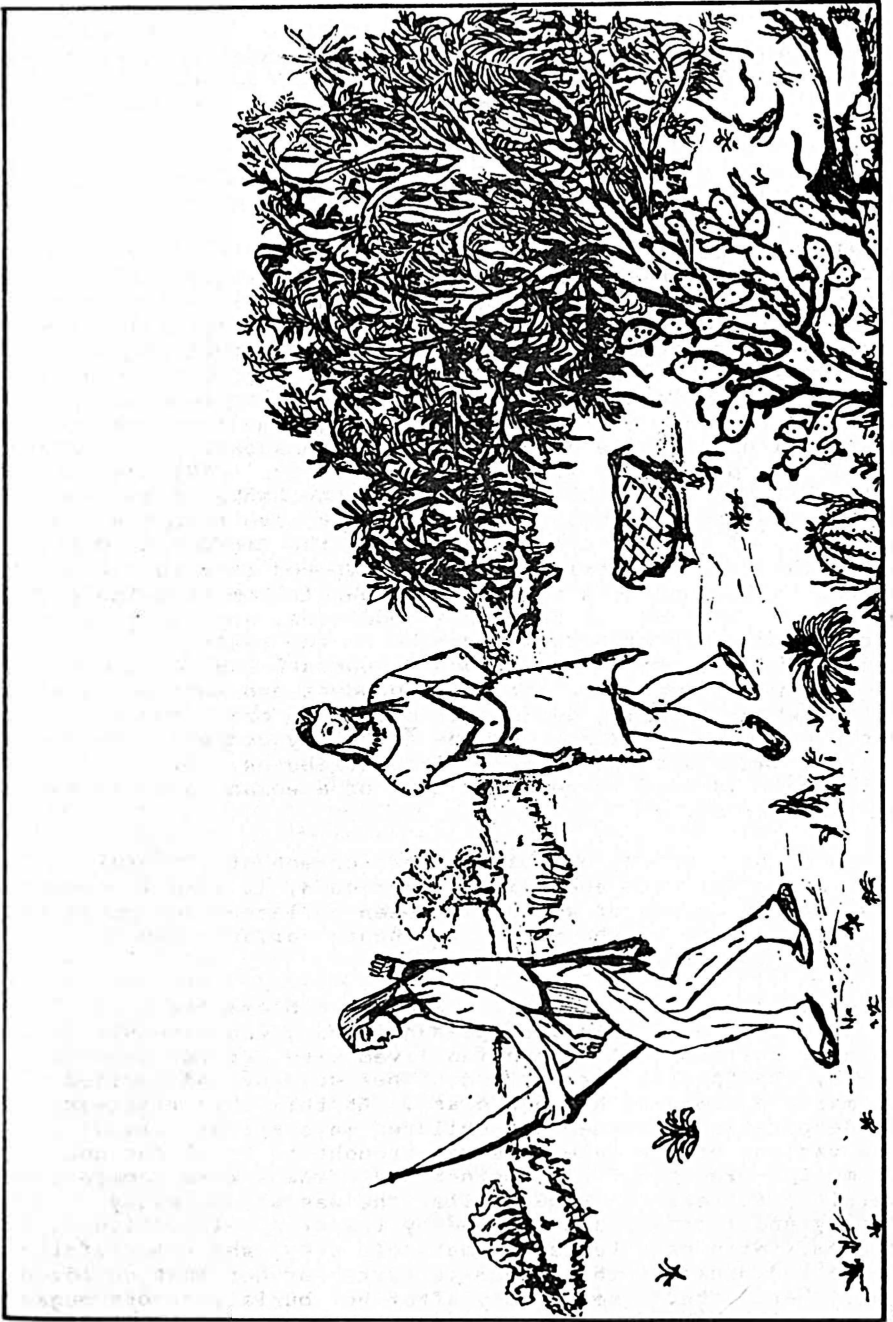

# CIHUACOATL IS ALIVE AND WELL IN BROWNSVILLE

by

George K. Green

The casual observer of the Brownsville scene might readily conclude that this pleasant bicultural city at the very southernmost tip of Texas boasts hardly any historical features that antedate the mid-nineteenth century--the old fort buildings and a few settlers' homes--and yet at least one aspect of the local folklore is, by most accounts, far older than any of the city's man-made physical artefacts: the fright-inspiring nocturnal specter of La Llorona, the legendary `Wailing Woman' of Mexico that most folklorists have associated with Cihuacoatl, the goddess of tradition or bogey-lady of the ancient Aztecs.[1] The phantom female in white is widely believed to roam the banks of several Brownsville resacas, the bodies of water that have resulted from the channeling of the old river meanders of the Rio Grande Delta. One folklorist from New Mexico, where the legend is also current, has related La Llorona with several European folk myths, including the banshees of Ireland and two Greek goddesses, apparently on the theory that some sort of personification of the night wind is involved.[2] However, among the Aztecs Cihuacoatl was not a wind deity but rather an earth or fertility goddess and the patron of Xochimilco, whose floating gardens or _chinampas_ are known far beyond the borders of Mexico. As the fertility goddess of a semi-arid region, water was one of her chief attributes. Her disheveled hair is said to resemble that of a woman that has just emerged from her bath.

The legend of La Llorona, one of the most common of all oral folktales among Mexicans and Mexican Americans, is told in several variants, many versions of which have been collected and published by folklorists. One of the most often heard variants may be summarized as follows:

> In colonial times, or later, a Spanish nobleman is said to have seduced a beautiful peasant woman, who bore him several children. After having lived with her for several years, the Spaniard grew tired of her company and decided to marry a woman of his own class. At this, his mistress, in desperation, drowned her children in a stream. In one variant of the tale, she was brought to trial for her crime and executed.[3] In another and perhaps more common version, at least in Brownsville, she was abandoned by family and friends, and ignored by the criminal justice system. With hair turned prematurely grey, she remorsefully paced the banks of the stream in search of her lost children until her death. Immediately after her burial, rumors began to circulate about the wailing of a malevolent feminine

spirit in white that nightly roamed the river banks in search of something. Any person that viewed her too long or at too close range was said to be doomed to take ill and die, or to be killed in an accident.

In a second major variant, a widow wishing to marry a man unwilling to accept her children drowned them in a stream, only to experience extreme remorse later and to die shortly thereafter.

In the interior of Mexico is told yet another major variant in which La Llorona represents the ghost of Doña Marina, La Malinche, Cortez' interpreter and lover, who is said to have murdered her illegitimate children, in part, out of the pain of being abandoned by don Hernán upon his marrying a woman of his station from Spain and, in part, out of a growing hatred of the conquering gachupines or Spaniards.

The major motifs, variants, and possible origins of the legend have been widely analyzed by folklorists in a number of books and journal articles.[4] However, several of La Llorona's most important attributes would appear not to have caught the attention of either scholars or amateur folklorists.

In the first place, the Llorona folktale contains the central motif of the transformation from an attractive young woman to a wrinkled old crone, which attribute is symbolized by her hair turning white. Curiously, the illustration of Cihuacoatl that Padre Durán offers the readers of his 16th-century chronicle is that of a ferocious old hag, whereas Sahagún's 16th-century picture of the very same goddess is a drawing of a young woman.[5] Moreover, Sahagún in the Florentine Codex points out that women of all ages participated in Cihuacoatl's celebration, the Feast of the Lords.[6] Among the specific characteristics of the goddess, according to the descriptions of the 16th-century Spanish ethnographers Durán and Sahagún who personally interviewed former Aztec priests among other informants, there are several that could closely relate to the idea of transformation or metamorphosis: (1) she was a goddess of the sunset or twilight--perhaps in part symbolized by the colors black and red with which her face was painted, (2) her feast day in the early summer came at a time when in Mexico the green corn was just beginning to be edible (transition from the old to the new harvest), and (3) she was the patron of pregnant women, childbirth and of women that died in childbirth (transition between the generations).

In the second place, although this goddess' Nahuatl name is invariably translated literally as `serpent woman' or `snake woman' (cihua, `woman'; coatl, `rattlesnake'), no representation of Cihuacoatl ever contains a snake, although the rattlesnake was one of the most common decorative motifs of Aztec art. For this reason, it would seem to be logical to not interpret coatl in its most literal sense of crotalus or rattlesnake, although her

character as a nocturnal phantom may include something of the `snake in the grass'. This same word coatl has given us the modern Mexican Spanish word cuate, which means either `twin' or `buddy'. Perhaps the second root of her compound name might better be taken to mean `duality'. This is an interpretation in accord with her dual representation as either young or old, with her relationship with the sunset, and with the contrast between her white attire and the absolutely pitch black interior of the inner sanctum of the temple in Xochimilco that housed her stone image.[7]

Moreover, it would also seem reasonable to infer that Cihuacoatl was also the guardian of tradition or the member of the Aztec pantheon that was charged with punishing transgressors. The Aztec words for her two symbolic colors--red and black--when taken together mean `tradition'. The temple in Xochimilco, in addition to her statue in a central location, also housed a complete collection of statues of all of the Aztec gods, and it was precisely these figures that were employed in the celebration of each of the gods' feasts to be later returned to the temple complex.[8] In addition, her feast, the Feast of the Lords,[9] included a ritualistic judgement of sinners. Finally, Sahagún tells us that she was the bearer of ill tidings and that she was greatly feared.[10]

And it is precisely these three attributes--punishment of transgressors, metamorphosis, and duality--that clearly characterize the structure of a vast number of the popular Mexican-American folktales of Brownsville, tales that at first glance would not appear to bear any relationship whatsoever with La Llorona.

The development of a great many local legends of the type that are generally referred to by anthropologists as exempla (from the Latin word for `example' in the sense of negative example) follows a strikingly similar bipartite pattern. In the first section of the folktale, are narrated events that constitute a transgression of some kind--sometimes disobedience towards a parent or elder but often some violation of a moral code. The first section of the tale, which is realistic and contains no events out of the ordinary, takes place in the daytime, usually in the afternoon. The second section, which includes a supernatural metamorphosis that constitutes a punishment of the transgression of the first section, takes place at twilight or at night. The metamorphosis of the second section takes three different forms: (1) transformation of the transgressor, often into an animal, (2) transformation of another character into some form that inspires fright, often the form of the devil, and (3) transformation of the entire surroundings.

The following folktales that were collected in the Brownsville area between 1980 and 1985 offer only a few examples of this highly uniform structure:

Carlos, a sixteen-year-old youth, had taken care of his father for the three years since he had fallen ill. Since that time, Carlos had had the responsibility of looking after and feeding the animals on his father's ranch. These tasks left him little time for entertainment.

One afternoon after school was out, Carlos and Alfredo, one of his few friends, were walking home from school together.

"Who are you taking to the dance?", asked Alfredo.

"I don't know whether I'll be able to make it or not. My father is very sick," answered Carlos.

"What's wrong with you, Carlos? This is the most important night of the year. And you're not going?" continued Alfredo.

Finally they reached Alfredo's house and Carlos told him, "Tomorrow I'll see you at the dance. I'm not going to school because I've got too much work to do."

The following day, Carlos finished his chores and noticed that his father was in worse condition than the day before. Carlos thought, "Even if he dies, I'll go to the dance with María Elena." Carlos changed clothes and started walking toward the place the party was to be held. The sun was setting rapidly, and Carlos knew he would have to come back through the woods in the dark. Finally, he reached the dance, and there he found María Elena, looking beautiful and waiting for him. Carlos forgot about his poor father and started dancing and laughing along with the others--people he didn't know.

Suddenly, Carlos noticed that the other couples were making a sound like that of horses' hooves. All of them looked at him curiously, with a malicious grin on their faces. He looked at their feet and saw that all of them had animal hooves, even the beautiful María Elena!

Carlos started running through the woods in the darkness, falling down on the cactus and mesquite thorns. The others followed with loud laughter and demonic cries.

Carlos yelled, "Forgive me, God!" He got up from the ground, cut and hurt by the cactus stickers, and saw that the others had disappeared. Everything stayed quiet.

When Carlos got home, he found Alfredo and other neighbors crowded around the door. Alfredo sadly informed him, "Your father is dead, Carlos."

The following day Carlos' father was buried, since then Carlos hasn't left the house.

Years ago Port Isabel was a small village named Point Isabel. On the other side of the salt flats was a ranchito and a few small houses. In one of these houses lived an old woman and her grandson. She had raised him because the boy's parents had died. As he grew up, he turned mean: he would beat her; he also drank a lot. Almost every Saturday he would go to a dance and get drunk there.

At that time there were many burros in Point Isabel; the old woman had her burros. One night, the grandson came home drunk from work to change clothes to go out, and his grandmother told him he couldn't. Cursing her, he said he was going in spite of her, and he beat her before he left. The boy caught a burro and rode it to a dance in the village.

He was falling-down drunk when he returned home on his burro at dawn. A small boy appeared in the path on the way to his house. The boy, who was about two years old, was crying in front of the burro. Cursing, the drunk told him to get out of the way; but the boy didn't move, so the burro wouldn't budge. At that point, the grandson jumped down, grabbed the child, put him on the back of the burro, and started up the path grumbling and complaining.

Soon the burro could barely move. The grandson felt that the animal was straining under an ever-heavier load. As in his drunken stupor he tried to keep from falling, he noticed a pair of long legs dragging on the ground. With a curse, he said, "Hey you, pick up your feet. You sure have big feet!" At this, the small boy answered, "Oh, you haven't seen my teeth yet!"

When the grandson turned around, there was the devil in the place of the little boy. At the sight of those fiery eyes and long, sharp teeth the grandson passed out; he was found unconscious next to the path.

From that day on, he has never touched another drop nor has he ever failed to respect his grandmother.

Magdalena was not a beautiful girl, nor had she that special grace of figure that makes worshippers of mortal men. But her face gave off a pleasing, gentle softness men find attractive. The young thing covered her ordinary figure in elegant dress that was dazzling to the eye. In this way, she was radiant at every ball and party.

Magdalena was very vain, and delighted in manipulating her many boyfriends to suit her moods and whims. She could be at once warm and tender, and cold and haughty. There was a certain young man, also very ordinary, who fell in love with Magdalena. He pursued her everywhere. At the dances, he was always near her, as a faithful servant would be. He would wait on her hand and foot. No matter what she did, no matter how she treated him, she could not discourage him. She didn't really care for his presence, because she wanted only to be surrounded by handsome, manly men. But the boy loved her even more.

Finally the time came, during an especially lovely ball, that the boy found the courage to ask Magdalana to dance with him. He had prepared and rehearsed this moment for many days. To his surprise, she brightly accepted. They glided softly around the floor. The boy had never felt such pleasure. The music stopped, and the dance ended. He escorted Magdalena to her chair and thanked her in a courteous manner for his pleasure.

She answered loudly for everyone to hear, "You are the most awkward and clumsy partner a girl ever had." She laughed with the amused faces of her handsome friends. "Why I'd sooner have the next dance with a gorilla."

The boy was devastated by the ridicule in her voice. He ran from the room in shock, returned to his house, and took his life. Magdalena was a little saddened when she heard the news the next day. However, with the coming of another dance, she had forgotten the entire incident.

Magdalena spent another glorious evening, again always in the company of handsome men. She left at the end of the evening radiant with satisfaction. Crossing the street, she was laughing happily as a runaway coach bore down on her. Magdalena's escort jumped aside in time, but she was crushed beneath the wheels.

Magdalena woke up in a misty dream. Then she realized she was standing in front of a beautiful white mansion, lights blazing from every window, and lively music inside. She climbed the steps and knocked on the door. She was greeted by the most handsome man she had ever seen. He said, "Hello, I am Count Lucio."

She took his arm and he ushered her into a ballroom filled with fine-looking men and elegant ladies. How she danced! There was never time for pause or rest. After what seemed like many, many hours, she asked her partner, "Won't the dance ever end?" He answered, "Never."

"Then I must be in Heaven," Magdalena sighed. She kept on dancing, always with a different partner. Around and

around to never-ceasing music. Finally she grew tired and bored. She could not find a place to rest. A large group of admirers followed her every movement. Requests to dance came from all sides until she could barely tolerate the noise. Then she saw the Count. "Oh, Count Lucio. I'm so tired. I want to go home." "But my dear, here there is no end, the ball will go on for eternity."

Magdalena's patience was at an end. Crossly she said, "Well! If this is the way Heaven is going to be, I'd rather be in Hell!"

Count Lucio laughed, "But, my dear, you are in Hell!"

When Montezuma was the king of the Aztec empire, Cortez was looking for the gold and silver that was supposed to be in Montezuma's palace. But before Cortez came to Mexico City, Montezuma had a large part of the treasure carried from the city and hidden. Some say it was eventually buried near the mouth of the Rio Grande River. The legend was, that the palace is guarded by the spirits of an eagle and a snake and that anyone who might take it would die.

Bill Marcus was a man who always wanted money, but he never wanted to work for it. His father had left him a good-sized farm, but he let it go. He wasted much of his life looking for buried treasure.

Well, one day he heard the story of the Aztec treasure and went looking in spite of the warnings. For months, he searched the mouth of the Rio Grande. One day, he spotted a strange circle of rocks under a big old mesquite tree and decided to dig there. He'd been digging for several hours when he heard a noise behind him. He turned around and there was the biggest rattlesnake he had ever seen. It was coming closer; before it could coil and strike, he grabbed his pistol from his holster and shot the rattler. Bill was always a good shot, and he got the snake right in the head. Then he took the rattler and hung it from the mesquite tree so he could keep his eye on it, and he went back to digging. He knew he was on to something; he moved some more dirt away; there was a gold idol, and pieces of an old rotting basket. He dug some more, and there it was: the Aztec gold, idols, jewelry.

He couldn't carry everything with him, so he covered up the hole and piled some rocks on top. He took as much as he could. He walked back to the river to where his boat was.

It was on towards evening when he started rowing across to

Texas. The current was strong, and it kept pulling him down river. A storm started as he was making headway across. There was lightning, thunder, and the wind started blowing really hard.

Suddenly a huge eagle came at him from nowhere. It came down on his little boat with a terrible cry. Bill tried to duck at the last instant. He grabbed an oar and tried to fight off the bird. The boat went over, and he was thrown into the river.

Bill was found almost dead the next afternoon on an island by some fishermen from Brownsville. Cured of his greed, he went back to his father's farm and worked it happily for the rest of his life. And, for all anybody knows, the treasure is still near the mouth of the Rio Grande.

All of the above tales clearly mirror the three attributes mentioned--duality, metamorphosis, and the punishment of the transgressor. If our analysis of Cihuacoatl's basic three attributes is correct, it is quite reasonable to say that the ancient Aztec oral tradition of Cihuacoatl is alive and well in Brownsville today.

## ENDNOTES

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LA LLORONA

## THE VALLEY'S FIRST SETTLERS

Told by San Juanita Vela de Lozano, an elementary school teacher during the 1920's, to Peter Gawenda in 1961.

Many, many lives ago, so many lives ago that not even Procoro could have counted them, ...and he was a wise man, there was a town very far in that direction where the sun never touches the sky. It was a good place. Every family had its own room. Every man had his bow and his arrows. Every woman had her field and enough seeds of corn to last for the next planting ceremony and even the one thereafter. Every child that was born lived to be a man or a maiden. There was always a fresh cob of corn in the bowl for the stranger. The water gods sent the rain to make the plants grow and to fill the river. The Sun Gods moved the sun through the sky everyday and kept the moon away so that he wouldn't burn. The animal spirits kept buffalo, deer, rabbits and birds close to the dwellings so that the hunters did not have to search for them. The war spirits did not confuse the thoughts of the people, and not one man had died by another man's hand in many harvests. There was no need to hide one's face because the heart never lost its power over the tears. The elders and the wise men were asked for their advice before the young men made decisions. There was never a loud word to wake up a young child.
...It was a good place.

All the men knew why. In ancient times the Snake God had presented a sacred snake to the young men. It was to give and to preserve life. But the snake had to be fed and had to be safeguarded if life was to continue.

But one day the snake had disappeared. No one knew how this had happened. No one saw the snake escape. No one knew why the snake had left. What should be done to get the snake back into the house of ceremonies? The elders knew that without the symbol of life they would lose the water, the sun the harvest and finally life. So the council of the elders assembled and everyone spoke his turn, and all the others listened. The first one asked that a search party would be sent to find the snake, and the party was sent. When it returned the party reported that they had found the track and followed the track, but the track led to the river where it was wet and where the water had washed it away. So the second elder spoke and said that this is the sign of the snake god, but what was the meaning? So the third spoke, that water was life, without water there would be only death. And the fourth rose and said that the Snake God wanted them to follow the water of the creek which had carried their

symbol of life away. The council deliberated until the sun woke the birds and the birds woke the children and the children woke the parents. And when it was recognized that the council was still in the house of ceremonies everyone gathered in the assembly place, sat down, and waited. There was much fear in their hearts.

The sun slowly climbed high into the sky above the town and then started to descend to the other side. The council listened to each speaker and the people waited. At last the oldest and wisest of the elders stood up and he was helped by the young men because he had seen many harvests, four times as many harvests as the moon takes days to fill its shape to that of the sun. And he spoke very slowly. The symbol of life had submerged into the water. The water was the giver of life but it was flowing into other lands. He had observed the birds flying to the same lands whenever the snow came. He had seen the sun highest above the same land every day of his life. This must be where the Snake God wanted them to go.

The council listened and each member gave his consent and it was decided to build vessels for the belongings and the old people and the very young children. Before the snow would fall the town would be abandoned and the people would follow the river until the sign of the snake would tell them that they had reached their new home.

And so it was done. For many sunsets the people followed the river, and they passed mountains and they passed deserts. At times the grass was dark green and at times it was yellow. But they did not see the snake nor any of its tracks. Some of the old people died and some of the children, but the survivors followed the river that was twisting and winding just as a snake would. It was the biggest water they had ever seen. The time for the snow had arrived, but it remained warm and no snow fell. The leaves should have turned brown, but here they stayed green. There should not have been any flowers, but they still blossomed. The deer was abundant and the buffalo still bore young ones. Now the people knew that the Snake God was taking them to a land of plenty, the land of water and the land of the sun. The corn would grow without having to wait for the snow to turn to water, and there would be many animals for the hunters.

When the big valley was reached the elders decided to stop for the winter. They set up a camp, pulled the vessels out of the river and used them to store their supplies. That same evening the oldest and wisest members of the council called the others to sit in council and he told them that the place of their Snake God was close. He had seen white birds which are the birds of the water, those that carry the souls to the gods. The snake ceremony should be conducted, he

said, to ask for a sign of the Snake God. And the council dressed, put on the black and white paint, started to beat the drums and sound the rattles. The ceremony lasted from the sunset to the sunrise and from the sunrise to the sunset. But no sign was received. So the elders called for the ceremony to end. But one rattle continued to sound, so that the elders feared the God's anger because the rattles had to be silent after the ceremony. They called again for the rattles to be stopped, but one did not. And suddenly the oldest and wisest of the elders saw a snake with a rattle in the sand, and he spoke that the snake god had returned their symbol. They had reached their home and would be able to live. The god was still with them and from now on the snake could no longer escape, as it carried a rattle just like their's.

And the people built dwellings and the men went hunting. The women planted the seeds of corn and those of cotton. The older men were searching for herbs and fruit. The children were imitating their parents, and enjoyed the sun. After several harvests the people grew in numbers and some followed the river until it spilled into the sea. Others crossed the big river and again others moved to where the sun rose. But they all followed the snake which remained a symbol of life. Only for the stranger did it become the symbol of death.

# THE WATERMAIDENS

Told by an old gentleman, referred to as Don and Jefe, to customers in the Barber Shop on Market Square in 1966 and written down by Peter Gawenda.

The area of Brownsville has many "resacas", pieces of the Rio Grande when it still took a different course. In spring and in fall, mist would rise in the evenings and quite often one could clearly see figures floating back and forth above the waters,...but that was when nothing was built yet.

The Water God of the Atanaguaypecam and Tugumlepem Indians lived in caverns under the resaca close to where first Fort Texas and then Fort Brown were built in later years. The Water God was a very strict and cruel god, and any violation of his rules or waters would be punished with certain death. The Indians sacrificed faithfully to him and always valued the water highly as they knew that he would otherwise punish them with a flood, or maybe a sudden drowning. If the god wanted to be especially cruel, he would lure them into a swamp hole and let them die very slowly. Any insult to the Water God meant not only certain death for the one who had committed the insult but often included his family and his clan.

The Water God had four very beautiful daughters. Their eyes had the color of the hazelnut or a doe and the brilliance of stars, and whatever man would look into their eyes would be lost forever. Their skin had the color of the meat of an almond and was as smooth as the virgin sea that is only touched by the rising sun and no wind. Their full and floating hair had the dark brown color of the little hawk who rides the winds in the sky. And the shape of their bodies showed the grace and elegance that is so unique to young water goddesses. Their voices were music in the ears of young and old men alike, and the maidens' presence was always a joy for the people living in the area.

Often the maidens would be seen playing around the banks of the resaca or the river. Sometimes they would even dare to play with the children of the Indians. But before the sun ever touched the horizon they would float into the mist of the resaca and disappear in the water. Little waves with white caps would mark the spot where they had entered their father's domain.

And it so happened that the young maidens fell in love

with four earthlings, sons of the local tribes, and they would play together until the sun started sliding toward the horizon. The maidens always left the flowers given to them by their admirers at the edge of the water when they returned home. The next morning the flowers would be growing at the spot where they had been left. And the play, the laughter and the happiness would continue many many suns.

But one time the sun had already touched the horizon when the maidens hurried into the resaca. Touching the hand of her admirer when floating by, one maiden called back: "If you see white crowns on the waves we were on time, but if they are red we are being punished for our disobedience." And when the maidens had disappeared red waves came up as if blood was boiling in the resaca.

The Indians then knew that the father had punished his daughters and that they might never appear again.

It is believed that the four maidens are the symbols for the water in the sea, the water in the d his daughters and that they might never appear again.

It is believed that the four maidens are the symbols for the water in the sea, the water in the lakes, the water of the rivers and wells and the water in the skys, the rain. The red waves are the symbol for floods. water that is saturated with the red sand or dirt, that usually came down the Rio Bravo.

For a long time afterwards it was believed that if an expectant mother would be presented with a bouquet of flowers from the banks of the resaca, she would give birth to a girl as beautiful as the watermaidens had been.

THE WATER MAIDENS

# THE INDIAN MAIDENS

Told by Felipe Lozano to some of his grand children at the beach in 1964 in the presence of Peter Gawenda.

Many centuries ago this part of the country belonged to a fierce tribe of very tall Indians whose hunting grounds reached from Tampico all the way up to Corpus Christi across to San Antonio and Laredo and back into Mexico. They were feared because of their size but also because of their ability to throw a spear more than four hundred yards. Sometimes they are said to have been cannibals who ate the hearts of their enemies, but this is not proven. There is an old saga though that has been told for a long time.

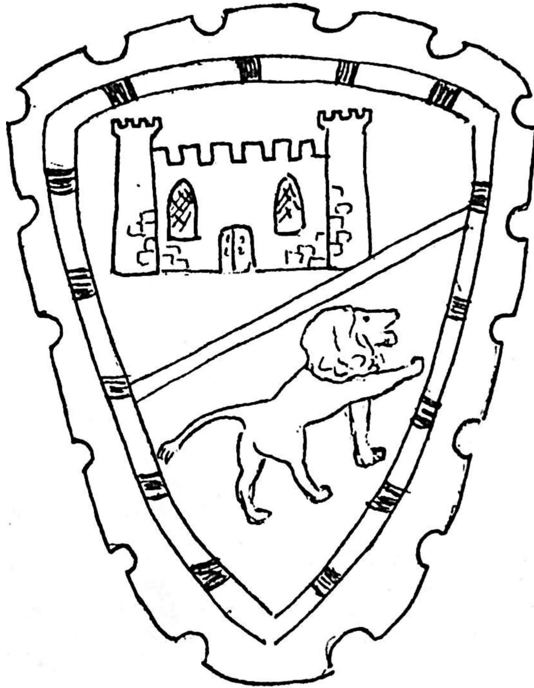
The young Indian male had to prove his bravery to his young bride before he was permitted to take her with him. At times this proof of bravery cost the young lad his life. The young bride had to follow her groom to insure that he would be permitted into the eternal hunting grounds, because only the married Indian was permitted into the eternal hunting grounds. As it was believed that the hunting grounds started beyond the sea, the young maiden was taken in a boat to Padre Island and was permitted to keep her loincloth, a small bowl with water and one cobb of corn. The boat then went back to the mainland. The marriage marks for the Indian maiden were one black streak across the forehead and two white streaks on the cheeks. The girl would first sing her wedding song and then perform the customary death ceremony. Then she would get up and very slowly walk into the sea. When only her head was still above the water the face would look almost like a sea gull. But the maidens had to keep on walking until they were completely under water, and it is said that the Gods of these Indians would allow the soul of the maiden to return to earth as a sea gull.

Hardly any traces or artifacts are found that have been left by these Indians. But if it's true that the souls of Indian maidens return as sea gulls, many young Indian lads lost their lives before their wedding ceremonies.

When Padre Island was not yet covered with concrete and still had sand dunes, every once in a while one could hear the marriage song in the soft winds at night or the death cries coming from the water, and Felipe insisted that sometimes you could even see the image of one of the maidens kneeling on the beach.

*...You could even see the image of one of the maidens kneeling on the beach...*

# HERITAGE OF THE SPANISH PERIOD



# BROWNSVILLE'S SANTANDERINO STRAIN

by

Milo Kearney

It is well known that Brownsville lies in the heart of the region that was once the Spanish province of Nuevo Santander. The town is situated near the mouth of the "Great River" that had bisected that territory and that now divides the Mexican state of Tamaulipas from South Texas. This region was settled in the mid-18th century by José de Escandón, member of a wealthy leading family of Soto la Marina in the northern Spanish province of Santander (today called Cantabria).[1] It was Escandón's idea to name the colony for his home province, since he noted similarities between the two regions.[2] Most notably, both areas stretch along a coastline endowed with fine beaches, palm trees, and a mild climate.[3] Escandón underscored his plan of creating a new Santander in America by naming the towns in his incipient province for towns in old Santander. Hence his new provincial capital was named Santander Jiménez, while the other new settlements received such names as Soto la Marina, Reinosa, and Laredo. Although the later Matamoros, across the river from Brownsville, took its name from the Mexican Revolutionary hero Mariano Matamoros, by coincidence its name echoes that of Matamorosa in old Santander.[4]

What is less well known is that, even though Brownsville was founded only after the Spanish province of Nuevo Santander had ceased to exist, the town has in part fulfilled Escandón's dream. For from the first settlers down to the present decade, a steady if small-scale migration has persisted from Santander, Spain, over to Brownsville. Furthermore, while these families represent a tiny fraction of the local population, their contribution has been disproportionately great.

The oldest families of Santander origin date back to the generation of Escandón himself, with the first ranches established on the site of the future Brownsville. Such a settler was José Miguel Ramírez, who crossed the Atlantic to start his ranch on land granted by the Spanish Crown to his father, Eugenio Ramírez. This land, which came to be known as the Ramireño, extended over the areas of La Muralla and Amigoland in what is now Brownsville. José Miguel Ramírez in February of 1765 married María Tadea Peña, giving his ranch its first bride. According to family tradition, José Miguel's great-grandson Juan Antonio Ramírez once lent a horse-drawn carriage to General Zachary Taylor, at the time Fort Brown was being constructed. Descendents of José Miguel still live in Brownsville.[5]

There is also a family tradition of Santander descent in the Tijerina family, which likewise traces back to the earliest settlers in Escandón's colony. The Tijerinas are descended from Capitán Blas María de la Garza Falcón, one of the founding settlers of Nuevo Santander in 1749.[6] The late Tomás Tijerina spoke of having relatives in Santander, but the exact nature of the blood link has been lost from the memory of the present Brownsville family.[7]

With the founding of Brownsville in the mid-19th century, new settlers from Santander appeared to help launch the town. One of these was Pedro Sergio de Barreda y Liaño, scion of a noble family of Penilla de Cayón and son of a mayor of the Real Valle de Cayón in Santander. There is a town in Santander by the name of Barreda. Pedro came to Brownsville by way of New Orleans. Here he established the Barreda Store on Elizabeth Street and was in 1848 joined by his brother Dimas and subsequently by his brother Celestino.[8] Mrs. Lucila Barreda Rego still lives in Brownsville, appropriately near Santander Road in San Pedro, and maintains contact with her relatives in Santander.[9]

Another settler coming in about the same time was Miguel Fernández, Sr. Miguel, who was born in 1839,[10] came to Brownsville from Santander as a lad seemingly not quite yet in his teens, in the custody of friends.[11] While Miguel was born in Pendueles, in what is now the province called Asturias or Oviedo,[12] family tradition remembers him as coming from Santander. Santander is also the stated provenance of Miguel's older brother José Fernández, who likewise settled in Brownsville.[13] Any seeming contradiction in the province of the origin can be explained by the fact that in 1833, the Valleys of Peñamellera and Riva de Deba were taken from Santander and given to the province of Asturias.[14] This meant that Pendueles was until then in Santander.[15] Miguel Fernández was born in Pendueles only six years later, when the town must still have retained a strong tradition of Santander identity. In Brownsville, Miguel prospered, operating a general store facing Market Square and engaging in import and export trade.[16] Along with his sons, Miguel founded the Merchants National Bank in Brownsville. Descendents of Miguel Fernandez live in Brownsville today and have made trips back to Santander.[17]

A third settler in the brand-new town of Brownsville was José San Román. Present in Brownsville as early as 1847, José came to the area by way of New Orleans from the Valley of Arcentales, in what is now the province of Vizcaya.[18] However, down to 1822, Santander's eastern provincial boundary ran up the Sámano River and then continued past Montellano and Traslaviña, among other locales.[19] This would place the valley of Arcentales in Santander prior to that date.[20] Since José San Román was an active Brownsville

merchant by 1847, it seems likely that he was born when Arcentales was still part of Santander. Like the settlers mentioned previously, San Román was an important leader in Brownsville society, dealing in dry goods, steamboats, and eventually railroad financing. He was considered by Charles Stillman to be a 'formidable rival'.[21]

As the 19th century wore on, new arrivals from Santander appeared. One of these was Manuel Sámano, bearing the same name as the Río Sámano in Santander. Manuel came from Esles, Santander, at age 15 to work for his uncles Antonino and Celestino Barreda.[22] Since Manuel was born in 1862, this dates his arrival in Brownsville at about 1878.[23] Manuel's son, the late George Sámano, later became Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Brownsville National Bank, as well as manager of Sámano's Central Pharmacy, owned by his brother Rodolfo.[24] The Sámano family still resides in Brownsville.

In 1898, two brothers, Eusebio and Adrián Ortiz came to Brownsville to work for their maternal uncle Antonio Barreda at his dry-goods store on Jefferson Street. The two brothers and Adrián's wife Manuela Cisneros came from the Liérganes district near the coast in central Santander, Eusebio having been born in the Liérganes town of Rubalcaba.[25] Adrián Ortiz subsequently ran La Madrileña Grocery on East Madison Street.[26] Family descendents still live in Brownsville and visit back in Santander.[27]

At almost the same time, Domingo Laiseca, Sr. crossed the Atlantic at the age of 15. He left Spain on November 22, 1900 and arrived in Matamoros on 22 December of the same year, having completed his sixteenth birthday at sea.[28] He came from Zalla, now in the province of Vizcaya.[29] However, Zalla lies in the immediate proximity of the pre-1822 provincial boundary of Santander and hence may also once have shared a Santander tradition.[30] Domingo's wife, Juliana Fernández, was daughter of the afore-mentioned José Fernández from Santander. Domingo set up a store in Brownsville which is still operated by the Laiseca family.[31]

The move into the 20th century brought no diminution of this pattern of settlement from Santander. Amador Fernández now planted in Brownsville a second Santanderino Fernández family. Amador and his brothers Joaquín and José came over from Villa Verde in Santander, where the family owns a spacious country home. They were inspired to the move by cousins already living in Matamoros. Amador was 15 years old when he first arrived.[32] This means he must have first set foot in Brownsville in about 1902, since he was born in 1887.[33] This Fernández family also still resides in Brownsville, keeping in touch with and visiting relatives in Santander.[34]

In 1913, the Mexican Revolution pushed another

Santanderino family into Brownsville. Andrés Pacheco was a Matamoros merchant who in 1913 moved to Brownsville to escape the unsettled situation across the river.[35] Andrés was the son of Serapio Pacheco, who had crossed to Matamoros from his home in the province of Santander. The family of Andrés' wife, Rafaela Leal, had also come over from Santander. Andrés made a major contribution to Brownsville, as a merchant in the wholesale food business, in curing and selling hides, and in selling John Deere farm implements. In Matamoros he owned a cotton gin and an ice factory. He also helped to finance the Southern Pacific Railroad locally, the Hotel Jardín, the Brownsville Country Club, and the Port of Brownsville. The Pacheco family still lives in Andrés' home on East Jefferson Street.[36]

The same year, 1913, saw the arrival in Brownsville of Feliciano Roiz. Feliciano came from his home town of Beges in Santander by way of Galveston, joining his brother Ulpiano Roiz in Brownsville. The Roiz family now resides in Rio Hondo, near Brownsville.[37]

Another Brownsville family transplanted from Santander is the Avendaño family. Arturo Avendaño left his native Castro Urdiales in Santander in 1909 to join a brother in Mexico and in 1931 settled in Matamoros, where he opened a grocery business. Arturo came to this area because he knew one of the Spanish Fernández families here. His son Fernando Raul Avendaño now lives in Brownsville, and Arturo's daughter Olga is married to E. Manuel García, owner of García'a Restaurant and Curio Store in Matamoros. The family maintains contact with and visits their relatives back in Santander.[38]

Likewise via the Mexican route of entry, in 1923 the Pérez family was implanted in Brownsville. Gumersindo Pérez had been born of parents native to Los Corrales de Buelna, downstream from Reinosa and Matamorosa on the Besaya River in Santander. Raised in Mexico by an uncle, he came to Brownsville in 1923, in search of a better life. He and his family still live here, and his daughter Sylvia Pérez is now principal of Oliveira Intermediate School. Mr. Pérez's parents, brothers and sisters remained in Santander, where he has visited them.[39]

The pattern has continued unabated since World War II. In the 1950's, a second Ortiz family from Santander put in its appearance in Brownsville, with the arrival of Miguel, Sr., with his brother Ricardo and Antonio Ortiz. Miguel, Sr. was born in Pendueles, that Santander town which had come to lie in Asturias, as discussed previously.[40] The maternal grandfather of the three brothers was the Miguel Fernandez, Sr. mentioned above. There was also a link to the Barreda family, for the Ortiz and Barreda homes were almost next door to each other on the Bay of Santander. The Ortiz family

regularly returns to Santander on visits from Brownsville.[41]

In 1974, still another Santanderino settled in Brownsville. This was Laureano Gómez, born in Bedoya in the Liébana region of Santander. As a priest and an Oblate father he had come to San Juan, Texas in 1971 and had been assigned a parish in McAllen. In 1974, he was placed in charge of Mercy Hospital in Brownsville, the present Brownsville Medical Center. There he met and fell in love with Mary López, when she was brought to the hospital after a car accident. After a dispensation was granted for Laureano to leave the priesthood, the two were married in 1975. Laureano retains contact with and visits his family back in Spain, including siblings in Bedoya and in Ciudad Santander.[42]

Finally, as recently as 1980, Oscar Garza de Saro, with a Santander family tradition, moved across the river from Matamoros to Brownsville. Oscar's paternal grandmother Manolita Revuelta was born and raised in Torrelavega in Santander before marrying in Spain Tomás de Saro, who brought her to live in Matamoros. Tomás de Saro's father Jacinto de Saro had been born in Villa Carriedo.[43]

If José de Escandón could be brought back to life today, he would surely be gratified by these developments in Brownsville. Not only has a small but highly contributive flow of Santanderinos continued to nourish the town's growth, but the development of Brownsville as a city has followed certain characteristics of Ciudad Santander. Ciudad Santander is the capital of the Spanish province of Santander (now called Cantabria), just as Brownsville is the political center and metropolis of Cameron County and to an extent of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. While Ciudad Santander with 184,000 people is twice as large as Brownsville, the population difference is somewhat compensated by the presence as a continuation of Brownsville of its twin city, Matamoros, Mexico.[44] Both Brownsville and Cd. Santander are the seat of a bishopric,[45] and both boast considerable ports, international trade, and local fishing industries.[46] Indeed, this maritime tradition seems to be a factor in the willingness of Santanderinos to emigrate, for Santander suffers from neither great social inequality nor undue poverty.[47] Both Brownsville and Santander draw part of their economic importance from a local cattle industry and from farming, including fruit production.[48] Both areas draw in tourists who come to enjoy the magnificent beaches.[49] Both cities are resorts for winter visitors from the colder sections of their respective countries.[50] Furthermore, Brownsville like Cd. Santander has a local heritage of ballads, for the Santander tradition of romances (ballads similar to the corridos sung in the lower Rio Grande Valley) was still producing new examples at least as late as the end of the 19th century.[51] Even the patron Virgin of Santander,

La Bien Aparecida, Patrona de la Montaña (whose statue is honored in the Cathedral of Cd. Santander) bears a strong resemblance to the Virgin of San Juan, Texas (whose statue is honored in the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Brownsville), although this is coincidence, since the Virgin of San Juan is based on the Virgen de San Juan de los Lagos in Guadalajara, Mexico.[52] Indeed, the Spanish presence in Brownsville, along with Cubans and other Latin-Americans, helps to account for the statistic that about 15 percent of Hispanics in Brownsville's Cameron County are not of Mexican ancestry, as opposed for example to a 94 percent rate of Hispanics of Mexican ancestry in Starr County.[53]

For all of these reasons, Brownsville might consider establishing a sister city status with Ciudad Santander, Spain. Such an official connection has already been made between Laredo, Texas, and Laredo in Santander, Spain, on 16 June 1978.[54] The name of Nuevo Santander may have disappeared from the map, but an echo of Escandón's dream lives on in the productive contribution of Brownsville's Santanderino strain.[55]

## ENDNOTES

[1] Hubert J. Miller, José de Escandón, Colonizer of Nuevo Santander (Edinburg, Texas: The New Santander Press, 1980), p. 5.

[2] Paul Horgan, Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 344.

[3] José Simón Cabarga, Santander (Madrid: Editorial Everest, S. A., 1985), p. 31 and Baedeker's Spain (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p. 199.

[4] Nuevo Atlas de España (Madrid: Aguilar, S. A., 1961), pp. 250-251.

[5] Interview with Claudio Ortiz, Jr., a descendent of José Miguel Ramírez, on 29 September 1985.

[6] Betty Bay, Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide (Brownsville: Brownsville Historical Association, 1980), p. 184.

[7] Interview with Ms. Zoyla and Ms. Eulalia Tijerina on 18 October 1985.

[8] Notas Genealógicas del Apellido de Barreda y Referencias a los Españoles de esta Linaje que Feuron a la Ciudad de Brownsville (A manuscript kept at the Stillman House Museum in Brownsville), pp. 2 and 4.

[9] Interview with Mrs. Lucila Barreda Rego on 29 August 1985.

[10] Tombstone of Miguel Fernández in the Old Cemetary of Brownsville.

[11] Interview with Mrs. Lucille Burke née Fernández on 8 July 1985.

[12] Tombstone of Miguel Fernández in the Old Cemetary of Brownsville.

[13] Betty Bay, p. 94.

[14] Pascual Madoz, Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico Histórico de España y sus Posesiones de Ultramar: Santander (Valladolid: Ámbito Ediciones, S. A., 1984), p. 194.

[15] Nuevo Atlas de España, p. 214.

[16] Betty Bay, p. 98.

[17] Interview with Mrs. Lucille Burke née Fernández on 8 July 1985.

[18] "Don José San Román", Vertical File in the Hunter Room of the Arnulfo Oliveira Library in Brownsville.

[19] Pascual Madoz, pp. 192 and 194.

[20] Nuevo Atlas de España, p. 254.

[21] Betty Bay, pp. 126-128.

[22] Interview with Mrs. George Sámano, Sr. on 25 September 1985.

[23] Tombstone of Manuel Sámano in Buena Vista Cemetary in Brownsville.

[24] Interview with Mrs. George Sámano, Sr. on 25 September 1985.

[25] Interview with Claudio Ortiz, Jr., the grandson of Eusebio Ortiz, on 29 September 1985. The confusion of the district of Liérganes with the town of Llanes, Oviedo, on page 97 of Betty Bay's Historic Brownsville seems to have arisen from a mistaken spelling of Liérganes as Llerganes. Pages 250-251 of the Nuevo Atlas de España clearly shows the town of Rubalcaba in the Liérganes district.

[26] Betty Bay, p. 95.

[27] Interview with Claudio Ortiz, Jr. on 29 September 1985.

[28] Interview with Domingo Laiseca, Jr. on 24 October 1985.

[29] Betty Bay, p. 94.

[30] Pascual Madoz, p. 192.

[31] Betty Bay, p. 94.

[32] Interview with Mrs. Bertha Fernández, daughter-in-law of Amador Fernández, in 28 August 1985.

[33] Tombstone of Amador Fernández in Our Lady of Mercy Cemetary in Mercedes, Texas.

[34] Interview with Mrs. Bertha Fernández on 28 August 1985.

[35] Betty Bay, p. 91.

[36] Interview with Ms. Ninfa Pacheco, daughter of Andres Pacheco, on 24 October 1985.

[37] Interview with Ms. Rose Roiz, daughter of Feliciano Roiz, on 4 September 1984.

[38] Interview with E. Manuel García on 15 July 1985.

[39] Interview with Gumersindo Pérez on 10 July 1985.

[40] Pascual Madoz, p. 194.

[41] Interview with Miguel Ortiz, Sr. on 14 September 1985.

[42] Interview with Laureano Gómez on 23 August 1985.

[43] Interview with Oscar Garza de Saro on 29 September 1985.

[44] *Baedeker's Spain*, p. 198.

[45] *Baedeker's Spain*, p. 198-199.

[46] Pascual Madoz, pp. 194 and 207.

[47] *Todo Santander y Costa Esmeralda* (Barcelona: Editorial Escudo de Oro, s. a., 1984), pp. 26-27.

[48] Abelardo Rivera, Geografía de España (Madrid: Editorial Dossat, 1953), p. 472.

[49] Baedeker's Spain, p. 199.

[50] Abelardo Rivera, p. 474.

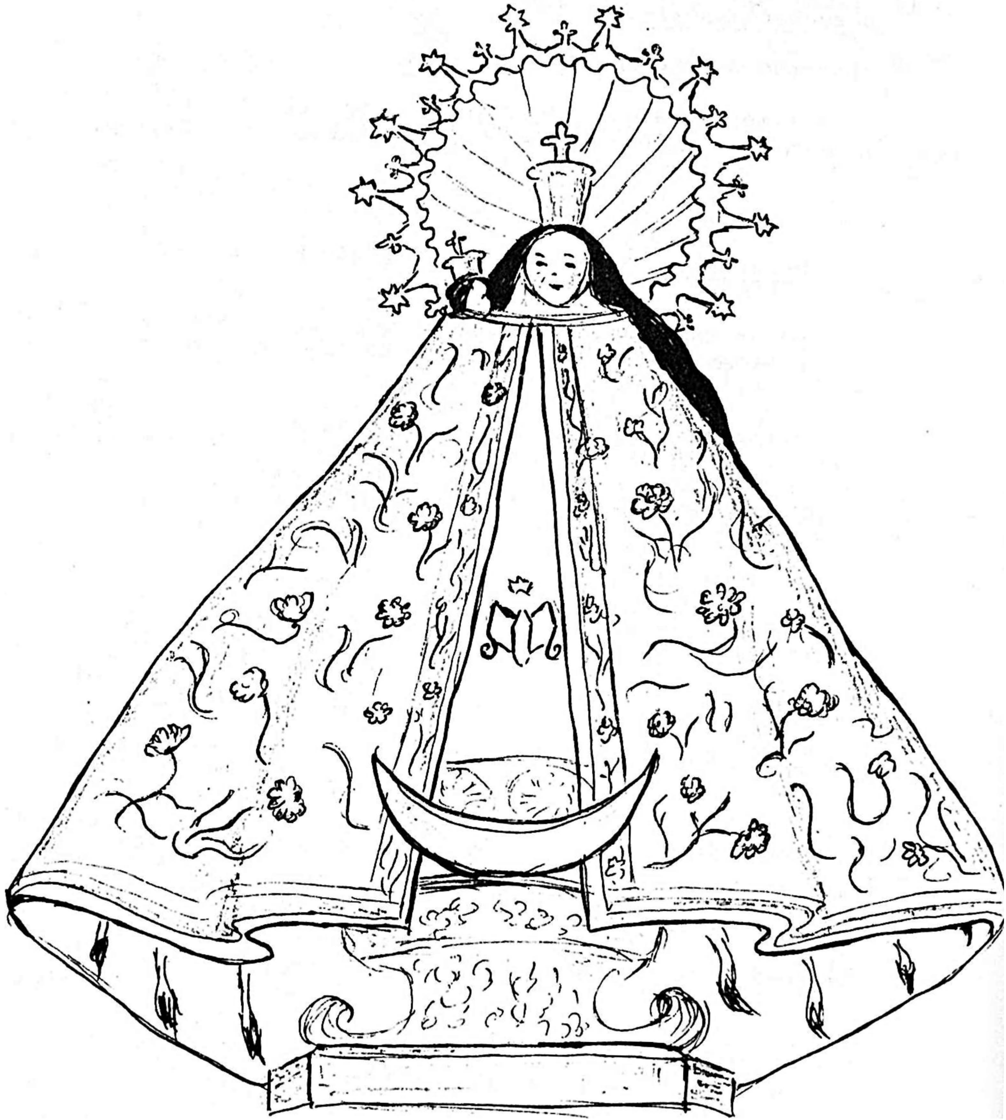
[51] José Simón Cabarga, Santander: Biografía de una Cuidad (Santander: Ediciones de Librería Estudio, 1981), pp. 166-167.

[52] Interview with Laureano Gómez on 23 August 1985.

[53] The Brownsville Herald (Sunday, September 22, 1985), p. 2D.

[54] A copy of the official document sealing the sister city status between the two Laredos was kindly sent to me by Ramiro Sánchez of Laredo, Texas.

[55] Many thanks to Yolanda González, Ruby Wooldridge, Dr. George Green, Dr. Denise Joseph, Dr. Joe Binder, René Torres, Cipriano Cárdenas, my wife Vivian Kearney and all of the Santanderino families interviewed for their help and suggestions in gathering this information.



# STEAMBOATS ON THE LOWER RIO GRANDE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

by

Robert B. Vezzetti

To today's casual observer positioned on the levee bank in Hope Park, gazing into the shallow, dark waters of the Rio Grande, it would be difficult to conceive that this stream was once the commercial lifeline of trade for the lower Rio Grande Valley and northern Mexico; that control over these waters initiated one war and prolonged the life of another; that this, then wider and somewhat deeper, river spawned fortunes which resulted in the founding of great mercantile houses, major banks, and the vast ranches of South Texas.

It was in 1829, some twenty-one years before the founding of Brownsville, that Captain Henry Austin, a cousin of Stephen Austin, first saw the commercial potential of steamboat use on the Rio Grande River. His ship, the _Ariel_, later lost in the waters of Galveston Bay, worked on the river until 1831.[1] His venture, however, along with several attempts to establish docking facilities and townsites on the north bank of the Rio Grande, failed, bringing a temporary halt to local steamboat activity.

With the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846 General Zachary Taylor saw the need for boats to ferry troops and supplies to his base in Camargo in preparation for his planned attack on Monterrey. He directed Major John Saunders, an army engineer, to select the needed craft. Saunders employed Mifflin Kenedy, an experienced river boat man, to assist him in locating suitable boats.[2] Kenedy, in turn, hired Richard King to join the operation as a pilot. Both men were to command steamers on the river for many years prior to the establishment of their now world-famous ranches. The _Corvette_, once a luxury passenger boat on the Ohio River, was the first to enter service. She was soon to be followed by other shallow draft vessels such as: the _Gramps_, a five hundred ton, side-wheeler, about 150 feet long and of wide beam, designed to take the high seas and to move over the bar at the Brazos. Drawing but three feet of water, she was expected to make the run from the Brazos to a river landing. The _Comanche_, a sternwheeler of two hundred tons, a powerful, light "mudder", drawing a draft of less than two feet when loaded, had the task of navigating the river between Brownsville and Roma. The third vessel, the _Whitehall_, was converted into a house boat for Reverend Hiram Chamberlain, the minister of the newly-organized Presbyterian Church. Living with the widowed reverand was his daughter Henrietta, who would become Mrs. Richard King. A fourth, the _Rancher_,

became the center piece of a battle fought during the "Cortina War" as she steamed from Rio Grande City with cargo and $300,000 in bullion. The attack took place at La Bolsa, a bend in the river. The combination of "Rip" Ford's rangers and cannon fire from the deck of the Rancho defeated Cortina. The Globe steamed the waters of the Rio as the first "mail steamer" to run a regular schedule. The Globe was a long way from her first duties, the run between Hartford and New Haven Connecticut. Then came the Colonel Cross, Major Brown, Bessie, Alamo, Matamoros I and II, the Paisano and others.[3] In time there would be twenty-six steamers operating on the river. The Corvette now lies in the river east of the Gateway Bridge, where for many years her ribs could be seen at low water.

With the conclusion of the war, Charles Stillman, Richard King, and Mifflin Kenedy, under the name of King, Kenedy and Co., purchased the now surplus military boats, added others, and soon obtained a monopoly on the river trade. Trade was heavy. Incoming ships of the Morgan Steamship Line, plying the Gulf of Mexico on a regular basis from New Orleans and Galveston to the Brazos de Santiago, brought lumber, ironware, and merchandise of all types to the area. The cargo list of one New Orleans bound schooner was typical. It carried 338 bales and seventy-five sacks of wool, 1339 beef hides, twenty-five bales and fifty bundles of varied skins, fifty-eight bales of goat skins, 537 pigs, 164 slabs of lead, and $408,300.00 in specie and bullion.[4] All cargo made its way to and from the Brazos de Santiago via riverboats.

Competition for a portion of this trade was intense. In 1855, Josè San Romàn and John Young, former partners of Charles Stillman, and both described as "formidible rivals" by him, challenged the Stillman, Kenedy, King group by placing the Swan and Guadalupe on the river.[5] However, in 1857, the Stillman, Kenedy, King combine purchased the Romàn and Young operation. Romàn and Young were also given an interest in the now expanded Stillman, Kenedy, and King company.

Boating on the river was a hazardous task, navigation was difficult due to currents, low water, driftwood, tight turns, and natural snags created by silt and drifting objects. The typical boat was a sternwheeler, 120' long and 24' wide, and drew about four and a half feet of water. Craft with a lesser draft were used upriver. Reynosa, Camargo, Rio Grande City, and various ranch docks where wood would be cut and stacked for fuel were the ports of call. Water level permitting, Roma and Laredo, only two-hundred miles from the Gulf overland, but some six-hundred miles by water, would be added to the list of ports of call. Travel by water, though slow, was more rapid and safer than overland travel in those roadless days. Dependent upon the river

currents, travel time between the mouth of the river and Rio Grande City was sixty-one hours, and between the mouth and Matamoros, two and a half hours. Because of navigation difficulties, travel was limited to the daylight hours.

War, which had given birth to river navigation on the Rio Grande, again gave further impetus to greater commercial activity and the creation of great fortunes. When the Civil War first broke out, remote Brownsville would hardly have been expected to become a factor in the struggle raging in far-off Virginia. However, as the war continued, Federal forces succeeded in blockading southern ports; ports necessary for trade to maintain Confederate war efforts. The need to export cotton, the "white gold" of the south, and import war material became desperate...the "backdoor to the Confederacy" was about to swing open. Southern cotton was transported from northern Texas and other southern states by oxcart to Brownsville and placed on "neutral" boats of Mexican registry, in fact owned by Jerimiah Galván, Stillman, Kenedy and King. It was moved downstream through "neutral" Bagdad to the waters of the Brazos de Santiago for shipment to England and other European ports.[6] War supplies traveled the route in reverse. Profits were huge. One boat alone, the Ranchero, reported receipts of $35,699.46 for one April-to-December period. In 1857 Kenedy and Co. netted a profit of $40,000.00 this in the day of gold-backed dollars!

The end of the war brought a decline in both river traffic and profits as it was now necessary to meet only the needs of more normal times.

It was now 1872 and time for the Rio Grande steamboats to step aside and make room for progress. Simón Celaya and others organized and built the Rio Grande Railroad, a twenty-two mile line from Point Isabel to Brownsville. The initiation of a railroad line brought on a bitter fight between the boat owners and the organizers of the railroad. Shippers turned to the railroad, as cargo could be moved overland at a quicker pace. Seeing the future of the boat as dark, if nonexistent, Kenedy and Co., as it was known after the departure of Stillman and King, sold its remaining boats to Captain William Kelly. Kelly, an experienced riverboat man who operated some sixteen boats, would become the last of the great steamboat men on the Rio Grande.

In 1907, the final threat to river navigation, the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad, now appeared. Brownsville and the Valley were now connected to northern markets by rail. The economy of the valley was shifting to agriculture and the need for quick shipment of produce was urgent. With the railroad, no longer did shippers have to depend on uncertain Gulf conditions or the chance of cargo lost at sea. The era of the river route to the sea via the Brazos was over. Captain Kelly operated the Bessie until the

coming of the railroad. The *Bessie*, last of the Rio Grande steamboats, was soon abandoned and now lies, with several of her sister ships, under the waters of the river on which she sailed.

Endnotes

[1] *The Brownsville Herald*, October 31, 1962, pg. 2C

[2] *Brownsville: A Pictorial History* Ruby Wooldridge-Robert B. Vezzetti; Donning Company, Norfolk VA, 1982, pg. 35.

[3] *The King Ranch*, Tom Lea, Little Brown & Co., Toronto and Boston, 1957, pg. 75.

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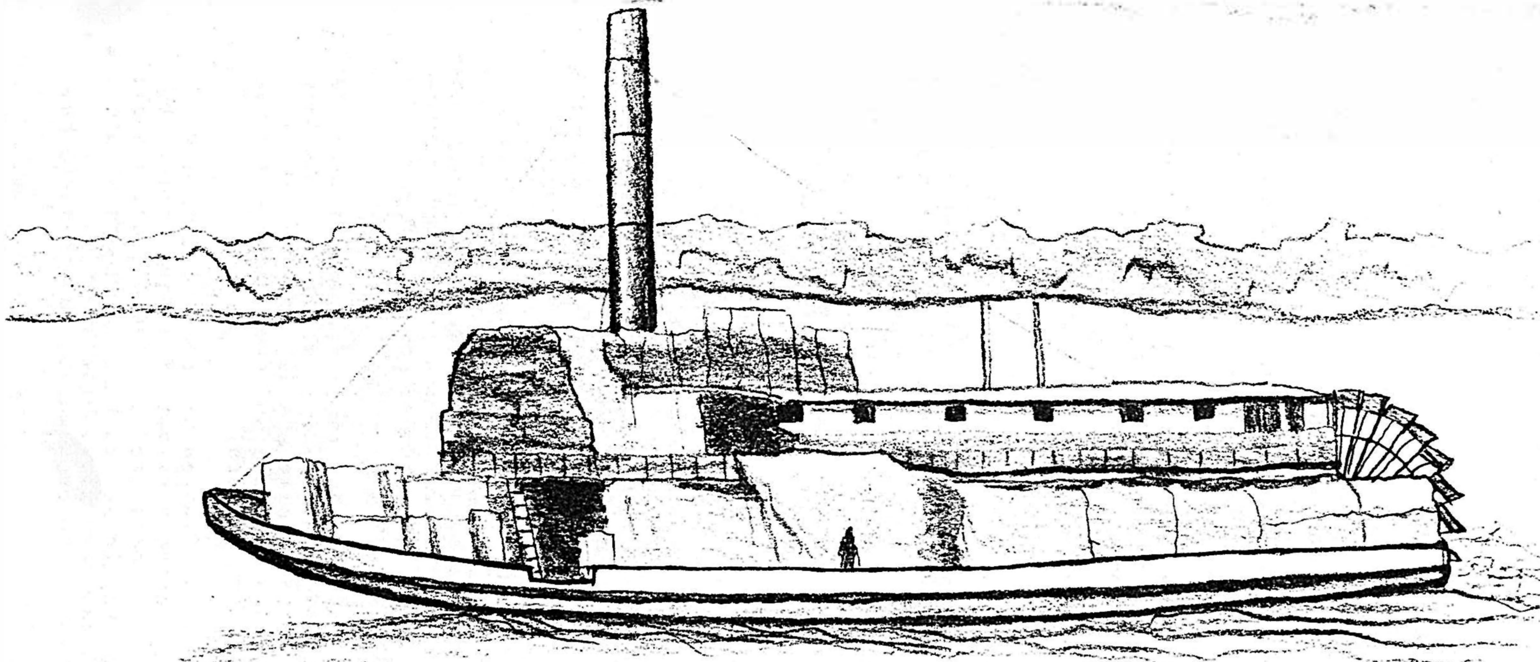
[6] *The Brownsville Times*, March 28, 1968.




STEAMBOAT ANTONIA, ON RIO GRAND RIVER
NEAR BROWNSVILLE TEXAS, CIRCA 1866

## THE MAN-EATERS

Told by Felipe Lozano to customers and friends in his barbershop in 1961 in the presence of Peter Gawenda.

When in the 1670's Spaniards came to the region north of the Rio Grande (or Rio Bravo del Norte), they encountered mostly friendly Indian tribes. The greeting which those Indians used when meeting someone they accepted was the word "Texia" (friend). Possibly by mistake the Spaniards adapted this welcome as the name for their province.

The tribes around the area of San Antonio seemed to be more peaceful and quickly christianized, but those along the coast objected to Spanish dominance. Historians and contemporaries such as Fray Juan Agustín Morfí have therefore branded them as having been vile, cowardly, treacherous and very cruel. These maritime tribes, the Karankawas, sometimes called Carancaguases or Carancagues had a total population of only one hundred fifty to two hundred and included such groups as the Cujanes, Guapites or Coapites, Cocos and Copanes.

As the Spaniards tried to assemble all the Indians around missions, the freedom-loving Karankawas started to avoid contacts with the white man by roaming in areas that were not yet settled and by escaping to the islands off the gulf coast. Felipe, who had been one of the first telegraph operators in the Valley, told of several reports which had been handed down telling of the unfortunate fate of shipwreck survivors who made it to the shores only to be tortured and killed by the Karankawas. Many times, so the story goes, the Indians ate the bodies of their victims, especially when they showed out-of-the-ordinary bravery during their torture. But Felipe insisted that this was not confirmed and was only made up by the Spaniards to keep other Indians from being friends with the Karankawas. Other tribes must have fought with the Karankawas when the Spanish pressure became too strong.

Losing their hunting grounds, the Karankawas became keen fishermen, who were good swimmers and good runners. As many of them had been forced to live in Spanish missions, they were fluent in the Spanish language and could easily deceive stranded sailors or passing traders.

One of the stories that Felipe had been told by his abuela dealt with a fortunate survivor of a ship wreck. It goes as follows. In late April back in 1690 or 1691 a small ship was sailing along the coast close to the mouth of the Rio Grande. The wind was very slow, blowing in a north-easterly direction. The crew was bored and would have

The "Giants" - the proud Karankawas

preferred to land and take fresh water or hunt for game, but the captain refused. His task was to reach Louisiana within the next few days. It was close to eight one evening, time for the Ave Maria, when the look-out spotted lights on the beach, and the crew suddenly heard first a bell, ...maybe a church bell, and then the clear voice of a Spanish Padre singing the evening prayers. The maps did not show any settlement but the sounds and the sights gave that impression. As the island had an opening like an entrance into a harbor the captain gave the order to anchor the ship, lower a boat into the water and send a party to the shore. Shortly after the party had landed they signalled the crew to follow. But what horrible surprise when the shore was reached! All the men were massacred. At the same time the ship had been reached by Indians diving under water, then climbing up on the anchor and the boarding ropes. Before the remaining crew realized what had happened, they shared their compadres' fate.

The Indians then cut the anchor rope and jumped back into the water. A few hours later the waves had thrown the ship onto the beach where it was breaking apart. The Indians plundered whatever they could use, then set fire to the ship and left the rest to the sea. The young boy who told this incident said that he had crawled under the canvas of one of the boats. When this boat was thrown free he floated along the coast for several days. Almost dead, he was picked up by another passing vessel.

The boy swore up and down that he had heard the bell and the Spanish voices and that he had even seen a mission. But when other ships shared the same fate it was assumed that the Indians tricked the Spaniards into landing by using what they had seen and heard during their captivity in the Spanish missions.

The Karankawas did not survive, but many legends could be told of their bravery and misfortune by Felipe.

# THE BLACK CAT

Told by Josefa Vela de Lozano in 1963 to Peter Gawenda.

Back in the old times before Matamoros or Reynosa had reached the river, and before Mexico had become Mexico, there was a large rancho almost five and one half leagues to the north of the town. The owner was a young and beautiful widow. Her husband had been gored by a steer, when he was branding the cattle, and he had died. The marriage had lasted only a few months, and no children were born before or after the Don's death. The woman's beauty was soon known in this part of Nueva España, and many young men came to court her. But no one could win her heart, as she would not forget her husband. At times it was said that she had come directly from Spain and that she was the only daughter of a gitano king.

On the farm she had several criados and criadas. No one was allowed in her husband's room since his death and she always kept it locked whether she was in it or not. As time went on she turned very bitter and unfriendly,..declan que ella era malvada. Neighbors no longer visited her, and she rarely saw sunlight. But the farm was kept spotless, and the cattle multiplied.

The servants started complaining, though, that they received less and less to eat, and that they had to wear their garments until they were in rags. Their dueña had become very miserly, ...muy coda.

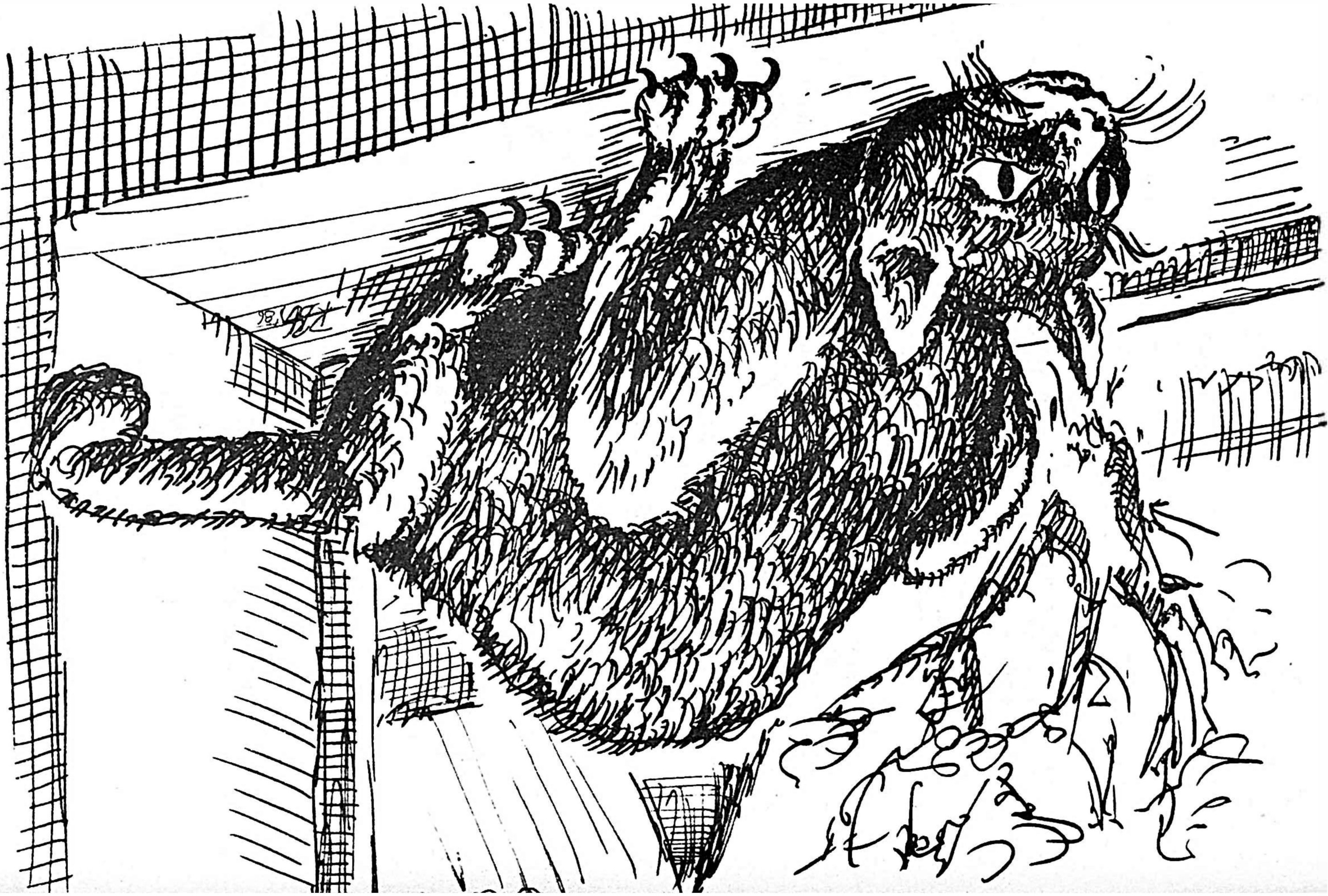
One evening after everyone had gone to sleep, two of the maids happened to come back to the kitchen and started to complain about how little food they had received, how much work they had to do, and how it wasn't worth staying. Both intended to quit. But one of the maids had watched where the lady of the house had hidden the machacado (dried meat) and left-over tortillas. So both sneaked to the supplies, grabbed a handful of the meat, rolled it into the tortillas and started eating. Although they both saw a cat with a shiny black coat and flashing green eyes sitting in the window, they didn't pay attention. But the following morning la Doña era más arpía, ...even meaner, and gave them less to eat. When both maids came back to the kitchen that night, the food was nowhere to be found. Again this large black cat stared at them with its green eyes. Angrily the two girls chased the cat away from the window and forgetting what they were looking for the two maids left the kitchen. The following night, when they returned to the kitchen ... here it was again, staring and hissing at them from the window sill. Beating its tail against the boards, ...back and forth, ready

to jump. The two maids panicked; goose bumps were running up and down their spines; and the room started to feel ice-cold. When they tried to chase the cat away it almost attacked them.

The next morning the lady of the house had become unbearable, so that both decided to leave that weekend. They just could not explain their mistresses' behavior. That evening both maids were sitting on the "corredor", ...they were sad and upset, and they talked about the beautiful times they once had shared and how everything had changed. Suddenly they felt cold, just like the day before. They trembled, ...and then they saw the cat, hissing at them and stalking back and forth. Out of anger, but also fear, one of the maids grabbed the machete which was left there by the jardinero and she threw it at the cat. The cat didn't move fast enough, and the machete struck it's right front paw, cutting it off. The cat screamed terribly and disappeared.

Neither the next day nor the following did anyone see the lady of the house. And when she did not leave her bedroom the third day, it was forced open. The sight was gruesome. The bed was splattered with blood; the Doña seemed in terrible pain; she was delirious and obviously dying. Where her right hand had once been, only a bloody stump remained.

When Pepa told the story, she added that not a trace was left of the rancho, ...but some old people say that where it used to be, once in a while, during a full moon, un gato negro will appear limping on three feet screaming and howling horribly. And at other times a woman can be seen who no longer has a right hand. She only moans and calls for her servants.



## THE THREE-MASTER

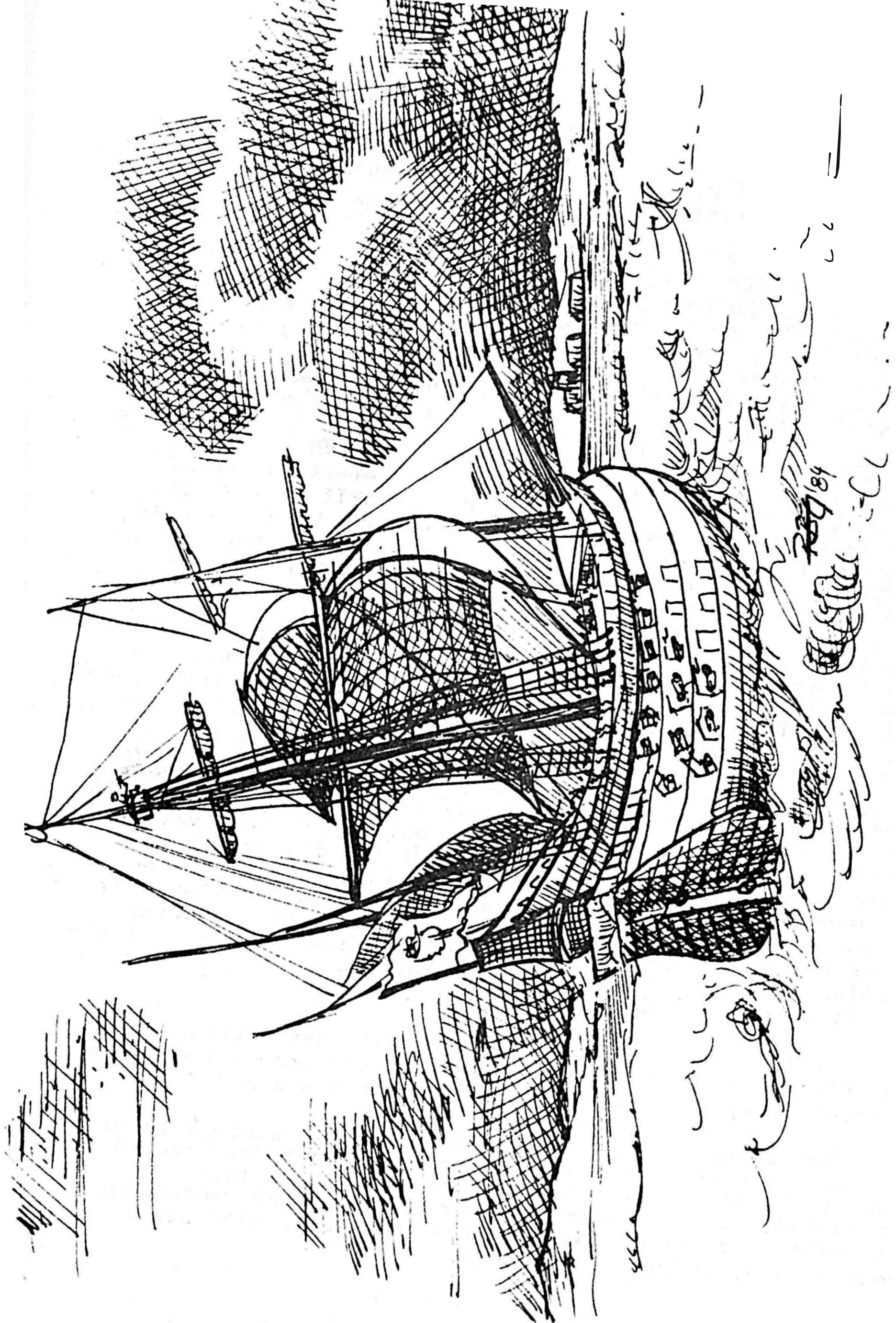
Told by a fisherman, John Garrean (or Garreau), on Padre Island's levees to a group of fishermen in 1967 in the presence of Peter Gawenda.

When the full moon lights up the sky, when the Gulf is choppy, and when shreds of clouds chase each other through the sky, it is possible to become witness of a beautiful but ghostly sight.

Several times in the past century, fishermen would return from the Gulf with the following story.

Usually at a distance between two to three miles of the coast, straight to the East of the entrance to the former port of Brazos de Santiago (close to today's Port Isabel) a strange object would appear from the direction of the Rio Grande's mouth, moving swiftly towards the open sea. It would seem to be very large and high, and the absence of any noise would make the vision very mysterious. It would move as if pushed or carried through the water. No living soul would be seen. Then, when it would come close, one could clearly recognize a three-master, or French corsair, with every sail set. All the cannon hatches would stand open. The ship would be loaded so heavily that the choppy sea could not influence its course. At one time, the fisherman said, a lieutenant of the U.S. Army from the former Fort Texas saw that spectacle and described the scene to him, saying "...on it went, glacial white, mountain high, deathly still, a spectral, gliding glory of moonlit space... It passed, vanished, and made no sign..."

Whose ship it was, nobody knows. Some people say it carried Jean Lafitte's ghost to the place where he had buried his (never-found) treasures. Other people who saw the ship insisted that it was a Spanish galleon having three masts. It is very possible that it was returning to the area where it was sunk by a storm centuries ago, or that it really did carry some soul's ghost that was not able to find its rest.



## EL PERRO NEGRO

Told by Felipe Lozano in his barbershop to his customers and written down by Peter Gawenda.

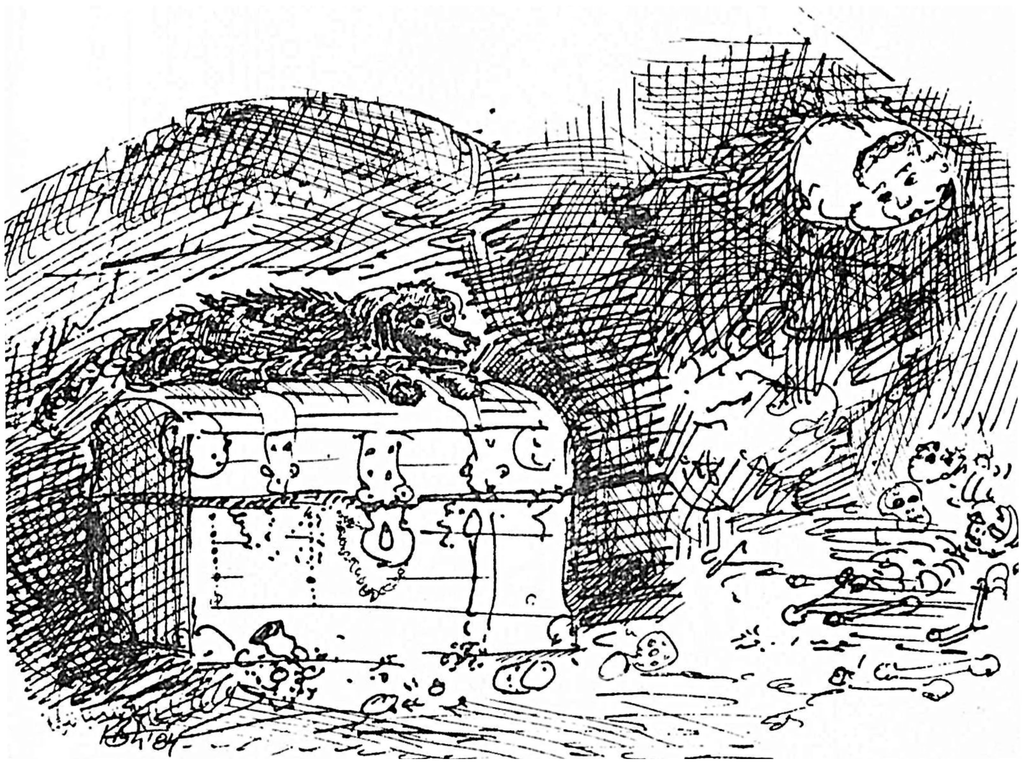
It is common knowledge that many treasures are still hidden along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and maybe in some of the river banks of the Rio Grande, Nueces or San Antonio Rivers. But nobody knows the exact locations where those treasures were hidden by pirates like Jean Lafitte, by Spanish nobles who had travelled along the coast like Cabeza de Vaca, and others.

Some small valuables have been found and one large treasure has been stumbled upon at several times, but it has not been recovered. And if someone finds it he will try to take it only that one time. This treasure, so it is told, is in a large iron chest, a type of chest that was used by the people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To find this chest you would have to dig into the river bank until you come into a grotto. But everyone who has succeeded in finding this large chest has not dared to get close to it. The chest is more than full and obviously cannot be closed; in fact gold chains and jewels have fallen out of that chest and cover the surrounding floor.

But the reason why no one dares to get close to the treasure chest is a large black dog who sits on the chest's cover. It looks as if it is ready to jump. It has reddish glowing eyes and growls viciously, baring its long yellow fangs. If anyone has dared to bother the dog by throwing a stone or has tried to shoot the dog, immediately that person has been attacked himself. Usually the growling alone has caused people to just leave everything and run. Whoever dares to stay longer would become hypnotized by the horrible reddish eyes. This would account for the many skeletons that are said to be lying in the grotto.

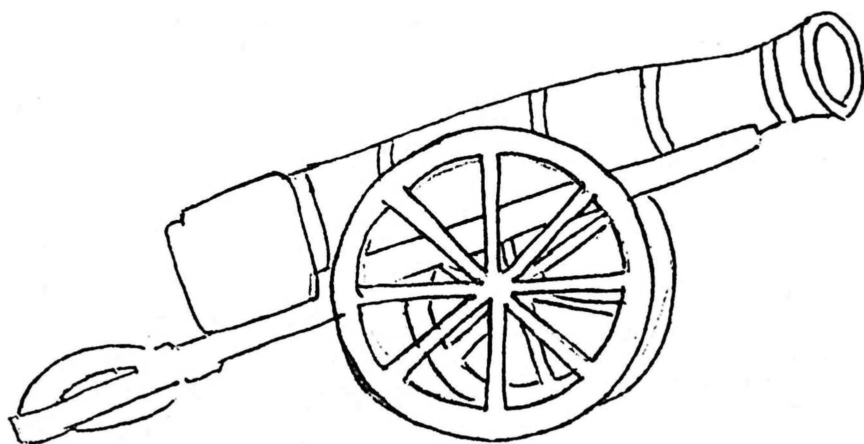
It is difficult to say who or what that vicious dog is, but Felipe said that it could be a cursed crew-member of the pirate's ship who now has to suffer for his greed.

One strange thing usually happens. If someone returns to the place where he had found the grotto before he had run away in terror, will find that the whole area looks untouched, ...as if someone has covered up and camouflaged the hole. No matter how much the individual will dig a second time, it will be useless.



# EL PERRO NEGRO

# FIRST GENERATION BROWNSVILLE



# Desertion on the Rio Grande

by

Jere C. Light

In 1846 the area between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers was disputed between the United States and Mexico. The American claim was based on the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819. Mexico's claim was based on the Constitution of 1824 when the area was a Department of Coahuila. Nothing, however, was said concerning the Texas boundaries in the west in the Adams-Onis Treaty, and the United States accepted the limits named in the Decree of 1811 by the King of Spain and reiterated in the Decree of 1816. (Binkley, 8-9)

After spending some time in preparation at Corpus Christi on the north bank of the Nueces River, General Taylor on January 13, 1846, was expressly ordered by President Polk to the north bank of the Rio Grande River. (Ruiz, 75)

General Taylor and his men arrived on the north bank of the Rio Grande opposite Matamoros on the 28th of March 1846. The residences of Matamoros stood on rooftops and other high points as the Americans set up camp in a plowed field opposite them and raised a flagstaff to run up the Stars and Stripes.

With the arrival of the Americans the Mexicans began to build fortifications in and around Matamoros. Just upstream and commanding a ferry crossing, they started an earthworks large enough for 800 men. Two redouts were also built 700 to 800 yards from the American camp and placing it under a crossfire. The positions were well chosen, but their lack of heavy guns weakened their effectiveness.

General Taylor then ordered a permanent camp site selected and artillery to command Matamoros. The main site was a star-shaped earthworks for 800 men laid out by Captain Joseph Mansfield. It was located on a bend in the river with water on three sides. When the work started, Taylor ordered a gill of whisky to each man, perhaps to keep their mind off the young señoritas who came down to the river, disrobed, and went for a swim. This main site was first called Fort Taylor. (Bauer, 40)

The two armies eyed each other wondering when the war would come. On April 3, 1846 the following proclamation issued by General Ampudia, the Mexican commander in Matamoros, appeared in camp.

> "The Commander-in-Chief of the Mexican Army to the English and Irish under the American General Taylor:
> Knew ye: That the Government of United States is committing repeated acts of barbarous aggression against the

magnanimous Mexican nation; that the Government which exist under the flag of the stars' is unworthy the designation of Christian. Recollect that you were born in Great Britian, that the American Government looks with coldness upon the powerful flag of England, and is provoking to a rupture the warlike people to whom it belongs, President Polk boldly manifesting a desire to take possession of Oregon as he has already done Texas. Now then, come with all confidence to the Mexican ranks, and I guarantee to you, upon my honor, good treatment, and that all your expense shall be defrayed until your arrival in the beautiful capital of Mexico.

Germans, French, Poles and individuals of other nations! eparate yourselves from the Yankees, and do not contribute o defend a robbery and usurpation which , be assured, the civilized nations of Europe look upon with utmost indignation. Come, therefore, and array yourselves under the tri-colored flag, in confidence that the God of Armies protects it, and it will protect you, equally with the English.

/s/ Pedro de Ampudia

Francisco R. Moreno, Adjutant of the Commander-in-Chief.
Head-Quarter upon the Road to Matamoros, April 2, 1846.
(Kenly, 49)

General Ampudia's aim was to undermine the allegiance of the foreign born enlisted men by insinuating that the attitude of the United States towards Mexico was merely a masonic plot to destroy the Catholic religion in Mexico, and that if they bore arms against Mexico they would be waging war against their religion. (Hopkins, 1)

There were other proclamations and inducements, starting at 320 acres of land for a private to come across the lines (Executive Document No. 60, 304) and rising with the deserter's rank. (Downey, 21) One of the most effective was the following:

"SOLDIERS! You have been enlisted in time of peace to serve in that army for a specific term, but your obligation never implied that you were bound to violate the laws of God, and the most sacred rights of friends! The United States government, contrary to the wishes of a majority of all honest and honorable Americans, has ordered you to take forcible possession of the territory of a friendly neighbor, who has never given her consent to such occupation. In other words, while the treaty of peace and commerce between Mexico and the United States is in full force, the United States presuming on her strength and prosperity, and on our supposed imbecility and cowardice, attempted to make you the blind instruments of her unholy and mad ambition, and forces you to appear as the hateful robbers of our dear homes, and the unprovoked violaters of your dearest feelings as men and

patriots. Such villainy and outrage I know are perfectly repugnant to the nobel sentiments of any gentleman; and it is base and foul to rush you on to certain death, in order to aggrandize a few lawless individuals, in defiance of the laws of God and man! It is to no purpose if they tell you that the law for the annexation of Texas justifies your occupation of the Rio Bravo del Norte; for by this act they rob us of a great part of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua, and New Mexico, and it is barbarous to send a handful of men on such an errand against a powerful and warlike nation. Besides, the most of you are Europeans, and we are the declared friends of a majority of the nations of Europe. The North Americans are ambitious, overbearing, and insolent, as a nation, and they will only make use of you as vile tools to carry out their abominable plans of pillage and rapine. I warn you, in the name of justice, honor, and your own interests and self-respect, to abandon their desparate and unholy cause, and become peaceful Mexican citizens. I guaranty you, in such case, a half section of land, or 320 acres, to settle upon, gratis. Be wise, then, and just and honorable, and take no part in murdering us who have no unkind feelings for you. Lands shall be given officers, sergeants and coporals according to rank; privates receiving 320 acres, as stated.

If in time of action you wish to espouse our cause, throw away your arms and run to us, and we will embrace you as true friends and Christians.

It is not decent or prudent to say more. But should any of you render any important service to Mexico, you shall be accordingly considered and preferred.

Head-quarters at Matamoros, April 20, 1846.

M. ARISTA,
Commander-in-chief of Mexican Army.
(Executive Document No. 60, 303, 304)

It was a hot day, even early in the morning at Fort Taylor, but there was a cooling breeze off the Gulf. The breeze, however, did not cool Sergeant John Riley. Riley had been around and he was a good soldier. He was sure of this. His last assignment had been as a drillmaster at West Point. Riley had aspirations of receiving a commission as a lieutenat. He had friends at the Point. However, he had one fault that he could not overcome-he could give orders but he had a great deal of trouble taking them. Early that morning he had been reprimanded for not saluting a shave-tail lieutenant. His Irish temper could be controlled no longer, and he asked for a pass to attend mass. He never reported back. (Downey, 20) This was not desertion to the enemy in time of war, because as yet there was no formal declaration of war and there would not be for another month. (Henry, 85)

On April 30th Mexican General Arista began crossing the Rio Grande with his main body. Taylor then had to strengthen the fort to withstand a siege. Major Jacob Brown was left in charge with about 500 men from the 7th Infantry with four 18 pound cannons and Braxton Bragg's field battery. (Bauer, 49) When Arista realized that Taylor had the majority of the American Troops with him at Point Isabel, he decided to knock out the fort before Taylor could reinforce it. The attack on the fort started at five A.M. on May 3rd. General Taylor sent word to Major Brown to remain in the fort and to defend it to the last man. (Bauer, 49) The American 18 pounders put two Mexican guns out of service within 30 minutes. However, Mexicans guns farther down river resummed the assault with some success. Bragg's light field pieces were not effective at that distance, so they ceased firing to save powder. The 18 pounders could not stop the bombardment. The Americans tried to set Matamoros afire but failed because they could not heat their shot hot enough. The Mexicans stopped the first day's attack at 7:30 P.M., while the Americans continued firing until 11:00 P.M. (BAUER, 50)

On the 4th the Mexicans put a new strong battery with guns and mortars on the north bank of the river behind the fort. On the 5th four more guns arrived and the fort was completely surrounded. From the 5th to the 9th a continuous bombardment and counter bombardment went on, but the Mexicans made no attempt to take the fort. They settled down to a regular siege to try to starve the Americans out. On the morning of the 6th at about 10:00 Major Brown was killed and command passed to Captain Edgar S. Hawkins. At 4:30 that afternoon the Mexicans demanded that the fort surrender. Captain Hawkins refused because as long as his supplies held out he and his men were in no real danger. The Mexican guns were too light to destroy the fort and the infantry had made no attempt to advance. During the siege, in addition to Major Brown, one other man was killed and nine were wounded. (Bauer, 52) In a letter to Washington, General Taylor stated that "It may not be improper to say that it is known that some of our deserters were employed against us, and actually served guns in the cannonade and bombardment of Fort Brown." (Executive Document No. 60, 303)

On May the 5th, Taylor started his return to Fort Brown from Point Isabel. After his victory at Palo Alto on May 8th and Resaca de la Palma on May 9th, Taylor's army settled down at the campsite at Fort Brown until he moved his men across the river to take Matamoros on May 17th. (Bauer, 52)

On May 30th, from his head-quarters in Matamoros, General Taylor wrote a letter to Washington explaining the action he had taken against men under his command who had deserted. He ordered his pickets to hail the men seen swimming the river and order them to return. If they did not, the pickets were ordered to shoot. Two men were supposed to have been shot under this order. Taylor said he did not know how far he should have gone in this matter, but he could not stand by and see his ranks thinned daily by the

insidious acts of the Mexican general. (Executive Document No. 60, 302, 303) It was noted by others that while working on the fortifications at Fort Taylor, soldiers began to desert, passing into the Mexican camp, and presenting themselves to the commanding officer. Some had the boldness to try to swim the river in sight of the American advance guard, who shot at them. Some were killed and wounded and some were even downed. (Alcaraz, 41) Thus the Mexicans had a sizable force of deserters.

John Riley was immediately given a commission in the Mexican army as a lieutenant. As he was speedily joined by others, they organized the San Patricio Battalion (Battalion of Saint Patrick), also know as the "Foreign Legion" and the "Red Company" because so many of them were red-headed. (Hopkins, 2)

Riley and his men were not put into action immediately, They were sent to Mexico City, where they acted as escort for foreigners and non-combatants, taking them to places of safety. Some of them, while in Mexico City, took money from the British Consul saying that they had no food. There were soon found out. (Hopkins, 3) But Mexico was at war and "peaceful Mexican citizens" were not desired. They would have to fight. (Downey, 21)

Riley chose artillery as their branch of service, and they began to form into a fighting force. They were equipped by the orders of Santa Anna with heavy field pieces. Riley and the veteran artillerymen trained the rest into crack gun crews. (Downey, 21) Assisting Riley was Patrick Dalton from Company "B" of the Second Infantry and a man named Batcharder, who was never found after the war. He was either killed or he escaped. (Hopkins, 3)

The Red Battalion saw its first action September 21-23 at the Battle of Monterrey. When the city fell, the terms of the surrender allowed the defenders to march out. The Red-heads were easy to recognize and they were booed and hissed as they marched out. From this point on, the men under Riley would fight with a venomous hatred for the men that scorned them that day. (Rives, 338-339)

The San Patricios fought at Saltillo, Buena Vista, and Churubusco, where they were called upon to defend the Convent of San Pablo. There in the field works before the Convent were 260 men of the San Patricio Battalion, fighting for their lives. (Brooks, 400) "The large number of officers killed in the affair was also ascribed to them, as for the gratification of their revenge they aimed at no other object during the engagement." (Ballentine, 256) They fought long and desperately and were "considered a principal cause of the obstinate resistance which our troops met." (Ballentine, 256) The Mexicans fighting with them made two or three attempt to hoist a white flag. The San Patricios killed the Mexicans attempting to display it. (Brooks, 381) They "were not taken prisioners until their Mexican comrades

had fled and their own ammunition was entirely exhausted." (Brooks, 400) Some of them managed to cut their way through and reached Mexico City, but most were killed or captured. (Rives, 385)

Of the 65 captured, 50 were hanged. The other 15 for different reasons were allowed to live. John Riley was branded and lashed because he deserted before the war was declared. He, like the others that deserted, was sentenced

> "...to receive two hundred lashes on the bare back, the letter D to be branded on the cheek with a red hot iron, to wear an iron yoke weighing eight pounds with three prongs, each one foot in length, around the neck, to be confined to hard labor, in charge of the guard during the time the army should remain in Mexico, and then to have their heads shaved and be drummed out of camp." (Chamberlain, 226)

General Worth said it would be too great an honor for Riley to be lashed by an American soldier so a Mexican mule driver was chosen to do the job. (Hopkins, 3)

Such was the end for the deserters on the Rio Grande.

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DESERTERS OF
FORT BROWN

# THE BELLS OF BROWNSVILLE

by

Henry G. Krausse, Jr.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, in a time before the advent of mass electronic information media and before we became sealed in with air conditioning, an assortment of audible signals kept the residents of Brownsville informed as to a variety of regulated activities. For example, the rich tones of the Immaculate Conception Church bells, located in a belfry atop the 88-foot church tower, pealed throughout the day, notifying the community of impending religious services from the earliest pre-dawn Mass through the Angelus each evening. Other churches as well made use of bells to call people to services. Likewise, bugle calls from adjacent Fort Brown military reservation could be heard daily throughout most of Brownsville's original townsite, beginning with "first call" and ending with taps. The post's daily retreat ceremony at sunset featured a resounding cannon salute which could be heard well beyond the town's limits. For the correct time of day, many relied on the large clock in the central tower atop the two-story public school building, at the site of the present Putegnat Elementary School, which announced the hour to one and all by Westminster chimes. And during a good portion of the first half of the twentieth century the Model Laundry steam whistle notified the enterprise's employees, as well as the community at large, of times for reporting for work, breaking for lunch and ending the work day.

But one series of bells came to have a greater impact on the community over a longer period than any other audible medium of information. For close to 75 years the town bell, located in a belfry atop the Municipal Market/Town Hall building "practically guided the life of the city."[1]

The story of our town bell begins with the founding of Brownsville, which was incorporated on January 24, 1850. The first Town Council by May 4, 1850 had begun deliberations leading to the creation of a public market and town hall. By mid-1851 the lower story was completed and the city market began operating. In early 1852 the upper story (town hall) was completed, the whole now presenting a handsome, spacious two-story building crowned with cupola and belfry. The only problem was that there was now no municipal government in existence to occupy the new town hall.

A dispute over Brownsville's claim to ownership of land within its corporate limits prompted the state legislature to repeal the city's first charter, effective January 8, 1852,

and for one year thereafter the town was without a municipal government. Thus the new Market/Town Hall's upper floor was initially vacant - but not for very long. On May 8, 1852 a local paper carried the following notice:

> "Divine services will be held by the Rev. Hiram Chamberlain at the new Town Hall in the morning and evening tomorrow. The members of the Presbyterian Church having secured that building, Mr. Chamberlain, its pastor, will in the future officiate in that place"[2]

Later records indicate that the first belfry bell belonged to the Rev. Hiram Chamberlain. It is not clear where he obtained it, but it is of record that the Presbyterian minister first used an abandoned steamboat moored to the bank of the Rio Grande at the foot of Levee Street for religious services.[3] One could easily surmise that the bell which the Rev. Chamberlain had installed in the Town Hall Belfry "could have been the same bell that the steamboat had used in its heyday to announce its approach on the river's tortuous bends."[4]

Virtually from the moment it was completed, the Town Market became the focal point of life in the new city, and a central factor in the business that soon flourished on "Market Square." Indeed, "Market Square was not just a place to buy. It was the place to see and to be seen, to hear the news, or to whisper the about-to-be news."[5] And here we can ponder one of Brownsville's social phenomena: whereas in many county seats throughout Texas the "Courthouse Square" has consitituted the center of community life, this was never the case in Brownsville. That may be attributed to the fact that Brownsville's Market/Town Hall was built thirty years before the construction of Cameron County's first courthouse (1882), only one and a half blocks distant. The courthouse just didn't have a chance.

At any rate, the first Town Hall bell was considered one of the outstanding features of the city market from its earliest days. It not only called the faithful to religious services, but also announced the opening and closing hours of the market, and further served as a medium of alarm durng fires, and for police signals in times of stress.[6]

One night in 1857, the citizenry was awakened by the frantic tolling of the Town Hall bell. The Belden warehouse (next to the Stillman establishment) was on fire. The flames progressed so rapidly that it was impossible to remove 300 kegs of gunpowder stored in the burning building, and the bell was momentarily silenced by a terrific explosion. However, the tolling of the bell had the effect of congregating the populace so as to organize bucket brigades which succeeded in confining the fire to one city block.[7]

Two years later, the town bell again performed its emergency duties when Brownsville was raided by Juan N. Cortina, the scion of an old, landed family, descended from José Salvador de la Garza, original grantee of the Espiritu Santo royal land grant. Juan Cortina was a zealous Mexican patriot who never accepted the American occupation of his country and usurpation of his ancestral lands north of the Rio Grande, and made a personal commitment to avenge what he considered wrongs perpetrated against his countrymen. At dawn on September 29, 1859, Cortina, at the head of a large body of men (variously estimated at between 50 and 90), mostly mounted, entered the town. With military precision, Cortina placed guards at key intersections and strategic locations, sent a party to free the jail prisoners, and also sent small parties to the homes of Brownsville residents whom he considered to be the worst persecutors of his people "to square accounts" with them. Four Brownsville residents were thus found and gunned down that morning. Juan Cortina was in complete control of the city that day, and having savored the satisfaction of completely demoralizing the citizens of Brownsville, he withdrew to Matamoros.[8]

Following Cortina's withdrawal, Brownsville's citizens understandably felt vulnerable to a repeated attack, as the men on Cortina's "hit list" had not all been dealt with, and furthermore, there had been no federal troops at Fort Brown for over six months. A sort of volunteer "homeguard" was organized; the streets leading into the town were barricaded, and volunteers were assigned to man the barricades around the clock. For the several weeks that the town felt threatened, the Town Hall served as headquarters for the defense force, "and the Town Hall bell would ring out to announce the hour of the changing of the guard."[9]

Two years later, Texas seceded from the Union, and the new state government demanded the surrender of all public property held by U.S. forces along the Rio Grande. The Federal forces decided not to resist, and a peaceful evacuation of the border posts was effected. The Texas Volunteers thereupon took possession of all the garrisons along the border. Soon thereafter the United States Navy blockaded the Confederacy's seaports and Brownsville found itself becoming the "backdoor of the Trans-Mississippi South," plunging into what is without doubt the most vibrant, exciting era in the history of Brownsville and Matamoros. Confederate cotton was brought overland by wagon trains to Brownsville, crossed over to Matamoros and shipped on European flag ships from the neutral port of Bagdad. The wagons returned laden with war material and other imported merchandise. Hundreds of Europeans and more than a few Yankees from northeastern manufacturing cities came to the "twin cities" to get in on the action; immense fortunes were made largely in cotton and transport enterprises.[10] Brownsville was also a rip-roaring, lawless town, described

by a visiting British Guards colonel as "the rowdiest town in Texas, which was the most lawless state in the Confederacy. The shooting down and stringing-up system were most in vogue."[11]

This situation lasted until November 1, 1863, when a Federal force of about 4,000 men under the command of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks landed at Brazos de Santiago. Confederate General H.P. Bee, in command of a small force at Fort Brown, upon receiving word of the landing, issued orders for the immediate evacuation of the garrison. On November 3 he set fire to all buildings on the post, to the cotton stored in the garrison as well as in town, and to all buildings on the post. He then hastily withdrew his troops northward to Santa Gertrudis (now Kingsville), leaving behind a thoroughly devastated military post for the Federals to occupy as well as a thoroughly demoralized civilian population.[12]

Our city bell clanged again, but this time there were no forces of public order to respond. The fire from Fort Brown spread and destroyed a downtown area fronting on the river. And finally, the powder magazine at Fort Brown exploded, shaking every building in town, causing widespread destruction of property and great panic among the populace. Rumors spread that the Yankees would put the people to the sword, and the ferries across the Rio Grande were unable to handle the crowds of people who attempted to cross to Matamoros. For two days there was complete chaos and lawlessness, until the federals arrived and restored order.[13] This had been "Brownsville's darkest hour." The civil authorities fled to Matamoros, and Brownsville went under military law. Since the buildings at the garrison had all been destroyed, a large number of the Federal troops were quartered in the town. Public buildings were taken over, including the Town Hall, but the market resumed operations as some of the people returned to Brownsville.[14]

The Federal forces remained in Brownsville until July 30, 1864, when they withdrew for service elsewhere and the town was immediately reoccupied by the Confederates. The market belfry bell had been in service all through this time, and it was used - and misused - according to the regulations established by the civil and military governments then in control.[15]

Following the dissolution of the Confederacy and the cessation of hostilities in May 1865, Federal troops once again occupied Brownsville. For the rest of that year Brownsville had no civil government. It remained exclusively under military rule. However, in late December the commanding officer at Fort Brown ordered an election to select the members of a city council. The new city council, under Mayor Moorehead, was sworn in on January 3, 1866. Its

initial task was to adopt a new set of by-laws and rules of order, including new rules for the operation of the city market, inasmuch as the old city records had disappreared during the war. After a number of issues of higher priority had been settled, the City Council, meeting on May 23, 1866, took on the issue of the market bell. As recorded in the Council's minute book:

"Alderman Kingsbury informed the City Council that Mr. Chamberlain, owner of the belfry bell in the market building, had requested him some time since to present his claim to the City Council for the said bell, that having neglected to do so at the time and the City Council not having met for some time, the council rooms being occupied by the District Court, he had paid Mr. Chamberlain the amount of his claim, $60.00 in specie, and presented the bill to the Council for the same amount."[16]

Alderman Kingsbury was, of course, concerned over the prospects of his being reimbursed, and the issue was not settled very speedily, for the Council was divided as to whether his claim should be honored. The Council's minutes of June 2, 1866 revealed a new facet to the issue of the bell:

"Alderman Glavecke, chairman of the Committee on Police, reported that he had examined the bell in the belfry of the Market House; that the eye or hook to which the clapper was fastened was broken, but that the bell could be easily fixed without losing the sound."[17]

There was considerable discussion as to whether the bell would lose its tone when repaired. It was not until the meeting of June 28,1866 that both the repair of the bell and the reimbursement to Mr. Kingsbury were settled:

"Alderman Browne stated to the City Council that the belfry bell for which a claim had been presented by the Rev. Chamberlain was used by the city for several years back. That it had been broken while in the possession of the United States authorities; that a mechanic had proposed to repair the hook for the clapper without the bell losing any of its sound, and moved that the $60.00 paid by Alderman Kingsbury be refunded, which motion was carried.

"On motion the Market Committee was authorized to have the bell repaired at the lowest possible rate, and the City Treasurer was authorized to exchange U.S. currency for specie to pay Mr. Kingsbury the amount of his bill."[18]

In this, the last quarter of the twentieth century, it seems rather ludicrous that the City Council should have

devoted so much time and discussion to an agenda item dealing with the payment for and repair of a bell. We must be mindful, however, that in the mid-nineteenth century much of the activity in the community had been governed by this market-house bell, already silent for nearly three years (since the Union occupation), and the citizens of Brownsville were eager for its return to service. To them the bell was not a minor issue. And return to service it did. On December 11, 1866 the following rules for ringing the bell were adopted by city ordinance:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3:00 A.M. | - to open the market | - | 6 double raps |
| 9:00 A.M. | - close the market | - | 6 double raps |
| 4:00 P.M. | - to open the market | - | 6 double raps |
| 8:00 P.M. | - to close the market | - | 6 double raps[19] |

Less than a year later, on the night of October 5-6, 1867, Brownsville was battered by a disastrous hurricane which left the town in ruin. Virtually all buildings were severely damaged, including Town Hall, which completely lost its roof, including the belfry. The market-house bell was later found in scattered fragments on a vacant lot one and a half blocks away, now occupied by the Masonic Temple (originally the first Cameron County Courthouse), it having been blown there by the force of the wind. Thus ended the Rev. Hiram Chamberlain's bell, the first of Brownsville's market-house bells, after fifteen years of intermittent service.

Work on restoration of the Town Hall and Market commenced without delay, and construction was completed early in 1868. Its appearance had been altered, however. It now consisted of only one story covered by a pitched roof with six dormer windows on each side, thus accommodating meeting halls and offices within the "attic" space. Initially, the structure had no belfry. Instead, some sort of small bell (possibly hand-held) was used to summon the City Council and police, and which the citizens ridiculed by referring to it as a "cow bell."[20]

The decade of the 1870's was a period of growing trade with Mexico and prosperity for Brownsville. With the completion of the Rio Grande Railroad in 1873, linking Brownsville with Point Isabel, goods could be speedily transported between the twin cities and the oceangoing ships. And as Brazos de Santiago was then the only practical harbor between Indianola, Texas and Tampico, Mexico, Brownsville monopolized the trade of mining districts of northeastern Mexico.[21] In these circumstances the need for a suitable bell to announce the many functions of government and trade became increasingly evident, and in early 1875 public pressure began to be felt at City Hall. On March 22, 1875 the Council ordered that a bell be purchased for the use of the city, the same to be ordered at once, and to be 36 inches

in diameter and of steel amalgam.[22] The Brownsville firm of Bloomberg and Raphael agreed to handle the transaction. By mid-July word was received from Mr. Bloomberg in New York that a bell meeting the specifications could not be obtained in that city for the amount appropriated, namely $50.00. At this, the Council deferred action until an unspecified future date.[23] There can be no doubt that the city fathers of that time made careful use of the public funds entrusted to them.

But the citizenry could no longer wait for a bargain. Brownsville historian Eddie Valent succinctly describes the whirlwind events of the ensuing weeks as follows:

> "The insistent demands by the public and the merchants for a bell were again directed at the City Hall and by the middle of October 1875 a bell had been purchased; for, on October 25 a claim was paid to George Willman in the amount of $57.50 for a bell and the freight on same. At regular session on October 18, 1875, S. Brown and Francisco Alcedo had proposed to the city council to build a cupola for the sum of $200.00, the city to furnish all materials. This proposal was laid on the table and his Honor the Mayor jointly with the committee on Buildings and Grounds was authorized to contract for a suitable belfry or cupola in which to install the bell. One week later the committee reported that they had entered into contract with S. W. Brooks to build a belfry upon the City Hall, and by November 22, bills to Brooks in the amount of $125.00 for building the belfry and to G. S. Smith for $12.25 for painting same, were paid."[24]

The new bell was installed in the belfry without delay, and one November 17, 1875 an ordinance was enacted regulating its ringing as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4:00 AM | - to open market | - 6 double raps |
| 5:00 AM | - to relieve night police | - 10 double raps |
| 10:00 AM | - to close the market | - 6 double raps |
| 4:00 PM | - to open the market | - 6 double raps |
| 7:30 PM | - to relieve day police | - 10 double raps |
| 8:00 PM | - to close the market | - 6 double raps |
| Midnight | - to close the bar-rooms | - 6 double raps |
| Alarm | - rattling clapper as long as necessary | |
| To summon City Council - ring bell 6 minutes | | |
| <u>Sunday Regulations</u>: | | |
| 9:00 AM | - to close stores | - 6 double raps |
| 4:00 PM | - to open stores | - 6 double raps[25] |

The closing rings at 10:00 AM and 8:00 PM terminated all meat sales, and an auction ("las tandas") of unsold meats took place shortly after each closing. The other merchandise stalls, e.g. bread and pastry, fruits and vegetables, tobacco, candy, firewood and charcoal vendors, fondas

(restaurants) remained open, and closed at the discretion of the owners.[26]

Protection Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was organized the following year, and on October 2, 1876 the ringing regulations were amended to include fire alarm signals. In case of fire, the bell clapper was rattled by hand for a determined period - usually about two minutes - followed by one, two, three or four loud, double-rap signals to denote the city ward in which fire had started.[27]

This second city market bell during the ensuing thirty-seven years never failed to ring out its commands. Indeed, it came to be recognized as the best known of the town's institutions. The bell's significance to the community is best described by Eddie Valent when he noted that:

> "Many of the old-timers would swear by all that was holy that the bell had a pleasing personality, but that at times a rough unpolished commandering character would crop up; for, so varied were its demands on her subjects. For many years the bell from its lofty perch in the belfry continued to reign over the surrounding area; summoning to municipal gathering; sounding the alarm; signaling distress, riot or tumult; starting or stopping the labors of the masses; pealing a joyous occasion or broadcasting a sorrowful event; or simply to open the markethouse."[28]

The period of 1910 through 1912 was one of feverish building activity and community improvement for Brownsville. A sewage system had been installed, electric light and potable water systems expanded and improved, a new county courthouse and jail built, a bridge to Matamoros completed, a deep-water port was in the initial planning stages, - and the old Market/Town Hall building came in for extensive remodeling and expansion. Historian A. A. Champion offers the following account of the commencement of construction work on the venerable building:

> "On Monday morning, March 4, 1912, to the strains of music from the Chili Band, workmen began the work of tearing down the old Market House, preparatory to replacing it with a modern and more sanitary building. Those who had stalls in the old building began moving their wares to adjoining buildings, some of them moving into the Armstrong and others into the Gavito buildings and other places near the Market House. A crowd had gathered to witness the scene. The carpenters ascended to the roof and began to dismantle the old bell and hauled it to the ground and immediately began to tear down the belfry."[29]

During the period of construction, while the full second

story was being restored on the building, the bell hung from a huge horcón (forked tree trunk) on the south plaza of city hall, and continued to announce the town's activities. "Here a few mischievous boys felt the stinging lash of Market Marshal Joaquín Treviño's whip, as they were caught, clapper in hand, trying to sneak in a few signals of their own."[30]

Completion of the building's remodeling on September 28, 1912 was in some respects a milestone in Brownsville's history. The new building now came to be increasingly known as "City Hall" - no longer "Town Hall." But most citizens continued to call it "the market house." Perhaps of greater consequence to the community, this event signaled the beginning of the end of the venerable institution of the Town Hall/Market bell. Eddie Valent offers a touching account of its passing:

> "When restoration was complete the bell did not return to the roof of the market-house but instead was placed in the belfry tower of the Fire Department Building, located next to the market, for reasons of convenience. This building housed also the Texas Cafe and so does to this day.
>
> "At the completion of the City Hall renovation, Ygnacio Domínguez,hero of the 1906 Negro raid, was appointed Market Marshal, and the transmitting of the signals over the bell were included in his duties. He carried out zealously the provisions of the bell ringing ordinance, and as the days passed and accumulated into years, his close friends noted a gleam of delight in the fading eyes of the veteran police officer, as he would signal the order at hand over the bell. His association with the bell, one of his first loves, brought back to his memory in the waning years of his life his many actions as a police officer, dating back to 1873, the year of his induction into the Brownsville police force.
>
> "Saturday, New Year's Eve of 1927 at 7:30, Domínguez passed away, and with his demise the market bell went silent, never to be rung again by the hand of man while at the Fire Station.
>
> "The hurricane of the fall of 1933 roared through the city doing considerable damage. The bell swinging in the belfry, tolled at exasperating intervals, in muffled tones, her last dirge into the blasting wind, until it was shaken loose from its moorings, crashed onto a parked car at the curb in front of the Texas Cafe. The bell's landing on the car probably saved it from complete destruction.
>
> "The bell was not installed again in the tower

but was stored in the Fire Station and later was loaned to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on Lincoln Street. Here the tone of the bell seemed to have mellowed as it called to worship the faithful for a lengthy period of time, lasting until 1964. At this time the Guadalupe church installed a modern amplifying system in the bell tower and the market bell came down. It was taken to little St. Therese Church, near the water port, where it resumed calling to worship the good people of that chapel."[31]

## POSTSCRIPT

In 1949 our City Hall underwent a complete metamorphosis. The market arches were filled in, the entire structure was remodeled to accommodate municipal offices, and the exterior was plastered with a coating of stucco in an attempt at "Spanish revival" style of architecture. One bright feature emerged from this transformation: a belfry--a graceful, Romanesque tower resembling that of an eighteenth century Spanish mission - was added to the south end of the building. It remained empty for a quarter century.

In November 1974, largely through the efforts of the Brownsville Historical Association, with the cooperation of city officials and the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, the old bell was returned to City Hall and installed in the belfry. At first the bell was rigid and could be rung only by moving the clapper. This engineering problem was apparently solved at the time of the building's latest remodeling in 1985, and the bell now swings freely, ready to perform symbolic service in it remaining years, perhaps to mark joyous occasions celebrated by the community.

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23. Valent, *Op. Cit.* p. 4

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25. City of Brownsville, Texas, *Op. Cit.* p. 523

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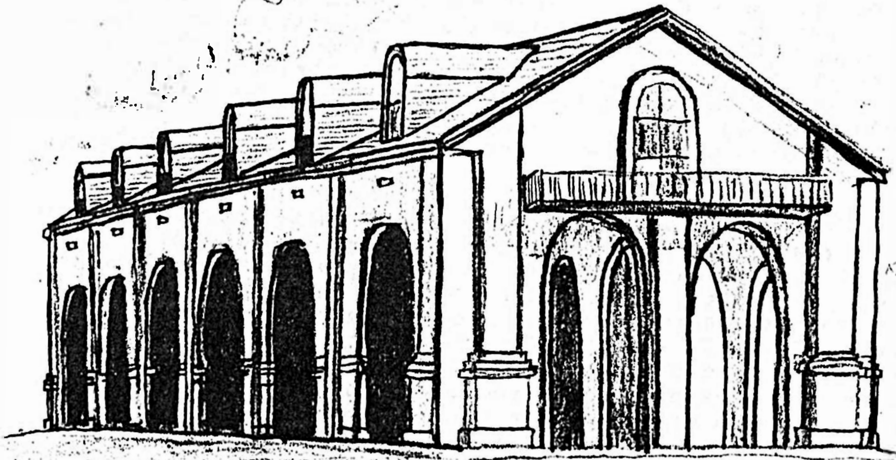



CITY MARKET BUILDING 1850
BROWNSVILLE
TEXAS

# ESPÍRITU SANTO GRANT

by

Ruby A. Wooldridge

The Espíritu Santo grant is one of the five Spanish land grants made by the Crown of Spain. Three Mexican land grants were made by the government of Mexico. The territory included in the eight grants were once part of Nuevo Santander, a province of the Kingdom of New Spain. With the expulsion of the Spanish government by Mexico in 1821, this province became the State of Tamaulipas, but when Texas was proclaimed a Republic, March 2, 1836, this land was claimed by Texas. On April 18, 1846, Nueces County was formed, including this territory, with its boundaries extending from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande. From Nueces County, the original Cameron County was created on February 2, 1848, after Mexico had recognized Texas' claim to the territory on February 2, 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This grant and the other grants were confirmed by the legislature of Texas in 1852.

Since Spain was anxious to establish settlements in the New World before some other foreign power would, she sent out expeditions to find suitable locations for such settlements. The most important expedition into the territory concerning the Espíritu Santo grant was made by José de Escandón, on January 7, 1747. He left Querétaro with seven divisions which consisted of seven hundred and sixty-five soldiers. These divisions proceeded from seven points on the frontier with the mouth of the Rio Grande as their destination, for it was here they were to meet on or about February 24, 1747.

The seven divisions under Escandón made a thorough exploration of the territory between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande and found four places suitable for settlements. Blas María de Falcon was given the site at the junction of the San Juan and Rio Grande rivers, which later became the villa of Camargo on March 5, 1749. East of this site on the Rio Grande, land was given to Carlos Cantú, which became the villa of Reynosa, March 14, 1749. José Florencia Chapa selected a place called Mier, near the best ford on the Lower Rio Grande. Revilla, later known as Guerrero, was established in 1750.

In the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the Spanish land grants fell into three distinct groups. The first group were the porciones or undivided assignments made by the Crown in 1767. These porciones, in the jurisdiction of Laredo, Revilla(Guerrero), Mier, Camargo, and Reynosa, were alloted on the east or north bank of the Rio Grande for agricultural

and grazing purposes.[1]

The second group of grants was composed of much larger tracts of land. They were granted to a limited numer of individuals between 1767 and 1810, for ranching and grazing purposes. These grants included the land of present day Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy counties.[2]

The third group was composed of assignments of vacant land which were made to individuals between 1770 and 1810. These were the lands that had reverted back to the Spanish Crown through sequestration or condemnation proceedings and were then reassigned to a second or third group of applicants.[3]

The Espíritu Santo grant was made in 1781, by the Crown of Spain to José Salvador de la Garza, an original settler of Camargo and grantee of one of the porciones. José Salvador asked the Crown of Spain for this grant after he married María Gertrudis de la Garza Falcón, as she had property consisting of some horses, mules, and horned cattle, and he needed additional land to pasture them. José Salvador had settled on this land about 1770, but the grant was not made until 1781, making this grant of one composition.

It took José Salvador from 1772 until 1781 to obtain a title to this land. In 1772, he asked the authorities of the new Colony of New Santander for these lands, but in the meantime, José Narcisco Cavazos also applied to the authorities for this same land, which he called Santa Rita. José Salvador opposed Narcisco's claim on the grounds that he had already submitted a claim to the land, but due to the negligence of his attorneys, the grant had not yet been given. José Salvador also presented five witnesses who declared that for the last eight or nine years, José Salvador had occupied this land in person by tenants and by Indians, and that he was the first settler. With this evidence, Francisco Xavier de Gamboa, Oider and Special Judge, told Cavazos that his purchase could not be admitted. Finally, on June 30, 1779, inspection was made of the land and on July 1, the survey of the land begun.[4] On July 22, 1779, the Chief Justice, at a public auction held in Camargo, sold the land to José Salvador at twenty dollars per league. Later, José Salvador's attorney asked the attorney of the Treasury to reduce the price of the land and to settle the boundary between Bartolomé Fernández's grant and De la Garza's grant. Fernández had objected to the last line of the survey because it included an improvement of his, but he had failed to produce his titles to this land so adjustment could be made. As for the price of the land it had been valued previously at two dollars per square league and one bit (12-1/2 cents) for a caballería, but at the auction the price had been raised to twenty dollars per square league. In answer to the request about the price of the land, the attorney of the Treasury,

Martin de Arandon, found that in the original petition of Cavazos the lands had been valued at twelve bits, and he also said that other lands in this vicinity had recently sold for two and four dollars a league, so therefore, he recommended that Gamboa fix the price, which Gamboa did, reducing the price to eight dollars per league. José Salvador paid the money into the Royal Treasury, on August 31, 1780, but in October the Attorney of the Audiencia recommended that the price of this land be fixed at ten dollars per league, and after José Salvador had paid the difference into the treasury, and when one hundred dollars had been paid to the Majesty for giving this confirmation, the grant would be confirmed. José Salvador paid the additional money and on September 26, 1781, received the grant of Espíritu Santo, consisting of fifty-nine leagues of land. (One league being 4428.4 acres) This grant was recognized by the State of Tamaulipas in 1834, confirmed by the Legislature of Texas in 1852, and patented by the State of Texas in 1859.

José Salvador had married María Gertrudis de la Garza Falcón, and by this marriage they had three children: Francisca Xaviera, Blas María, and María Antonia Margarita. After the death of José Salvador, his estate was partitioned by his wife and children; the widow took the Espíritu Santo lands and the children took the other property. In María Gertrudis' will she designated her daughter, María Xaviera, her son, Blas Maria, and her grandchildren, Josef (Joseph) Antonio Margil Prieto and Josef Manuel Prieto, children of children of María Antonia Margarita, as her heirs.

The heirs of María Gertrudis partitioned their estate, not in writing but by possession, into three shares of about twenty leagues each. Francisca Xaviera (Javiera), the eldest daughter, had married José de Goseascochea, a Lieutentant of the Militia of Camargo and subsequently Captain and Chief Justice. They had two children: Estefana, who married twice, the first time to Francisco (Vicente) Cavazos and the second time to Trinidad Cortina; Feliciana, the other daughter, married Juan José Tijerina. Francisca Xaviera took as her inheritance the upper one-thirds of the sixty leagues and made Santa Rita her headquarters ranch. She died August 20, 1833, leaving her daughters, Estefana and Feliciana as her heirs.

Blas María on July 25, 1792 married María Francisca Cavazos, Narcisco's daughter.[5] Blas María took the middle one-third of the grant, which included "Rancho Viejo," as his inheritiance. Later in the litigation over the Brownsville Townsite, Rancho Viejo became an important point of call in proving the occupation and limit of Salvador's grant. The ranch does not exist today, but a resaca still bears its name.[6] Blas María died on May 15, 1802, and since he had no children, he left four-fifths of his estate to his wife and one-fifth to her niece, María Josefa Cavazos, whom they had

reared. María Francisca died on March 6, 1839 and left her estate, minus ten leagues of land that she had sold to Captain José Miguel Paredes in 1835, to María Josefa and to her mother María Ygnacia Cavazos, who was María Francisca's sister. María Josefa married Rafael Cavazos, and they had four children.

María Antonia Margarita married Pedro López Prieto on July 28, 1783. They had two children and heirs, Joseph Antonio Margil and Manuel. Margarita took the lower-one third of the grant as her inheritance.

On November 10, 1853, the heirs of the estate agreed to partition (parol partition) this grant into six shares. Estefana and Feliciana, heirs of Francisca Xaviera, each received one-sixth or ten leagues of the grant. María Francisca's part was set aside to María Josefa in the partition. She received a one-sixth share, and José Miguel Paredes received a one-sixth share. Margarita's share went to her two sons, Joseph Antonio and Manuel. Joseph Antonio had married María Jacinta Olivares, and they had four children, but all of them died unmarried before the year 1828. After Joseph Antonio died, María Jacinta married Reynaldo Treviño, but it was from Joseph Antonio, her first husband, that she received a one-sixth share of the grant. Manuel had married Trinidad Tijerina, and they had five children. These children together received a one-sixth had of the grant from their father's interest.

In the meantime, the lands of this grant changed hands many times and in doing so caused prolonged litigation in the courts over the titles. It was finally decided among the owners to settle these boundary disputes by getting a court order to partition the grant, so in 1889, the grant was partitioned into thirty-two shares.[7]

The titles to this grant became more complex after Mexico gained her independence. As stated before the early settlement of Congregation de Refugio, situated across from present day Brownsville, became a municipality on January 30, 1826, under the name of Matamoros. During the same year the Ejidos (town commons) around and about this new town were marked out and proceedings were commenced to expropriate the lands for municipal purposes. Matamoros was entitled to acquire four square leagues of land in a square centering at the center of its plaza. That part of the town commons north of the Rio Grande was upon the Espíritu Santo grant and on that part of the grant that belonged to María Francisca Cavazos. She was in possession of the property at that time, and she agreed to the proceedings on the condition that her ranch and labor (field) were left for her own use. Later, it was found that there were certain irregularities in this expropriation proceedings, for the Mexican government had failed to pay the owner the value of the condemned land.

The City of Matamoros made grants known as "Labor Titles," and technically known as titles by emphyteusis or emphyteutical titles to various persons. They are not titles in fee, but are lease holds; they can be inherited but are also terminable by the will of the grantor.[8]

After Texas claimed this land, the Legislature of the State of Texas in January, 1850, granted the whole area in the town commons to the City of Brownsville and at the same time incorporated the City. As a result, there were four types of claimants to the townsite of Brownsville: heirs of the original Spanish Grantee; City of Brownsville; certificate holders; and holder of the emphyteutical grants.

There was much dispute over these titles but the first decision rendered by the United States Circuit Court in 1852 cancelled the labor titles held under location and surveys and established the title under the original grantee.[9] James Stillman, through various conveyances, obtained the title to the larger part of the lands in Brownsville and his heirs then conveyed their interest to the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company, in 1881.[10]

Today, Brownsville is the main city of the Espíritu Santo Grant and the county seat of Cameron County. When Brownsville was merely a part of the ejidos of Matamoros, it was called Refugito. Later is was named Brownsville after Fort Brown, which was named after Major Jacob Brown. Brownsville was not the first village in this grant, as Mansfield, Freeport, and Channondale were the first American villages. They were organized in the neighborhood of the Old International Bridge, but are no longer in existence.[11]

Another important village within this area was that of Santa Rita. About 1830, the Rio Grande River changed its course and left a "banco." In 1834, the Mexican government granted this banco to John Stryker under the name of "Banco de Santa Rita." Cameron County was created in February, 1848, with Santa Rita as the county seat. While the county was being organized between February and September, Santa Rita lost its prominent place to Brownsville and by a vote in December, 1848, Brownsville was officially designated the county seat. Santa Rita no longer exists, and the land where it was located was bought by James Grogan and Simón Mussina; here they established a new town, "La Villanueva de Santa Rosa." This town did not prosper, although the name still exits today.[12]

Fort Brown, which played a prominent part in the history of the United States during the Mexican War, was once part of the Espíritu Santo grant. The United States government took the first step towards condemnation of this reservation in 1853, but the proceedings went no further than the

appraisement of the land at fifty thousand dollars. The land was finally condemned at the above valuation and the money with interest was paid into the bank on November 29, 1853. The title to this land was in dispute in the courts at this time, but finally on February 20, 1879, with the United States Supreme Court's decision of giving title to the original grantee, the final judgment of condemnation was made. This land was never included in the partitioning of the Espiritu Santo grant. Fort Brown today is owned by the City of Brownsville since its abandonment by the United States government.[13]

Information from thesis of Ruby A. Wooldridge, The Spanish and Mexican Land Grants of Present Day Cameron County, 1951.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas has Spanish-Mexican Heritage," The Brownsville Herald, December 31, 1948.

[2] "Ranches Played Important Part in Valley Growth," The Brownsville Herald, January 1, 1950.

[3] Abstract of Title Covering the the Coast Lands Farms in Cameron County, Skellton Abstract Company, p. 1.

[4] Abstract of Title to the West Brownsville Addition to the City of Brownsville, Cameron County, Valley Abstract Company, Brownsville, Texas, pp. 6-7.

[5] Abstract of Title to the West Brownsville Addition to the City of Brownsville, Cameron County, Valley Abstract Company, Brownsville, Texas, pp. 10-19.

[6] "Cameron County's First County Seat," The Brownsville Herald, May 10, 1936.

[7] Title of Abstract of West Brownsville Addition, Valley Abstract Company, pp. 19-33.

[8] Abstract of Title to the Park View Addition to the City of Brownsville, Cameron County Title Company, p. 15.

[9] Abstract from Land Title Office of H.M. Skelton, pp. 55-56.

[10] Abstract of Title of West Brownsville Addition, Valley Abstract Company, pp. 19-33.

[11] "Lower Rio Grande Valley has Color and Tradition," The Brownsville Herald, January 1, 1950.

[12] "Ranch Viejo" The Brownsville Herald, May 10, 1936.

[13] Abstract of Title from the Land Title Office of H. M. Skelton, Brownsville, Texas, pp. 84-88.

WHEN THE NAVY WAS STATIONED AT FORT BROWN

by

Bruce Aiken

The period following the Civil War was troublesome for the residents of Brownsville and the surrounding ranchlands. The influx of settlers brought new growth and new problems. Cattle stealing was a way of life--political activity in Mexico, particularly by Generals de la Barra and Porfirio Diaz, was a matter of great concern to the United States.[1] The stability that existed was a result of a small force of army troops stationed at Fort Brown.[2] Yet additional efforts were necessary to quell the existing turmoil.

In 1875 a rather unusual military arrangement was undertaken--one whose mission called for a coordination of efforts between the US Navy and the US Cavalry. Similar efforts by various army branches had met with great tactical success. Artillery supporting infantry, cavalry protecting flanks of main army forces, these were time-tried methods. But this new effort would be a real challenge. Thus, under these conditions the US Navy gunboat USS Rio Bravo was ordered to Fort Brown.[3]

It was November 16, 1875, when Commander George C. Remey, USN, recorded in the letter book his arrival at the new station.[4] A berth was assigned at the wharf immediately behind the Post Headquarters building, a large brick structure on the bank of the Rio Grande. A new era of inter-service cooperation was ready to begin.

Over the next four years a lot of activity took place, but little is known to support effective results. It is known that the political activity in Mexico not only continued but increased. Efforts to curtail cattle theft met with little success. When the crossing point to be used by the cattle thieves was known, the gunboat could lie in wait while the cavalry did its job. This was seldom the case. The two branches were expected to work as a team to curtail the theft. It takes little imagination to understand the problems faced by both the navy and the cavalry. The Rio Grande was a meandering stream with so many curves a riverboat could travel five to ten miles, yet be little more than one mile from the starting point. On land, the cavalry following trails through the thick mesquite brushland found conditions no better than those faced by the navy. How either group knew where the other was located at any given time was remarkable. It was one of the world's best guessing games.

While all this was going on, a major problem was developing. The banks of the Rio Grande behind Post Headquarters at Fort Brown were eroding away at a dangerous rate--there was immediate danger the large brick building would tumble into the river. Army engineers, called to study the problem, found the answer--the USS Rio Bravo. It seems that when the gunboat was tied to the wharf, its bow, facing upstream, parted the strong river current. One-half was directed towards the middle of the river. The other half was injected into the bank alongside the vessel, the force being strong enough to melt away the soft river soil. Immediately, the USS Rio Bravo was assigned a new berth, a quartermaster wharf downstream.[6] Congress granted a $25 thousand appropriation, a rather large sum at the time, to embed pilings into the bank behind Post Headquarters, thus reverse the erosion and save the building from disaster.[7]

The decision to relocate the USS Rio Bravo to a new wharf, in fact several other wharves, proved only to have transferred the original problem to a new site. With each station, erosion took its toll until the Commander at Fort Brown found it necessary to cordially invite the navy to find a home elsewhere.[8]

The navy docked the USS Rio Bravo across the Rio Grande from Brownsville at a little ferry landing called Santa Cruz. (The site is approximately where the Gateway Bridge now meets Mexican soil.) Here the erosion problem was insignificant, probably because the dock was on the inside of the river curve and the gunboat remained operating from the site until the boat sank into the muddy waters of the river whose name it bore.

Today, spars are visible on the left river bank several yards downstream from the Gateway Bridge. Old timers tell us these are the remains of the once proud little gunboat that so gallantly served in those troubled times. ?Quien sabe?

## ENDNOTES

[1] Letter Book, USS Rio Bravo, November 1875.

[2] Post Returns, Fort Brown, Texas, 1875-79, Microfilm 617, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

[3] Fort Brown Military Reservation Investigation, House of Representatives, 50th Congress, Misc. doc. No. 419, Washington D. C., June 4, 1888.

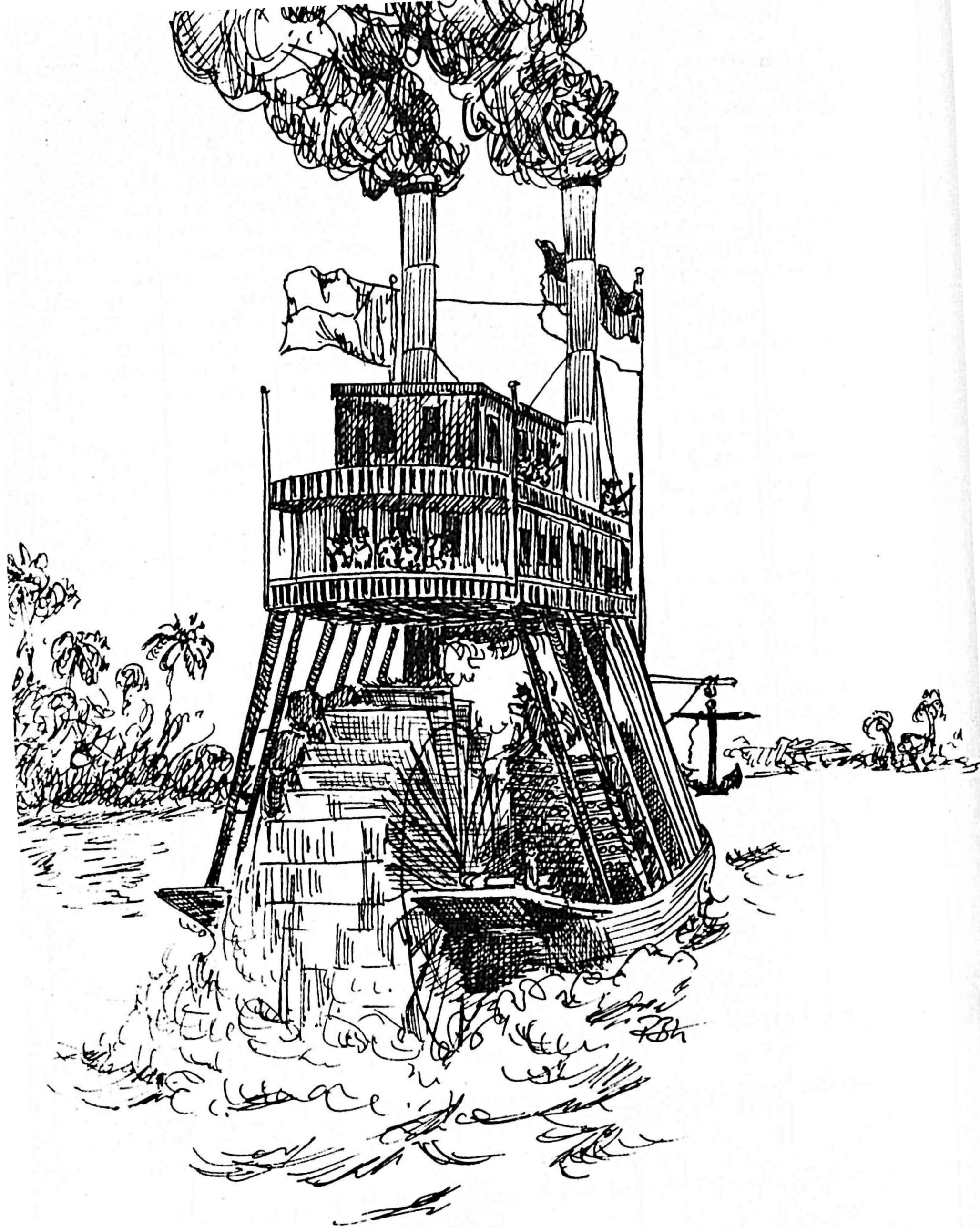
[4] Letter Book, USS Rio Bravo, November 1875.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.



One of the early "Steamboats" on the Rio Grande carrying freight and passengers from Brazos de Santiago to Brownsvill Santa Maria, Rio Grande City and Roma, Texas.

# "The Twin Cities": A Historical Synthesis of the Socio-Economic Interdependence of the Brownsville-Matamoros Border Community

by

Antonio N. Zavaleta

## INTRODUCTION

The history of the Brownsville-Matamoros border community brings to life the fullest meaning of the concept of symbiosis. In the biological sense, the term describes the mutual interdependence of two organisms. However, when applied to bordertowns the concept implies the idea of interrelated cultures, economies, and societies. One author described the relationship this way:

> "being on the border as they are, and serving different national economic regions, the two cities have a symbiotic relationship, both in complementary and supplementary senses, in that services available in one city complement or supplement and generally do not compete, biotic relationship is necessary for the economic coexistence of two large cities located so close to each other."[1]

An examination of the rise and fall of the population and economy of Brownsville-Matamoros reveals a mutual dependency founded upon interwoven relationships and networks. It also reveals the emergence of a unique cultural phenomenon, different from either of the great parent cultures, but dependent upon each in certain ways.

Numerous investigators, both popular and academic, have alluded to the interdependence of the U.S.-Mexico border community, usually focusing on single facets such as economy or society. In his book, On the Border, Tom Miller states:

> "ironies and contradictions thrive on the border between the U.S. and Mexico, a region that does not adhere to the economic, ethical, political, or cultural standards of either country."[2]

Indeed as Miller points out:

> "the symbiotic relationships shared by the many

pairs of border towns...are born of necessity. The cities couple like reluctant lovers in the night embracing for fear that letting go could only be worse."[3]

What few, if any observers have done, is examine the origins of the symbiosis from a historical perspective for a specific pair of bordertowns. This article undertakes that task, to examine the historical development of Brownsville-Matamoros, and the inseparable tangle of roots that have developed over the centuries.

The symbiotic nature of bordertowns is a single aspect of numerous components which must be brought into focus in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the significance of the U.S.-Mexico border community in the 20th century.

A general theory of international borders can be applied with modification to the U.S.-Mexico border, since it is unlike any other in the world. Many of the forces which have shaped the border generate from the fact that the developed side of a border (U.S.) produces forces which "pulls" people from the underdeveloped side (Mexico) to the developed side. In addition, conditions on the underdeveloped side produce forces which "push" people to the developed side.

Another significant factor which has historically shaped U.S.-Mexico bordertowns is their status as central places and as service centers. In recent years "central place" has become a major theory in explaining the relationship between geography, population and their economies.

A complete and functioning model for bordertowns can only be seen as a symphony of symbiosis, border theory, central place, and culture, which has been orchestrated by time and reviewed by history.

## A BORDER THEORY

The work of Hansen enables us to conceptualize the development of the Brownsville-Matamoros community from the perspective of border theory with a U.S.-Mexico application. In his book, The Border Economy, Hansen reviews the work of twentieth-century location theorists, Walter Christaller and August Losch, indicating that although neither had developed a systematic theory for border regions, they tended to regard them as disadvantaged areas because of the barriers to international trade and the threat of military invasion.[4] In the case of the U.S.-Mexico border and her twin communities, Brownsville-Matamoros, international trade was developed because of the border and its history of military activity.

The work of Christaller and Losch, however, provides us with a valuable glimpse into the historical formation of the

Brownsville-Matamoros border community as a centrally located service center. The "twin cities" are particularly appropriate models for central place study because there is always a mutual interdependence between any central place and its complementary region. Therefore, in the case of central places, divided only by a national boundary, it stands to reason that central places such as Brownsville-Matamoros would fit the model and be interdependent. Because of their strategic location at the end of the Rio Grande River, along the Gulf of Mexico, both the key factors of trade and transportation figured prominently in their development.

As Hansen outlines, central places located on national boundaries face specific disadvantages as well as advantages. What Christaller called the "sociopolitical separation principle," is evidenced when the two nations and their border communities demonstrate strong feelings of community and defense.[5] This feeling of nationalism and protectionism seems to supercede previously described factors affecting central place location, while political geography takes precedence. The idea that "national frontiers artificically fragment complementary regions," can certainly be substantiated in the Brownsville-Matamoros example, although equally compelling systems have been developed to downplay the "international interference" at the border.[6]

While historically, the communities have been affected by recurring war and revolution, by and large, the Brownsville-Matamoros community has tried its best to ignore the rules and regulations and intermittent wars, in order to proceed with the business of life.

Additional problems arise for central places located on national borders, since political and economic instability leads to "small complementary areas and limited development."[7] In his book, The Economics of Location, Losch argues that national boundaries hamper the economic development of the border communities because the border constitutes a block to market areas, thereby creating gaps in the market networks. In addition, he feels that border areas often have depressed economies because investors find that "unstable" political boundaries often produce negative characteristics because:

1. tariffs separate economically complementary market areas.
2. differences in language, customs, and national character have the same effect as customs duties.
3. public contracts and "official traffic" do not cross the border. And,
4. border areas are the most threatened in military terms.[8]

On the other hand, politically and economically stable

borders can and do provide many and diverse economic opportunities for the growth and development of their central service centers. Stable boundaries may lead to greater trading activity along the border, and more diversified economy because of the income derived from import-export activities.[9] Hansen indicates that:

> "export-oriented industries tend to locate near borders (or at other points where international transfers can be facilitated) in order to reduce transportation costs. In addition, the location of export activities in border regions will attract labor, capital, and related economic sectors to these regions. The conclusion that may be drawn from this position is that the existence of tariffs does not necessarily cause a diminution of economic activities in border regions. The extent to which tariffs and other barriers to exchange will repel economic activities and result in economic stagnation in border regions depends on the market characteristics of the affected industries."[10]

The history of the U.S.-Mexico border community indicates that the theories of Hansen, Christaller and Losch can be variously applied. While not always applicable, the study of the historical development of bordertowns demonstrates that both the advantages and disadvantages have applied at one time or another.

The concept of "border" is, in this case, a political barrier or boundary separating one single community into two halves. However, the border or boundary, as it is viewed from the North American cultural perspective, is very different from the Mexican concept of frontera or frontier, which refers to something on the periphery. Historically, the Anglo-American wanted to move toward the river and establish a boundary, while the Mexican strove to stay away from the frontier. The North American was drawn to the borderlands, as if by destiny, the Mexican was banished to the frontera, sent in exile from his cultural heartland. As numerous authors have described over the years, this trend led to the Americanization of the Mexican frontier, and the Mexicanization of the American border. The result is a border culture. Weaver describes it aptly:

> "A border area is actually the place where the frontiers of two nations come together, intermingling aspects of two cultures, and we must be concerned with how these overlapping frontiers influence the institutions of both nations. The omission of a theory which encompasses such overlapping phenomenon is an error which comes

from viewing an international border as a boundary, either in a cultural, economic, historical, or in any sense of the meaning of its being a clear demarcation between two entities, as being the end or beginning of something."[11]

It is from the perspective of "border culture" that we develop the concept of one irredentist community, separated by political boundaries, but not by culture. With more than a century and a half of mutual co-existence, the communities have grown together in culture and economy, while apart politically. The socio-economic growth of the Brownsville-Matamoros community has come about as a result of its unique status as a central place. Each city provides for the needs of its outlying satellites as well as for the needs of the sister or twin community across the river. For example, the histories of Brownsville and Matamoros reveal the mutual development of:

1. common economic features
2. similar governmentnal agencies
3. common social problems endemic to the area
4. other specialized activities and institutions, and
5. unique cultural practices[12]

CENTRAL PLACE THEORY

The most obvious physical contrast in the historic settlement of the U.S.-Mexico border area is the arrangement of the space between rural and urban patterns of land use. Towns arose historically to serve the needs of the local populations. The concentration of people in towns began as (1) border populations developed a need to exercise control from a centralized form of government, (2) there developed a need to have a central place for the exchange of goods, and (3) there became a need to process resource materials efficiently such as sugar, cotton, cattle.

Almost without exception, the Lower Rio Grande bordertowns can be viewed historically as central place service centers, which developed to fulfill basic human needs. The historical transition from camp, to settlement, to village, to town, along the river, exemplifies the bordertown's reason for existence. Bordertowns developed as an attempt to minimize the distance between central service places, usually located on or at major travel or transportation routes.

Prior to the development of capabilities along the border, the subsistence life-style could not support permanent markets because there was not enough demand for and supply of goods. The small surpluses produced by individual families along the border were best exchanged by barter. However, in ranch life, there was a need for outside

products. This need for very small amounts, distributed over wide ranges, could only be supplied by the emergence of, first, the itinerant peddler and later by the permanent merchant. With time, the provision of goods was a service which was provided on a permanent basis at a crossroads or major transportation route. Annual or seasonal fairs, where people from the poorest and the most remote areas of the region could go to some central place, also worked in establishing border settlements. As specialization, productivity, and the demand for trade and outside goods gradually increased, gatherings took place more often and became permanently located at a central place. Groups of ranchers and later farmers, together with merchants and service providers, developed the periodic markets and service centers at Matamoros and Brownsville in the 18th century.

From the perspective of central place theory, first Matamoros and then Brownsville personified this continuum, transcending the steps from scattered subsistence ranches, to small squatter settlements, to village life, to bordertowns by the end of the 19th century, and finally reaching the small city stage in the 20th Century. The small city serves as a district capital (Cameron County Seat, Matamoros Municipio Cabecera), whose geographic significance lies in its role as center for distribution and communication.

> "It is at the bottom of the wholesale distribution ladder, that is, the smallest market that can efficiently support a middle exchange between manufacturer and retailer. In a sense, small cities are the outposts of metropolitan life. These cities are ideally served by good roads, railroads, and they are so located that in a day a family can travel to and from the center, having time to shop and do business."[13]

Retail trade is clearly the most significant central place activity, however, as the central place develops over time, isolated retail trade develops into organized trade including wholesale. This was the fact for Matamoros in the first half of the 19th century. In addition, transportation is always a major feature of the development of any central place.

FIRST SPECULATION: 1519 to 1745

Spanish interest in the colonization of the lower Rio Grande river delta dates from the earliest record we have of the exploration and description of the area.[14] The actual settlement of the lower river valley, however, and especially the Brownsville-Matamoros communities comes relatively late in border history. From as early as 1519, the Spanish Governor of Cuba, Garay, had intentions of following the recommendations of Alonzo de Piñeda, who in 1519 briefly

explored the mouth of the river and its environs, christening it "Rio de las Palmas". Piñeda had hoped that the river with its seemingly numerous and friendly Indians would provide the Spanish with wealth and a foothold in Mexico to the north of Vera Cruz. In the early days of the Conquista, claim of land promised considerable prestige at court and a guarantee of wealth and power, thus, producing intense rivalry among the early explorers and exerting considerable pressure upon them to establish new holdings for the crown.[15]

The recorded history of the lower Rio Grande and what would eventually become the Brownsville-Matamoros border community began with a combination of military intervention and land speculation, a pattern which would become very familiar along the border well into the 20th century.

It is important to note that from the earliest attempts at colonization, the lower river area did not fit the model of the previous Spanish colonial experience. That is, as with its other northern sites, the lower river was located too far away from the seat of power and prestige in Mexico City for it to be taken very serously. Hopes of finding immeasurable wealth in the area never materialized and interest waned.

The mouth of the river was the one place along the gulf coast that Piñeda felt was best suited for colonization. Although seriously considered for a while, it was doomed to failure. Between the years 1519 to 1528, half a dozen attempts to settle the area were thwarted by a combination of vicious Indian attacks and political in-fighting among the Spaniards.[16] For the next 200 years, the lower river area, which should have been an area of major colonization in the 16th century, was left to native control.

## COLONIZATION: A BORDER SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY 1740's-1820's

The advent of the 18th century found renewed interest in the Spanish colonization of the lower river. In his book, Great River, Paul Horgan explains that,

> "from high above the map in the last years of the 17th century, the way from Mexico City to the Rio Grande was seen as a single stem, winding this way and that around mountains and through valleys and across plains, pausing at watering places and isolated missions with their little forts, keeping alive as it went an occasional provincial capital where commerce and religion found rewards, and ending at Santa Fe."[17]

The crown now wanted to establish an eastern branch of colonization extending to the Gulf creating a "Y" pattern out of the single stem described by Horgan. The renewed interest in colonization was based on an ancient Spanish fear, loss of

control of their lands to other European powers. Toward the end of the 17th century, in fact, Anglo and French colonies came dangerously close to the Spanish borders, and at several times the northern extent of Spanish rule was actually challenged. Importantly, Spanish-French border squabbles seemed to always focus around the river as a northern boundary to "reasonable" Spanish domination.

It was the lack of significant Spanish activity in the form of investment and settlement in the area, north of the Rio Grande, which eventually prompted American and European empresarios and entrepreneurs to encroach on the lower river in the early part of the 19th century. Historians agree that the Spanish efforts at colonization along the Rio Grande were historically too late to halt the invasion of foreigners and were at best a token effort. The crown would not be able to hold the area north of the river through the 19th century. However,there was one redeeming value to colonization, it established the territory known as Nuevo Santander with its northern river communities. Colonization would also establish the eastern trade route the Spaniards were looking for. One important distinguishing factor was that the route would be a river for the first 150 miles.

Nuevo Santander which encompassed over 20,000 square miles, stretched from Tampico on the southeast, to Nuevo León on the southwest, north to the river from the mission of San Juan Bautista in the west, to the mouth of the river on the Gulf of Mexico on the east.[18]

From the beginning, the river communities of northern Nuevo Santander varied from the Spanish colonial experience. The man selected to spearhead the development, Don José de Escandón, was a new breed of Spanish-Mexican. Born in Spain and member of a very prestigious family, he came to Mexico as a young military officer serving first in the Yucatan and then in Querétaro.

Escandón began his settlement with an ambitious and successful reconnaissance and mapping campaign, followed by the implementation of a settlement plan which allowed for the 765 soldiers who originally participated in the program to become farmers and ranchers, by accepting grants of land and funds to allow for resettlement. He reasoned that instead of establishing the classic Spanish settlement pattern of a mission and fortress, soldiers would lay aside their arms, though not too far, to farm and ranch and defend their land against Indian attack when it became necessary. In this manner Escandón founded fourteen communities, of which six were located along the river itself. Thus, between 1749 and 1755, the river communities of Camargo, Reynosa, Dolores, Revilla, Mier, and Laredo, were founded.[19]

From the beginning, hardship and poverty were by-words

for the river communities. Not only were they located at the very edge of the Spanish colonial empire, they were the most recently developed, and therefore viewed by Mexico City as isolated outposts on a desolate frontier. Blistering summers, followed by frigid winters, sparse rainfall, and only a thin lense of rocky soil characterized the semi-arid nature of the area. In the second half of the 18th century, from approximately 1755 to 1810, the Spanish colonists attempted to eke out an existence on the northern frontier along the river by farming small subsistence plots and by ranching. With the exception of the verdant strip along the river, the land was barren and overrun with savages.

In the original plan for the northern settlements, Escandón questioned the wisdom of expanding settlements east of Reynosa to the coast. His geographers supported the notion that the coastal low-lands were unfit for human habitation. In his history of the area Fehrenback explained it this way:

> "Escandón avoided the coast. The entire Gulf was still a fever area in the 18th century, though the richest lands lay in the lower delta of the Rio Grande. The settlements were sited far up the river, in the drier and presumably healthier climate from Reynosa west."[20]

The humid, sweltering heat, the dense scrub and underbrush, and most of all the hostile Indian population made the coastal lands seem impractical for settlement but very attractive for cattle pasturing. As our discussion departs the communities up-river to look east to the coast, it is important to recognize one of the most notable features of the Escandón river settlements. The unique distribution of land grants called "porciones" created strips of land which had river frontage but then came off from the river perpendicularly in a very narrow strip for miles, thus guaranteeing the landowner water and river bottom land for farming and pasturing and ranching land for livestock. Many of the oriiginal "porciones" remain in the same grantee families to this day. The Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande were never intended to amount to anything more than a Spanish presence along what most assumed would eventually be the northern border of Mexico. The ranching-farming subsistence way of life was designed to support life and nothing more. However, for most, poverty became a legacy which was to be passed on from generation to generation to this day. When in the early part of the 19th century capitalism and production for profit came to the river, the subsistence economy was no match, giving way almost immediately.

Indeed, in the last half of the 18th century, ranchers from Reynosa and Camargo first leased, and later purchased, pasture land in the area of present-day Matamoros needed for

their rapidly expanding herds. By 1774, a small ranching camp of semi-permanent lean-to's and jacales had sprung up in the area and was named, San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos (Saint John of the Beautiful [resacas] Lakes).[21] This small community of herdsmen were of mixed-blood, having been produced by the admixture of Native American and European progenitors. This Mestizo underclass of half-breeds was pressed into service on the ranches, and along with their families, formed the original nucleus that would some 40 years later become Matamoros.

At the close of the 18th century, missionaries from Zacatecas arrived in the area to formalize the community into a mission with church and school, and in 1797 the tiny settlement was renamed Congregación de Nuestra Señora del Refugio de los Esteros (Congregation of Our Lady of Refuge of the [resacas] Lakes) or Refugio for short.[22]

With the 19th century dawning on the river, the tiny settlement of Refugio, with its fewer than 100 residents, could not have imagined what the future had in store. In fact, all of the critical forces that would shape the border community were now in place and awaiting their cue.

At first, French and Anglo-American incursion to the area, which began about this time, was only considered a nuisance by the Spanish authorities. The older communities up-river still held the socio-economic and political advantage since the major trade route between Mexico City and the north ran through Laredo with side roads to Reynosa, Camargo, Mier, and Revilla. Foreigners were an unfamiliar and curious sight. In 1800, Spain still thought itself to be firmly entrenched in Mexico, but internal discord and foreign interest were soon to change the course of history along the river. Mexico's northern boundary, which was for the most part a desolate buffer zone between foreigners and Mexico City, was colonized too late in the era of Spanish domination for its strength to insure a strong hold on the northern frontier. The river had long been a source of boundary disputes between Spain and France, and the infant Anglo nation to the north now eyed the area as they debated manifest destiny in Congress. One significant fact at the close of the 18th century which would set changes in motion along the river was that the river from the bay to as far west as Mier was now pacified, and finally free from the threat of Indian attack. The water route from New Orleans up-river to Mier and then overland to Monterrey, Saltillo, and Mexico City, rapidly became the most desired means of travel from North America to the Mexican capitol. However, this open route also expedited foreign incursion in the area. Commercial speculation and growing Anglo-American interest in the river led Refugio's population to grow to over two thousand at the time of the Mexican War of Independence (1810-1822). Founded as nothing more than a ranch camp, the

little community began to realize her potential as a commercial center and trade route early in the 19th century. The factors which would later establish Matamoros as a major central place were now set in motion.

FOREIGN INCURSION AND COMMERCE: 1820-1900

In his Historia de Matamoros, José Raul Canseco mentions that the municipal court records of the day were replete with "foreign" names, a sign of things to come. New faces and strange tongues were everywhere along the lower river from Refugio to Laredo.[23]

The Mexican War of Independence, in 1810, initiated a series of events which would begin over one hundred years of civil and military strife along the river. The war focused the attention of the two nations on their common border and spurred the arrival of entrepreneurial speculation and economic prosperity for Refugio and eventually brought about the formation of her "twin-sister" community on the north bank, Brownsville.

By 1822, Spain had been violently banished from Mexico, which she had herself captured by violent means some 300 years earlier. The imprint of Spanish culture was left indelibly marked upon the land and the people. Independent Mexico immediately recognized the importance of Refugio's location, wasting no time in granting her port status. By 1823 the community boasted a population of 2,300. Three years later, in 1826, the state legislature of the newly formed state of Tamaulipas changed the name of Refugio to Matamoros, after the famous revolutionary leader. At the time of the name change, the first official census of Matamoros fixed her population at 2,922 inhabitants.[24]

No sooner had Spain been expelled than the first foreign land settlement speculators arrived at the new seat of government in Mexico City. Most notable was Stephen F. Austin who had left his small band of colonists on the Brazos river to await word of permission to settle in central Texas. The Austin colony was granted settlement rights and as Horgan explains:

> "It was the most fateful single act of the Mexican nation in the nineteenth century, for by it were released forces that must clash in always increasing energy until in the end they would meet in bloody battle along all but the whole course of the Rio Grande."[25]

Horgan refers to the fact that the decision to allow foreign settlement in Mexico even on the frontier, would soon give impetus for thousands of Anglo-American settlers to pour over the border into Texas. These North Americans had a

sense of nationalism founded in a Calvinistic doctrine of superiority and predestination, and the fervor of manifest destiny would soon swing the balance of power and numbers in favor of the Anglo-Texans.

In 1800, the overwhelming majority of the 15,000 Spanish-speaking residents of Nuevo Santander were located mostly south of the Rio Grande. The uninhabited zone, between the river and San Antonio de Béxar, continued to serve as a buffer zone between the Spanish river communities to the south and the soon to develop area of Anglo settlement along the Brazos and Colorado rivers in central Texas to the north. The ethnic balance of power was changing and by Texas Indpendence in 1836, the Texas empresarios, including the Austin family, had succeeded in promoting immigration to Texas at a level above 20,000 Anglo-Americans and their slaves. This number amounted to a 10:1 advantage of English-speakers over the Spanish-speaking Texans north of the Nueces river. The growing de-hispanization of Texas in the early 1830's was alarming to the Mexican intelligentsia in Mexico City and frustrations mounted as they realized that they were, for the most part, powerless to counteract the trend.[26]

Along with the Anglo settlers, who were classic frontiersmen interested only in realizing the Jeffersonian dream in Texas, followed the many and diverse service providers. The more developed European nations were in the early phases of the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution embodied a system of mass production based upon a capitalistic form of economy, and was presently extending its influence to the farthest corners of the earth. The distant river on the Mexican frontier was soon to become a major focus for entrepreneurial activity. As mentioned earlier, the land route to Mexico City was long and arduous, while the Gulf-river route shortened the trip by many months and allowed for the more secure delivery of goods. Matamoros and later Brownsville would benefit from speculative activity, increasing commerce, and by facilitating travel.

In summary then, Spain lost Mexico in the first quarter of the 19th Century. Mexico then allowed Anglo-American colonization of Texas and encouraged foreign trade along the river.

Ocean-going vessels dropped anchor off the coast of what is today Port Isabel-Boca Chica, depositing people from foreign lands, bringing with them skills, merchandise and money. Since the gulf vessels could not navigate up river, there was a need to deposit the cargos on the sands and have them hauled overland to Matamoros where the customs houses, import-export warehouses, government services, and wagon train companies would prepare the goods for the overland trip to the heartland of Mexico. It was exactly this type of

commercial opportunity along the river in the early 1800's that prompted S.F. Austin's cousin, Captain Henry Austin, in 1829, to bring his river boat the "Ariel" up the river to Matamoros. A proud ship, she sported two brass cannons and was able to carry 100,000 pounds of freight.[27] Austin began hauling merchandise up-river as far as Mier. The arrival of river boat transportation revolutionized the entire river community from Matamoros to Laredo, opening it further to foreign developement and settlement, and most importantly, set the stage for the soon to develop battle between Anglo-Texans and Mexicans for control of the river.

In the 1830's, the tension between the Mexican government and the Anglo-American settlers of Texas continued to escalate. There was considerable government regulation heaped upon the "Texians", and the Mexican attempts to abolish slavery in Texas was seen as a direct affront to the Texan way of life. Since North Americans were seen as their "most dangerous enemies" by the Mexicans, the conflicts between North Americans and Mexicans heightened. In Matamoros, for example, a new law

> "required all foreign merchants except the English, the German, and the Dutch to pay a tax on their capital in trade and on all importation during the previous year. The specific exception left only U.S. shipping suject to tax."[28]

The Americans were outraged by this direct attack on their livelihood. The Mexican General at Matamoros, Mier y Terán, had made several recommendations which characterized the Mexican fear of the Anglo colonization of Texas. For example, he wrote,

> "The government should send ethnic Mexican colonists to Texas; encourage Swiss and Germans to colonize; encourage trade between Texas and the Gulf coast of Mexico; garrison more troops in Texas, using convict consciptees who after their term of service might be forced to settle in the province."[29]

The Mexican apprehension of Anglo colonization along the river was well founded. Emigration continued in even greater numbers, forcing an early confrontation between the Mexican government and the Anglo-Texans.

From the time of the earliest settlements of Escandón in the middle of the 18th century through the 1830's, the north bank of the river across from Matamoros was pasture land. However, the south bank was thriving. In her early days as a commercial center, Matamoros was supported by numerous foreign merchants, soldiers of fortune, gamblers, prostitutes, and other entrepreneurs living and dying on a

rugged frontier. The European merchants plied their trade up and down the river, supplying the military garrisons and exporting goods to the interior of Mexico. They were called "Anglos" collectively by the Mexicans, but were actually German, French, English, Dutch, and Austrian in origin. They were different from the frontiersmen and other settlers that Austin and other empresarios had brought to Texas from the north. These merchants were often from long lines of European merchant families who recognized the river as an economic opportunity to make fortunes in commerce, not in ranching or farming. Although they were not men of the earth, many acquired great tracks of land in their dealings. In short, they were capitalists.

The combined events and developments taking place along the river led eventually to the Texas War of Independence, which would lead in 1836 to the formation of an independent Texas nation. Although this war was not fought on the river, Matamoros played a major role. The lower river communities from Laredo to Matamoros were major debarkation points for the Mexican armies, who when they arrived north of the Rio Grande, found themselves in a War Zone. Conversely, after the end of the war, the Mexican armies retreated back to the river. The infant nation and her leaders realized that any modicum of stability for the settlers in central Texas would have to come by holding the Mexicans below the river. Therefore, Texas regulars, militia, and the newly formed Texas Rangers began pouring into the area below the Nueces. Mexico, which never recognized Texas independence had hoped that Texas would claim the Nueces as its southern boundary, but the Rio Grande was a more natural boundary, and the Mexicans were powerless to enforce a line or discourage Texas encroachment to the Rio Grande.

In the years between 1836 and 1844, Texas fought the land, the Indians, and the Mexicans, for survival. The river braced itself once again for war, the second in 8 years, and Matamoros swelled to over 16,000 inhabitants.[30]

Washington had for years been observing with great interest the events along the river, and in 1845, with Texas statehood in sight, Washington ordered General Zachary Taylor to the river. With his encampment established at Point Isabel overlooking the Brazos Santiago pass, Taylor detached Major Jacob Brown to camp on the north bank of the river directly across from Matamoros. The events of the ensuing war and the battles and personalities of the next three years have been well described by historians. Most notable was the offical establishment of the river as the U.S.-Mexico boundary, and the formation of a permanent American settlement on the north bank directly across from Matamoros. The settlement grew rapidly and was named for the fallen hero Major Brown--hence, Brownsville.

The site that was selected for the construction of the military encampment was a cotton field located in a conspicuous bend in the river directly across from Matamoros. During the first four decades of the 19th century, merchandise unloaded on the gulf coast 20 miles to the east had to be hauled by ox-cart to Matamoros. The American military presence on the river during during the late 1840's introduced a lighter, shallow draft steamboat to the river. This faster, more navigable boat revolutionized river travel, thus, eliminating the problems of the much slower, deep-drafted boats of an earlier era.

In the years between 1844 and 1848, before the establishment of Brownsville, several other small settlements in the area made bids for legitimacy as the first American township on the north bank. In her book, Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide, Betty Bay notes that the concept of a Brownsville emerged rather late in the bidding. Two small American settlements were located on the river west of the fort site at the end of the war. Freeport was the docking area for Capitan Patrick C. Shannon who operated a service which ran between the gulf and Matamoros, while Mansfield was promoted by Matamoros businessman, Asa Wheeler. Both sites were located in the same general vicinity, to the west of present-day Brownsville.[31]

At the end of the war in 1848, U.S. troops pulled back from Matamoros to the north bank, seeking a location for a permanent fort. A favorable site was selected approximately one-half mile north of the earthen river fort, on higher ground above the river flood plain. In the years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, there was considerable question concerning how present-day Brownsville was acquired by its first Anglo-American owners. In his book, Lone Star, Fehrenbach described some of the typical problems of the day:

> "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo confirmed all Mexican land titles in principle but could not guarantee then in practice. A horde of American businessmen, squatters, and ex-soldiers arrived on Espiritu Santo lands; many bore headrights, bounty warrants, and Texas veterans' land certificates. There was a general claiming that the lands around Brownsville were "vacant," or national land, and thus public land under Texas law by right of conquest. A swarm of claims were filed, and a swarm of lawyers found employment."[32]

It was at this time that Charles Stillman, a respected Matamoros merchant from New York, speculated that the land adjacent to the new fort would be more appropriate for a civilian settlement than the existing settlements to the west, including Santa Rita, Freeport, and Mansfield.

Stillman, along with several partners, purchased approximately 1,500 acres of the original de la Garza grant from lawyers. Stillman's newly-formed Brownsville Town Company hired a surveyor to lay out lots in the finest American tradition with perpendicularly crossed-streets. The townsite was in constant litigation from the beginning. The lawyers from whom Stillman purchased the land had "exacted three square leagues of land" from the de la Garza grant in order to "secure" the remainder for the family, a practice which was to be questioned in the courts for years. The Spanish-surnamed landowners of the Brownsville area were able to protect their land in court, and with their wealth, were able to fend off Anglo-American incursion.

> "The imposition of American law infuriated most Mexican landowners. They had to defend their ancient titles in court, and they lost either way, either to their own lawyers or to the claimants. In these years, the humbler classes of Mexicans were finding that they were treated with contempt, and that the American law would not protect their persons."[33]

Charles Stillman's investment was returned many fold. Within twelve months the property, which was purchased for $10,000, appreciated to a value of more than one million dollars. Betty Bay reports that the new town of Brownsville was the cosmopolitan boom town of the U.S.-Mexico border. "Inhabitants of the new town of Brownsville numbered both men and women of distinction. Many of them bore noted names."[34] Her new population included many professional people from many countries including Spain, Ireland, and France. Thompson reports that the 1850 census of population for Brownsville placed the population at 8,541. Importantly, two-thirds of these were listed as "Individuals Born in Mexico (mostly laborers)," the first underclass in Brownsville. Both Matamoros and Brownsville developed, as business opportunities arose on the river. From 1848 to the turn of the century, the social and cutural interdependency of Brownsville-Matamoros continued to develop. Thompson states:

> "Gradually the Americans began to absorb Spanish customs; the society of Matamoros was Spanish, and it was customary for the Brownsville citizens to be accepted and to participate in social, civil and military affairs and to reciprocate. The Spanish culture of the cities in Mexico was always cosmopolitan in nature, and Cameron County society with a relatively large, mixed European influence, became more cosmopolitan than most other areas of Texas."[35]

The war caused the population of Matamoros to decrease slightly, but with the exception of Mexican troops, the war

was not waged against the town's physical structure or its folk. The majority of the significant battles had been fought on the unpopulated fields of the north bank. The names Palo Alto, and Resaca de la Palma remind us of a time of gentlemanly wars and of lunchbaskets of curious observation.

The American military presence in Matamoros during the war years drew to the river in the years between 1846 and 1860 and Americanization of Matamoros and the creation of her sister community Brownsville to the north. Matamoros blossomed with the arrival of still greater numbers of empresarios and entrepreneurs and matured in the years after the war. For Matamoros, an old Spanish way of life was to die, and a new Anglo-European capitalistic system replace it with inseparable ties to the community on the north bank.

> "Gamblers and saloonkeepers from the States swarmed up from Point Isabel and opened their shops to a rush of custom. Dance halls equipped with musicians and girls and upstairs rooms, found a large trade... Sutlers came with stores of goods, to be sold at sky-high prices, ...shipments of ice arrived, and whiskey juleps could be had at the bars. An American vaudeville company true to the tradition of the pioneer theatre, appeared and occupied the old Spanish opera house... And presently arrived four thousand Bibles, shipped out by the American Bible Society, and soon the moan and stammer of the voluntary revivalist were heard amidst the carousing."[36]

These were boom years for Brownsville and Matamoros, whose location promised the romance of the frontier coupled with a European flavor which was found in few other places west of the Mississippi.

Brownsville promised to be an American town the magnitude of St. Louis or New Orleans. By the 1850's no fewer than twenty riverboats could be seen meandering up and down the river between the mouth and Camargo/Mier. The lower river valley and her Queen cities of Matamoros and Brownsville were booming. By the early 1860's Matamoros boasted a cosmopolitan population of 25,000, while Brownsville had rapidly grown to 3,000 in just ten years.[37]

The river had become a river of invasion and conquest and reinvasion and reconquest. The people of the border accepted their fate along with changes in their political identity, paying little attention to military uniforms, and proceeded with their business of making money. From the beginning of these properous years illegal activities flourished. Money was to be made in the avoidance of government taxes, resulting in the smuggling and theft of goods. The concept of contraband and banditry, plus the

infamous border "contrabandista" was born.

Far from the border, along the Eastern seabord extending into the deep South, an uneasy calm was about to errupt into a war between the states. Although remote, the strategic geographical location of Matamoros/Brownsville, coupled with their role in international trade, would demand that the sister communities once again play a part in the economics and politics of the war between the states.

Though a world away from Richmond, Virginia the river played a major role in the Confederate war effort. The Texas coast had been blockaded since 1861, but ships flying foreign flags were permitted to sail to Bagdad at the mouth of the river and load Texas cotton, which was shipped from Matamoros to foreign markets. The newly formed international border (1848) once again proved to be a boon, as both Matamoros and Brownsville benefited economically from the American Civil War. Hundreds of French and British ships, their crews and representatives lay anchor on the coast and travelled inland to negotiate cotton deals. Cotton was golden, traded for other goods sorely needed by the Southern war effort. However, in 1863 the Union moved enough troops into the river area to seriously curtail shipping activities

> "Neutral brokers in Matamoros held chests of medical supplies, new Enfield rifles, and gold for Texas; thousands of European ships lay waiting off the river mouth."[38]

The end of the U.S. Civil War brought a short-lived military peace to the border, while ushering in a very treacherous period of increased banditry along the river. Brownsville's population had increased to 25,000 in just 20 years of existence, while Matamoros had the astonishing population of 40,000.[39] Fehrenbach described the population as

> "a polyglot, with peddlers, merchants, deserters, gamblers, swindlers, undercover agents, and whores from a dozen nations. Times were flush; a number of merchants made immense fortunes from the cotton trade. Common laborers earned $5 to 10 daily, paid in good silver, when hourly rates were then an unprecedented 20 cents in St. Louis. Lightermen could make $40 a day.
>
> There is no record of how much prostitution and swindling paid. But millions in gold passed through all three towns (Matamoros, Bagdad, Brownsville)."[40]
>
> "In addition,...the smuggling of contraband goods was highly organized. Matamoros might have

been the official port of entry for Mexico on the lower Rio Grande, but upstream, whole towns were established as stations for the illegal passage of merchandise by enterprising Americans."[41]

Most of the smuggling operations were being run by American business men based in Brownsville. The smuggling business was seen as part of border life; "it was illegal, it was adventurous, it was a game."[42] Born in wars of the period from 1810 to 1865, the border communities, Matamoros and Brownsville, had grown together in economy, in marriage, and most importantly in culture. During many decades after the war, life on both sides of the river held the same flavor, without sharp differences resulting from the American ownership of the north bank. Settlers and vagrants from the United States attached themselves to the towns, to engage in trade and wagon-driving. Almost none took up ranching or agriculture. The backcountry life of the rancherías continued in the Mexican tradition, apart from the world of commerce.

The period after the end of the American Civil War saw a reduced military presence along the border and at the same time an increase in lawlessness. Hundreds of former soldiers and thousands of new arrivals looked for work in the diverse economies of Matamoros and Brownsville. Many found that there were fortunes to be made quickly in smuggling and in cattle rustling. During the decades after the Civil War, to the turn of the 20th century, the cattle industry flourished in the Brownsville area with the Chisholm Trail originating at the river. But as the great herds increased so did the banditry. Mexicans and North Americans alike regularly engaged in organizing the theft of cattle to be driven across the poorly patrolled river. These years also marked the first time in approximately thirty years that open, hostile military action was not taking place along the border. However, the remote character of the border in the years between 1865 and 1900 produced a lawlessness which was far worse than the organized military efforts of the previous thirty years. The "duty free" zone created along the border by Porfirio Diaz heightened commerce in the area, but it also encouraged the blatant cattle rustling and smuggling activities that flourished from Brownsville to Laredo.[43]

Toward the end of the 19$^{th}$ century, the burgeoning populations of Brownsville and Matamoros were plagued by hurricanes and a cholera epidemic. The results of border banditry, natural disaster and disease in the 1880's, reduced the populations to half their pre-civil war size.

As the 19$^{th}$ century wore down along the border, all of the factors considered significant in the explanation of the socio-economic characteristics of the Matamoros-Brownsville

border communities were in place.

Principle among these characteristics was the institutionalization of a rigid social class system in the community. The feudal class system developed by the Spaniards with the landed aristocracy at the top, along with mixed-bloods and Indians at the bottom, accommodated the English-speaking merchants and other recent arrivals at the top. Although not slaves, the Mexican peasant class was treated like slaves by both the Mexican and Anglo upper-class. In all probability, the Mexican peasant classes were worse off than the Black slaves had been, because of the endless supply of Mexican peasants, who had little commodity value. This fact would linger well into the 20th century.

Fehrenbach described it this way:

> "The terror of Mexican life remained almost unchanged at the bottom, but at the top political control passed competely into the hands of the new arrivals. ...This was not part of any ethnic plot to disposses the Mexicans, who by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were U.S. citizens. But few Mexicans were literate; they refused to learn English, and even the upper class was entirely ignorant of Anglo-Saxon institutions and politics and tended to be contemptous of both."[44]

The U.S. Mexico bordertowns including Brownsville were dominated during the years before the 20th century, by a small group of leading merchants and financiers.

> "This peculiar political system, in which ethnic Mexicans usually possessed numerical superiority but remained politically inert as individuals, became a lasting feature of south Texas life. It was a logical outcome of centuries of Hispanic-Mexican tradition, in which the Indian and mestizo base were allowed no function in politics, and in which event the Spanish landed elite possessed no initiative beyond being permitted to sit on local municipal councils."[45]

In addition, the close contact of the two ethnic groups and their cultures tended to produce a polarization of values. The characteristics of socio-economic dominance are well described. The North American minority along with a few wealthy Mexican families made up the privileged class with all other Mexicans at the bottom. The gap between the two polarized groups was so formidable that upward mobility was very improbable but not impossible. The upper classes of both ethnic groups adopted certain desired aspects of the other group. For example, Americans adopted many of the elitist views of the upper class Mexican, vestiges of a

Spanish social class heritage. The Mexican on the other hand, admired the work ethic and the determination of the North American. The result was a social intermingling, the two intermarried, and formed a new breed of 20th century border native.

Matamoros had in the middle of the 19th century given birth to the Brownsville community, and by the end of the century, the younger had grown in the image of the former and their social, economic, and political structures were now mirror images of one another. This remarkable symbiosis so evident today was in place by 1900.

## THE AGRICULTURAL ERA 1905-1960

The dawn of the 20th century on the river brought new economic vitality for the sister communities. The south Texas ranching country, which had extended to the river in Cameron County on the north bank and in the municipio of Matamoros north to the river on the south bank, was now giving way to extensive land clearing and leveling operations. Large-scale commercial agriculture had arrived in the river valley. These early labor-intensive operations required an increased sphere of service activity to be delivered from the ever increasing importance of the Matamoros-Brownsville central place. Labor intensive agriculture meant many jobs for the Mexican peasantry to the south, if only seasonly, as well as jobs for the emerging middle-class in Brownsville.

The arrival of the 20th century along the river witnessed two proud communities with illustrious histories, strong economies, and a society and culture which bound their people together. Brownsville and Matamoros were both well established central places, with specifically adapted economies, each supplementing and strengthening the sister economy across the river.

Brownsville was described at the turn of the century as a "busting city" full of friendly intercourse back and forth across the river. Full employment seemed to have been the rule, and capital expansion of the time produced public buildings which "will compare favorably with those of any city of its size in the country."[46]

One epitaph of the early 1900's reveals many of the sociocultural realities of Brownsville society of the day:

> "It has been shown that wealth abounded in former years and that it was lessened by the unsettled condition of the border during a long period. There still remain many evidences of that prosperity, in the social refinements and educational advantages which wealth procurred, and

in the opportunities for travel and familiarity with the world, which were extensively utilized.

> The position of the city, on the farthest border of our territory and without the means of rapid transit to and from the great centres of population, combined with half its inhabitants being foreigners who clung to the traditions and customs of their native country, are facts which have heretofore retarded its growth and nurtured procrastination in developing its natural advantages. The sociology of this people (Brownsville) for nearly half a century past is peculiarly remarkable and borders upon the romantic, replete as it is with incidents of pastoral ease and plenty; urban success and luxury; intermarriages and social seclusion; moral courage and freedom from crime."[47]

Chatfield implies that the more prosperous days of economic windfall were gone with the 19th century, but that the wealth had brought "social refinement" and "educational advantages" to certain classes of people in Brownsville and Matamoros that remained.

Interestingly, he reveals a familiar bias, the feeling of recent arrivals to the area, that Mexicans are "foreigners." Forgotten is the fact that fifty years earlier Brownsville had been Mexico. Because of the social class arrangement mentioned earlier, ethnic division in Brownsville has always played a much less important role than class distinction. From the beginning of Brownsville's history, critical class divisions were set up along upper-class vs. lower-class lines, rather than along Anglo-American vs. Mexican lines.

At the turn of the century, Brownsville harbored high hopes for a bright economic future centered around her strategic location for expanded commerce and transportation, as well as by growth of her status as a central place for the delivery of services to the surrounding populations. For example, in the late 1890's, Brownsville felt quite certain that the great Pan-American Railway would cross the Rio Grande at Brownsville and link the two continents. Chatfield reported.

> "Brownsville, besides offering many inducements to a local transportation line, is squarely located on the shortest route to the City of Mexico, and will thus become of great importance as an intermediate station on the great Pan-American Railway, which will cross the Rio Grande at this point."[48]

While Brownsville did get a life-giving railroad, the

major link touted by Chatfield in 1893 was routed through Laredo, rather than Brownsville, thus, connecting the great railroads of the midwest with San Antonio, Laredo, Monterrey and then south to Mexico City. Brownsville was by-passed.

The turn of the century saw Brownsville and the "Lower Rio Grande Valley", become an area of increased land and agricultural speculation, and less of a commercial trade and transportation route. Once again agricultural development hinged around the possibilities of what a railroad would bring. Chatfield stated,

> "The merchants, farmers and manufacturers of the United States who shall have located at Brownsville or its vicinity, and reaped the advantages of being early in the field, will assuredly be in a postion to introduce their goods and products into the markets of Mexico, Central and South America, at figures with which it will be difficult for more distant trade centers to compete."[49]

As early as 1888, American railroad builders had approached the merchants of Matamoros and Brownsville, concerning the efficacy of building a railroad line from Matamoros to Linares, Nuevo Leon, and south to Matehuala, San Luis Potosi, thus connecting with the central Mexican route to Mexico City. However, late in the 19th century the port of Bagdad, the commercial mainstay of the area, was falling out of favor with the major shipping lines due to the fact that the harbor had not been improved and successive hurricanes were rapidly silting the channel, making it increasingly hazardous to enter. The result was that many vessels were now opting to sail the safer route down the coast to the growing port of Tampico or to the ancient port of Vera Cruz.

Although the local business communities were ecstatic about the idea of a railroad, only 27 kilometers of rail had been laid by 1889. The project was halted when the port of Bagdad was permanently closed after the hurricane in 1889.

Tamaulipas historian José Canseco indicates that this very negative turn of events in the economic history of Matamoros dealt a devasting blow to the economy. As a result, much of the commercial wealth in Matamoros relocated in Monterrey.[50] In fact, a number of the major industrial families in Monterrey today had ancestors who were the early entrepreneurs in Matamoros. They had hoped that Matamoros would become what Monterrey is today, the industrial capital of Mexico. While the government of Porfirio Diaz was petitioned by the border communities to grant public works assistance to reopen the port, he never took interest in the economic plight of the floundering city on his northeastern

frontier. The astute dictator did, however, authorize the construction of a railroad from Matamoros to Monterrey, which was finally completed in 1905. Diaz realized the growing restlessness in Mexico and anticipated civil conflict. He reasoned that transportation to Matamoros on the northern coast would be critical from a military point-of-view. Thus, once again Brownsville-Matamoros benefited economically from something which was politically and militarily motivated.

Further elaborating on a socio-economic problem which has persisted to this day, Canseco writes that General Servando Canales, governor of Tamaulipas from 1870 to 1876, wanted to discover the true cause of the constant activity of "guerrillas, bandolerismo and insurrección" that constantly plagued the state and especially the Matamoros-Brownsville area. Canales felt that the "roots of evil had their base in unemployment, provoked in every case by natural disaster (hurricane)."[51] The incessant rains associated with recurring hurricanes drove workers from the fields and ruined the crops, necessitating their search for"survival" in other means, often illegal.

Associated with the completion of the Matamoros-Monterrey railroad in 1905, was an equally important event which marked a renewed socio-economic interdependance for Brownsville-Matamoros at the beginning of the 20th century. The first international bridge for the area, a railroad bridge, was completed in 1905. This impressive structure would inseparably "link" the two communities by facilitating commercial and social interaction. This "bridge" between nations and their cultural-economies was realized via an initiative included in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to build bridges along the Texas-Mexico border, thus, spurring economic development of the area. The construction of the bridge at Brownsville was begun in 1889 along with the railroad to Monterrey, it featured two swing spans which could be opened to parallel the river in order to allow riverboats to pass up and down the river uninhibited.[52]

Porfirio Diaz' vision of revolution came early in the 20th century. By 1910, Mexico was in the midst of a bloody civil war which focused its northern campaign on the border communities. Matamoros and Brownsville once again became the passive beneficiaries of the economic spoils of war.

In 1900 Matamoros' population was recovering from twenty years of devastation, in the form of hurricanes, epidemics, and emigration due to a faltering economy. In the 1870's, Matamoros had enjoyed a 10 to 1 population advantage over Brownsville, her infant sister on the north bank. The American Civil War had served to pull people and prosperity to Matamoros. Now economic decline and civil unrest would push people to Brownsville. By 1900 Matamoros' population

advantage had dwindled to 3 to 1 over Brownsville, and during the Mexican Revolution the population differential narrowed further, so that in 1920 the communities had approximately identical populations (see figure). During the Mexican Revolutionary War and the decades of civil strife which followed, Brownsville's population doubled and redoubled, reaching 20,000 by the 1930 census. Now Brownsville was truly booming, as the economic emphasis along the lower river shifted from commercial merchandizing to trade, and thus agriculture. Although the river delta had long been recognized for its agricultultal potential, most agriculture in the area took the form of small subsistence farms until the emergence of commercial agriculture in the early 20th century.

From the beginning, cotton was king in the Brownsville-Matamoros area. It was the natural product along the gulf coast, from the deep south to Brownsville. At times sugar cane cultivation was attempted but harsh freezes and fluctuating world markets never allowed its development into a staple crop the magnitude of cotton.

Cotton was introduced into the south bank in the late 1850's. Coupled with the establishment of the "free zone" and the booming port of Bagdad, Matamoros enjoyed economic prosperity from the American Civil War and the export of cotton. Even during the decades of decline in the late 1800's, cotton farming established itself as a major industry in the region. In the 1930's cultivation of cotton had reached an incredible 35,000 hectares. By the 1950's the number of hectares in cultivation had increased to 350,000, or 10 times in twelve years. In the first quarter of the 20th century, a similar phenomenon was ocurring on the north bank.[53]

Brownsville and the surrounding area pushed back the thick south Texas scrub and emerged into a cotton capitol. The major agricultural expansion witnessed on both sides of the river, from the early 1900's to the middle of the century, was due to the many major irrigation and dam building projects of the period. The emergence of controlled irrigation along the river served to open the land for major development. Furthermore, the construction of dams "tamed" the river, thus ending a 200 year history (1750-1950) of river travel in the area. In the early 20th century, focus shifted away from the river as a transportation and commercial route and toward the river as a boundary.

The agricultural era spawned new opportunities for Brownsville and Matamoros to develop as central service centers. At the end of the 19th century, Chatfield speculated that,

"Brownsville possesses all the attributes which

> marked the birth of the great cities of the West, and in some respects has superior advantages. The settler coming here finds himself within reach of all supplies he may require to begin work immediately; he can stock a farm without leaving the main street of the city, and without the vexatious delays occasioned by sending to remote dealers for his implements and live stock. He can furnish his house, clothe himself and his family, lay in stock of provisions, load them into a wagon with a good span of mules attached (which he can buy on the same street), and drive off to his farm. If proper arrangements have been made by the dealers, the settler can buy a ready made house, too, and have it delivered at any point within twenty miles, free of charge."54

Clearly, turn of the century Brownsville, was in a position to outfit thousands of farmers arriving daily from the north. A similar situation existed in Matamoros, and as the century wore on, mechanized agriculture became more and more dependent upon technological goods available only on the U.S. side of the river. As early as 1893 Chatfield comments that the first developmental stage of Brownsville was complete.[55] With an infrastructure in place, and with the essential services provided, the stage was set for the first waves of Mexican immigration. At the close of the century, Chatfield could not have known what the magnitude of Mexican immigration, legal and illegal, would be in the decades to come. As mentioned earlier, poverty has always been a reality along the river and in its communities. Early twentieth century Brownsville was described as a city having an unusually high incidence of poverty.

By the 1930's, it was clear that the economic future of the Brownsville-Matamoros border community was in agriculture. The large ranching enterprises had moved north and west, out of the river valley. The years of commerical prosperity enjoyed, first by Matamoros and then by Brownsville, due to their strategic locations on a major trade route, were now over. The silting of the port of Bagdad in the 1880's, the completion of the railroad from Laredo to Monterrey, and the emergence of the age of mechanized highway transportation, all spelled economic doom for the merchants of Brownsville-Matamoros.

The second wave of American settlers to come to Brownsville after 1850, and the third wave to come after 1900, all came to work the land. They were farmers. From 1850 to the early 1920's, farming existed on a relatively small scale in the area. But with the arrival of agricultural land development companies in the early 20th century, the stage was set for a new form economic prosperity for Brownsville-Matamoros. This phase, which began in the

1930's, was marked by massive irrigation and canal projects, as well as the opening of more and more acres of arable land, and most importantly, it was marked by the need for greater than ever numbers of Mexican laborers. Fehrenbach recounts the fact that the railroad finally reached Brownsville in 1904 and opened the way for settlers and development. "The old merchants who had made fortunes supplying the army and trading with Mexico were gone; new kinds of men arrived."[56] But the fact was that many of the merchants simply switched their focus from supplying Mexico to supplying the newly arrived American farmer and his family. In addition,

> "Baronial beef empires gave way to remarkably similar baronial cotton and vegetable empires. Outside observers studying the economy and society of the Rio Grande delta, with its large, capitalistic landholdings, its purely mercantile towns and cities, and its large and largely depressed ethnic Mexican underclass, frequently describe the region as "feudal."[57]

The first third of the 20th century was a time of tremendous development in the Valley. For the first time in the history of the lower river, the economic emphasis had shifted away from Mexico and to the U.S., even though the area had only been in the U.S. less than one hundred years. During the first decades of the 20th century, the symbiosis, which was so firmly evident between Brownsville and Matamoros, had expanded their role as central places. The agricultural industry, which was becoming more and more technological, required services and supplies of every sort. At the same time that the economic interdependence was solidified, the social and cultural web between the communities, continued to develop even faster than before. Whole neighborhoods of recent arrivals from Mexico maintained familial ties in their mother country, while trying to make a go in the host country. Fehrenbach indicates that,

> "The new development ... brought the Southwest back firmly into the United States. Tons of vegetables, fresh and canned, were shipped North by rail; towns and cities swelled. New blood came in, because here was a lusty new frontier, where a man with capital could meke his fortune out of crops and land... this entire development was based on Mexican labor. In fact none of it would or could have taken place without a great mass of low-paid workers from south of the border."[58]

These words of the historian Fehrenbach are, clearly an understatement. Former Secretary of Labor, Ray Marshall, feels that the historical movement of Mexican laborers to the United States is, "quantitatively one of the most important international migrations in the world."[59]

The first thirty years of the $20^{th}$ century were marked by a number of mitigating circumstances, which both aided and hindered the continued development of the Brownsville-Matamoros border community. The Mexican revolution of 1910 forced many upper-class Mexican families, from throughout the lower river region, to relocate on the north bank. Since the majority of these families were landed and educated, they chose to settle in the cosmopolitan town of Brownsville. This fact was seen as a positive boost to the local economy and society. However, at this time immigration of the Mexican peasant class was also encouraged in order to supply the labor needed for agricultural and public works projects in the valley. The result was a dramatic increase in the lower-class Mexican population of Brownsville and the class system in Brownsville began a distinct polarization.

The recent Mexican arrivals in Brownsville were not impervious to the bloody revolution taking place to the south, and as the years passed, many Brownsville Mexicans sympathized with the popular revolutionary movement. These Mexican sympathizers were seen as a very dangerous element along the border. They were rapidly purchasing arms and Anglo-Mexican hostilities in the area mounted through the decade. Retired Boundary Commissioner Anson Nills reflected the sentiment in the statement, "there are some 300,000 of the Mexican race in the State of Texas and these are made up to a great extent of the most dangerous and turbulent persons of both nations."[60]

Due to an assortment of historically described reasons, Mexican immigration came to be viewed as a serious problem in the 1920's. The "Mexican Problem", as it was referred to in Washington, was never supported by the Brownsville business community. During the decade of the 1920's, social scientist debated the immigration question from the point-of-view of "racial purity." One early $20^{th}$ century scholar, Kimbal Young, summed up the universal sentiment this way,

> "We may justly then...raise the implication of the possible effect of racial mixture in this country between various immigrant stocks as we actually find them in this country.
>
> If the racial stocks that are flooding this country...are of such inferiority, on the average, as to be contented with a lower standard of life, if they are incapable of taking on the best of modern culture, then the sociological significance of the entire matter is apparent."[61]

Young felt that the country needed a immigration law and that Mexican immigration, which had been unchecked for sixty

years, was a national disgrace and had to be stopped. In his examination of the subject, Ricardo Griswold del Castillo, introduces evidence from the 1926 House Committee on Immigration which describes the Mexican threat:

> "The continuance of a desirable character of citizenship is the fundamental purpose of our immigration laws. Incidental to this area the aviodance of social and racial problems, the upholding of the American standards of wages and living and the maintenance of order. All these purposes would be violated by increasing the Mexican population of this country."[62]

Needless to say, the Brownsville business community, which supplied the lower valley agricultural industry, felt very threatened by any discussion of controlled Mexican immigration. The fragile economic stability of the area, which had survived the economic rollercoaster of the 19th century, depended heavily upon cheap Mexican labor for its survival. Labor shortages during World War I aggravated the labor shortage problem, requiring a still further increase in Mexican immigration to the border during the era. Between 1910 and 1930, it is estimated that 750,000 Mexicans immigrated to this country. Even though the numbers were increasing every year, the Dillingham Commission viewed Mexican immigration to the U.S.-Mexico border as only a "temporary problem." Consider the following excerpt from that commission:

> "The Mexican immigrants are providing a fairly acceptable supply of labor in a limited territory in which it is difficult to secure others, and their competitive ability is limited because of their more or less temporary residence and their personal qualities, so that their incoming does not involve the same detriment to labor conditions as is involved in the immigration of other races who also work at comparatively low wages. While the Mexicans are not easily assimilated, this is not of very great importance as long as most of them return to their native land after a short time."[63]

The immigration reform laws of the 1920's attempted to limit Mexican immigration, and in 1924, with the creation of the Border Patrol, the question of legal status was introduced for the first time. At first the new immigration laws were only variously applied, but toward the end of the 1920's and in the early 1930's, a ruthless deportation campaign was exercised indiscriminately against Mexicans in the valley. The events of that time played a major role in our understanding of the socio-economic climate in Brownsville during the Great Depression. For instance, McKay estimates that during the period from 1928-1931,

approximately 500,000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children, were deported to Mexico from the U.S. It is further estimated that at least one-half of those had been residents of Texas, the majority from the valley.[64] Indeed, the federal deportation campaign in Texas was begun in the valley, principally in the Brownsville Border Patrol sector. This unselective process of rounding up Mexicans for detainment and deportaion, caused not only indignation from the entire Brownsville population, but a terrible fear on the part of the Mexican population in Brownsville and the surrounding area. As early as the summer of 1929, local farmers were predicting a major labor shortage and Brownsville merchants were feeling the pinch of depressed retail sales.

As the economic threat to the valley increased in the spring of 1929, the valley cities organized to combat the potentially devastating effects of the deportation campaign. Several Chambers of Commerce, including the one in Brownsville, and several newly organized groups, formed to aid the Mexican residents of the valley. The objective of these groups was to assist Mexicans in either proving their American citizenship or to help them in applying for legal resident alien status. In some cases indentification cards were issued to valley Mexicans, which were endorsed by prominent Anglo-American residents.

In 1930, the American economy continued its downward turn, and as jobs became scarce, the organized activities surrounding the opposition to Mexican deportation waned. As the Great Depression went into full swing in 1931, deportation increased. Whole neighborhoods or colonias of Mexicans were deported from Brownsville and others valley towns. McKay reports that, "in a one-month period in the spring of 1931, more than 450 Mexicans were deported from Brownsville."[65]

The mass deportation of Mexicans, in the late 1920's and early 1930's, can be explained as a national movement to guard the integrity of "American racial purity, "to increase employment opportunities for Americans, and to relieve the pressure on welfare dependency during the depression years. It should be noted that while mid-west farmers and communities supported the deportation campaign in order to reduce the number of unwanted Mexicans in their areas, it was never supported by valley farmers or businessmen.

The impact of the Immigration Act of 1924 on border economy and society is still being felt to this day. In addition to the establishment of legal resident alien, and illegal alien status, the important category of the commuter was created. A commuter is defined as,

"an alien who has been lawfully accorded the

privilege of residing permanently in the U.S., but who choose to reside in foreign contiguous territory and commute to their place of employment in the United States."[66]

Although the legal definition explicity refers to commuting to work, one other important sub-category exists with reference to the U.S.-Mexico border, that being the crossing card holder, or shopper. The crossing card holder may enter the U.S. legally for up to 72 hours but may not work legally. Both the legal commuter and the crosser/shopper categories have greatly influenced the economic status of the Brownsville-Matamoros border community during the period from 1924 to the present.

The legal commuter is a recent arrival who works in Brownsville and very possibly lives in Brownsville, thus supporting the economy as any economically active person would. There has always been an animosity between the Brownsville-born Mexican and the Mexican commuter, since the former sees the latter as competing with him for limited jobs, goods, and space in the Brownsville service economy. Often the commuters are skilled or semi-skilled workers and are automatically in a socio-economic class above the native-born American of Mexican descent. The commuter, who legally works in Brownsville but resides in Matamoros, has historically been the most controversial immigrant. That is, they enjoy employment in Brownsville, a community with an historically high-employment rate for native-born Mexican Americans. In addition, Commuters are often highly sought after by employers because they are willing to work for low-wages, but usually withdraw a major portion of their incomes from the Brownsville economy to be spent in the Matamoros economy. This fact, in of itself, is not negative since a certain percentage of their income is spent in Brownsville to support sales tax revenues, promote commerce, and create employment in the service sector. Secondly, a certain percentage of their Brownsville income, which is spent in Matamoros, is multiplied back into the Brownsville economy in the form of service sector purchases. (i.e., food, entertainment) Thus, the Brownsville-Matamoros business community has always been supportive of the legal commuter. The only segment of the border community that suffers from the existence of this category is the native-born Mexican who resides at the lower socio-economic level of Brownsville's society. They are inevitably left out of the economic equation.

If the Great Depression was bad for the United States economy, it was worse for the Mexican. The population of Brownsville increased by just 2,000 persons from 1930-1940.[67] Mexican deportations, coupled with Mexican northern migration from rural Mexico to the urban border, caused Matamoros'

population to double from 24,995 in 1930 to 54,136 in 1940.[67] Matamoros' burgeoning population ushered in a new age, as Matamoros took her place along the border as a staging area for population movement to the north.

The deportation compaign of the early 1930's was to be short-lived. In 1933, President F.D.Roosevelt announced his Good Neighbor Policy, which attempted to repair the damage and ill-will created between the U.S. and Mexico during the stormy first-third of the 20th century. While the economic community of Brownsville-Matamoros never sanctioned the federal deportation of Mexicans in the early 1930's, they had to weather the maelstrom created as a result of the program.

The decade of the 1930's witnessed a doubling of the total amount of arable land in the Brownsville-Matamoros areas. This extensive and rapid agricultural development necessitated a corresponding increase in cheap Mexican labor for the area. Brownsville businessmen were now extending the provision of their services beyond the limits of Cameron County into Hidalgo on the west and Willacy on the north.

With the tension of the early 1930's somewhat relaxed, the years before the Second World War were once again a prosperous time along the lower river. As the United States entered the war in 1941, the country's agricultural industry once again found itself in desperate need of farm labor, and Brownsville and Matamoros had regained their status as the Queen cities of the lower border. However, the events of the next twenty-two years, called the Bracero Era (1942-1964), would dramatically alter the course of their population histories.

In 1942, Mexico entered into an executive agreement with the United States to provide the American agricultural industry with the contract labor they sorely needed. The agreement guaranteed the Mexican _braceros_, as they were called, transportation to and from the United States. The agreement specified working conditions and insured a minimum pay scale for the contract period. Since the program also provided massive federal farm subsidies, it was a bonanza for the farmers and their local economies.[69] During the first decade of the program, Brownsville's population grew to an unprecedented 36,000, nearly doubling in just 10 years. Matamoros' population increased an even greater amount, pushing well past the 100,000 (128,344) mark by 1950.[70] While the _bracero_ was only needed during the war years, the program was extended into the post-war era at the insistence of the agricultural industry in America. However, after the war years, growers found it increasingly convenient to hire illegal _braceros_ or "wetbacks," rather than formally contract Mexican labor. The hiring of wetbacks in the 1950's was very lucrative for Brownsville and the entire Lower Rio Grande Valley. Growers could employ wetback labor for the

specific period of time needed to harvest a crop and then terminate them.

In many cases they would simply call the Border Patrol, "la *migra,*" to round them up for deportation because their services were no longer needed. As a result, during the 1950's the number of legal *braceros* decreased dramatically, while the number of wetbacks increased proportionately. Interestingly, they were the same people, only their legal status had changed. The number of wetbacks in the country was estimated to have peaked around one million in 1954.

The Bracero-Wetback Era produced the first-glimpse of a population explosion in Matamoros. Thousand of Mexicans journeyed from the interior of Mexico to the border, hoping for an opportunity to "jump" into the flow of life north of the river. Thousands accomplished this assimilation quite efficiently in some aspects, but completely failed in other aspects. For Brownsville, the economic prosperity of the 1950's would precipitate the prosperous growth years of the 1960's and 1970's. The vast numbers of recent arrivals from Mexico would also lead to a heightening of the class polarization in Brownsville. Between the years 1935 and 1965, thousands of illegal Mexican aliens entered Brownsville society. Located in the poorest *barrios,* they were largely uneducated and unemployed. A large percentage of these made up the migrant farm worker population, which was needed in the northern agricultural industry after the end of the Bracero Era in 1964.

Poverty has existed in Brownsville from the beginning of her history, a poverty primarily of class deprivation for recent arrivals from Mexico and their first generation native-born Mexican American children. At the end of the Bracero Era, the Federal Government had boasted that,

> "through operation Wetback, the United States kept part of the product of a man's labor, but exported his unemployment to Mexico."[71]

However, the last laugh was not on Mexico or the wetback, it was on Brownsville and the other border cities. Having experienced the improved quality of life afforded him on the U.S. side of the river, the illegal alien kept coming back, no matter how many times he was deported. When the wetback had assimilated to the point that he could permanently keep from getting caught, he became a Tejano, and no longer a Mexicano. With a social security card, a driver's license, an address in the *barrio,* and a few words of English, plus his children in Brownsville schools, he was on his way to the American dream.

However, the Brownsville economy did not provide him with the one thing most essential for the accomplishment of

the American dream-a-job. Therefore, the unemployment referred to earlier was not "exported" to Mexico with wetback deportation, it was imported to the bordertowns, where it became endemic to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Brownsville.

As the Bracero Era came to an end in 1964, the era of labor intensive agriculture was also winding down. Cotton was no longer king, having been replaced by cheaper synthetic fibers. The cotton gins, compresses, and warehouses so commonplace in Brownsville and Matamoros sat idlely compared to earlier standards. Agriculture in the area was shifting to other more productive crops and to capital intensive technology. The summer days, when thousands of Mexican braceros worked in the valley fields, were gone forever. They were replaced by the hum of splendid green and red cotton harvesters. The end of the Bracero Era was supplemented with the growth of other industries. For over a hundred years the economic prosperity of Brownsville and Matamoros had waxed and waned, only to wax and wane again.

The eminent Mexican demographer, Jorge Bustamante, described some of the critical factors existing on the Mexican side of the border in 1964 this way:

> "At the end of the Bracero Program (December 1964), conditions of unemployment in Mexico were high. The previous trend of expansion of arable land had reached a point of no progress. By the end of the last decade (1960-70) immigration to Mexican border cities was at lower rates than in previous decades when the Bracero Program was in operation. These factors seem to indicate that conditions for immigration were drastically reduced in the United States with the termination of the Bracero Program, and out-migration in Mexico found other avenues, namely, urban centers within the country. The point here is that the alternative to migration to the United States from Mexico is concomitant to conditions existing in the United States that should be studied by focusing on its economic and social structure as a whole."[72]

The era of agricultural development and prosperity in Brownsville-Matamoros culminated at the end of the Bracero Program in 1964. The border community now had to rapidly diversify its economy, changing and expanding to meet new challenges. Whereas the previous thirty years had insured great wealth for one segment of the population, it sent another deeper into poverty. Near the end of the Bracero Era in the early 1960's, the population of Matamoros reached 150,000 people, while Brownsville's population was approximately 50,000.[73] Both the U.S. and Mexican census of

population recognized the figures to be greatly undercounted. By 1960, Matamoros was feeling the negative effects of over population. Unemployment, housing shortages, health problems, and crime, had shot-up dramatically. The population of Matamoros increased 500 percent in just thirty years. The population gap between Brownsville and Matamoros that had been reduced to an insignificant number in the 1920's and '30's, now gaped. However, the age of agricultural expansion and the Bracero Era induced huge flows of northward bound migration from the interior of Mexico to the border. Border Patrol activity in Brownsville, coupled with a growing "shadow" population, hidden in areas of poverty, kept the problem in check until it became uncontrollable in the 1970's.

In his book on border politics and economics, Raul Fernandez, described the population problems of the 1960's and 1970's this way:

> "the origin of the growth has been such that these urban centers have never had the productive capacity needed to support such a large population. The large concentrations of people in these towns perform the function of a large reserve labor at the disposal of U.S. industry and agriculture. The net result of the laboring activity of the large mass of workers concentrated south of the border is a depressing effect upon the wage rates and the maintenance of a higher than average level of unemployment in the areas of the United State bordering Mexico. Thus the fundamental aspect of the social economy of the border towns is the corporation of a large pool of Mexican workers into the orbit or the American monopoly-capitalistic economy and the formation of a large reserve of competitive, unskilled and unorganized workers immediately south of the border."[74]

As Fernandez points out, the superficial appearance of a glamorous border tourist economy, with its souvenir shops, peddlers, restaurants, and night clubs was deceiving. Behind the facade of tourism in Matamoros in the 1960's and 1970's, there was a population timebomb waiting to explode onto both sides of the border.

Border Industrialization: 1960-1985

The time-bomb ticked away as Brownsville and Matamoros rode the crest of a new-found Mexican wealth. Mexico was now (1965) an international oil power and petroleum was king. In the late 1960's, oil tank trucks by the hundreds rolled

across the "new" international bridge into Mexico, made a loop, and headed back to the Port of Brownsville. A convenient loophole in the law allowed Mexican crude to be brought to the port by ship but required that it be brought into the U.S. by land. At the International Airport in Brownsville, millions of dollars worth of electronic components and other valuable commodities were summarily loaded into World War II vintage aircraft and flown as contraband into Mexico for sale. While the loading and departure from Brownsville violated no U.S. law, as soon as the aircraft entered Mexican airspace, the craft and its goods were considered contraband and the pilot became a modern day smuggler. The rationale behind smuggling across the border had not changed in a hundred years, only the technology of smuggling had improved.

During the 1960's and 1970's, wealthy Mexicans purchased real estate, homes, and automobiles in Brownsville, as an endless procession of dollars and pesos flowed out of Mexico and into the Brownsville economy. Many homes and cars were purchased with cash. The downtown retail area, near the bridge, was teeming with people eager to buy and sell. Downtown Brownsville and Matamoros took on the appearance of a medieval bazaar. "Chiveras," Mexican women who came to Brownsville to purchase items by lot, such as 600 pairs of pantyhose, or 250 blowdryers, were catered to as if they were visiting dignitaries from foreign countries. The American tourist came south for the winter and the Meixican tourist came north for the holidays. Wealthy Mexican industrialists regularly purchased condominiums on South Padre Island, as the island experienced a companion boom. The port flourished, two modern shopping malls were built to rival any Midwestern city, and everybody was making money.

In the years after the peak of the Bracero Program, the Mexican government recognized that it must act swiftly to bolster its northern frontier. Especially vulnerable were the border boom towns and their prpulation problems created as a result of the Bracero Era.

In 1961, the Programa Nacional Fronterizo (PRONAF) was begun. PRONAF was intended to develop the infrastructure in the north so as to, "facilitate and promote the appearance of import substitution and the increase of the tourist industry."[75] After only modest success with PRONAF, the Mexican government instituted the Border Industrial Program (BIP) in 1965. BIP was intended to attract Ameerican labor intensive industrial interests to the border, in order to take advantage of the overabundance of unemployed former Braceros and their descendants. So that the products of the American multinationals in Mexico would not compete with the Mexican market, the components were produced for export only. BIP was an instant and highly acclaimed success everywhere along the border. The Mexican government has particularly

favored the program because as Fernandez states,

> "the clearest result of the BIP has been the intensification of the economic dependence of the border towns upon the American economy. It has done so by means of a whole new program which purports to reintegrate the border economy into the natinal economy of Mexico."[76]

The effect of the BIP on the Brownsville-Matamoros border community has been dramatic. Referring to Brownsville's development during the 1960's and 1970's, Miller states that, "the key to Brownsville's rapid growth has been the city's economic interdependence with Matamoros; the direct catalyst was the BIP."[77] The fact that Brownsville and Matamoros are "one economic unit,"

TABLE 1

POPULATION HISTORY FOR BROWNSVILLE-MATAMOROS

| YEAR | BROWNSVILLE population | MATAMOROS population | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1820 | --- | 2,300 | Matamoros named 1/28/1826 |
| 1830 | --- | 3,500 | |
| 1840 | --- | 16,372 | |
| | | | Mexican American War |
| 1850 | 2,000 | 11,033 | |
| 1860 | 2,734 | 25,000 | |
| | | | American Civil War |
| 1870 | 4,905 | 40,000 | |
| 1880 | 4,938 | 16,039 | Hurricane and Cholera |
| 1890 | 6,134 | --- | |
| 1900 | 6,305 | 18,444 | |
| 1910 | 10,517 | --- | Mexican Revolution |
| 1920 | 11,791 | 13,000 | |
| 1930 | 20,021 | 24,955 | Deportation Campaign |
| 1940 | 22,023 | 54,136 | |
| 1950 | 36,066 | 128,344 | Bracero/Wetback Era |
| 1960 | 48,040 | 143,043 | |
| | | | Border Indus. Program |
| 1970 | 52,522 | 184,853 | |
| 1980 | 91,000 | 238,840 | |
| | | | Peso Devaluation |
| 1990 | (110,000) | (350,000) | |
| 2000 | (200,000) | (500,000) | |

All data are from either official census, or published documents, it should be noted, however, that census data are always estimations and never absolutes. The data for Brownsville and Matamoros after 1920 are thought to be more reliable. The population projections to the year 2000 are considered to be conservative low range figures.

has been developed historically. However, with the emergence of the BIP, this casual interdependence matured into a symbiotic dependency for mutual survival. Between 1967 and 1980, forty-two U.S. corporations had active plants (maquiladores) in Matamoros. Whereas in 1980, between 11,000 and 15,000 Mexican nationals were employed in maquiladoras in Matamoros, by 1985, the number had exceeded 20,000.[78]

In 1980, the population curve for Matamoros attained a vertical direction, indicating an unprecedented population of 238,000 persons.[79] Brownsville's population, on the other hand, increased only 10 percent between 1960 and 1970, and it increased a dramatic 75 percent between 1970 and 1980. A large percentage of the increase was due to "spill over from Matamoros". The higher wages paid to industrial workers in Matamoros relative to the interior of Mexico, attracted workers from the interior to the border. In some border areas, such as Laredo and Nogales, BIP has increased employment opportunities faster than it has induced population growth. In Matamoros the opposite is true. As described earlier, high unemployment has been endemic to Brownsville and Matamoros since the early part of the century. In addition, while BIP was intended to increase male employment opportunities, in Matamoros, traditionally 80 percent of the employees have been young women. Matamoros' reversal of the border trend has aggravated the problem of illegal immigration of young adult males to Brownsville, thus "pushing" Matamoros' unemployment problems to the Brownsville side of the river.

Although BIP was intended to solve the severe unemployment problems on the border, in Brownsville-Matamoros, unemployment increased between 1965-1985. BIP was also designed to attract foreign capital investment to the border, thus providing the whole Mexican economy with a greatly-needed economic infusion. According to the Mexican government the BIP, "has generated foreign exchange second only to that generated by exports of petroleum."[80] Importantly, the foreign capital investment in Matamoros is multiplied back into the economies of both sides of the river. Border economists rate the sectoral multiplier from maquilas realized on the U.S. side to be as high as 4.[81] that Mexican maquila workers spend anywhere from 30 to 75 percent of their Mexican earned income on the U.S. side.[82] Thus, as maquila activity increases in Matamoros, retail and service sales in Brownsville must also increase proportionalely. BIP has been an economic windfall for both Brownsville and Matamoros. In Matamoros, the BIP temporarily alleviates unemployemnt pressures in the community, while in Brownsville, the investment translates to jobs, increase in sales and cah flow, increases the tax base, and increased tourism ralted to the industries. One investigator calculted that as employment increases in Matamoros, a concomitant

increase in employment would be realized in Brownsville.

BIP has undoubtedly provided the Brownsville-Matamoros border with the Economic bolstering it needed to counteract the decline in the agricultural industry of the 1970's, as well as offset the negative effects of the port-bracero era. In his study of the economic growth of Brownsville, Miller states that,

> "Brownsville underwent spectacular economic expansion over the 1970's. Industrial development has been the essential factor behind the community's economic renaissance."[83]

The economic prosperity and the diversified economy of the 1970's discussed by Miller, was he feels, "less subject to fluctuations caused by external by external events and trends."[84] That is, as we have seen in our survey, Brownsville and Matamoros have historically been affected by external factors beyond their control. In spite of the predictions of reduced vulnerability to external factors, few observers have been astute enough to envision what the 1980's would bring, and even fewer have dared to acknowledge the economic warnings we ignored in the late 1970's, that was, "The Brownsville Economy is too dependent upon the Mexican economy for its own good."

At the beginning of 1980, the Brownsville-Matamoros border community was riding the crest of the economic windfall generated in the 1970's. However, the seemingly limitless growth and wealth of Brownsville-Matamoros was to have a rude awakening.

In February and August of 1982, the Mexican government drastically devalued the peso, its, "value plummeting by more than 150 percent in just six months--after six years of stability for the currency."[85] The sudden devaluation marked an abrubt end to economic prosperity in the Brownsville business community. Over the years, the Brownsville economy had invested heavily in "Mexican dependence," with little attention being paid to the development of a solid economic base on the U.S. side of the river.

The successive devaluations were most seriously felt in the retail and service sectors of the economy, upon which Brownsville has historically relied. The Mexican retail and service consumer simply stopped coming to Brownsville to shop. The real estate industry was also hard hit, resulting in a glut of homes on the market, with very little sales activity taking place. Only tourism, as an industry, appeared to hang on and even increase slightly during the early 1980's.

The Brownsville population had been averaging a 4

percent growth rate per year in the late 1970's. This growth rate dropped under 2 percent per year after 1982, for the first time since the 1930's. More than 500 businesses closed and unemployment for retail and service workers shot-up. The Texas Employment Commission estimated that unemployment in Brownsville was above 15 percent in 1983, while the state average held steady around 5 percent.[86] The figure is undoubtedly conservative. The "shadow" population of illegal aliens mentioned earlier as well as the lower income groups, in Brownsville, were the most severely devastated by the devaluations. A new category of poverty emerged, the "new poor."

While all valley cities felt the effects of the peso devaluation, none did so dramatically as Brownsville. The fact that Brownsville is the only true bordertown in the valley explains this fact. The peso devaluation decreased the "walk-over" retail trade and the commuter employment opportunities in Brownsville. The cyclical effect meant that there were fewer dollars circulating in the Brownsville economy in the years between 1982 to 1985. In spite of the economic hardship produced by the peso devaluation, the populations of Brownsville and Matamoros continue to grow at highly-accelerated rates.

Perhaps population projections to the turn of the century (2000), will most dramatically predict the impending economic needs and problems on the horizon for the area. While Brownsville is growing faster than most of the state of Texas, her percentage of poor is growing faster than the rest of her population. One report estimates that by the turn of the century, Brownsville will have the third lowest per capita income in the state, behind Laredo and McAllen, also border areas.[87]

Furthermore, conservative estimates place Brownsville's population at 200,000 by the year 2000, while Matamoros is expected to reach 500,000 in the same year.[88] The combined populations of Brownsville-Matamoros at the turn of the century, 700,000, will be more than the entire population of the valley today.

Clearly, the economic problems experienced by Brownsville at mid-decade (1985) can be expected to worsen and then cycle back as the century winds down.

While the Brownsville-Matamoros economy was hard hit by the peso devaluation, the maquila industry continues to flourish, indicating to many that the future economic growth and stability of Brownsville lies in its ability to industrialize.[89] Through the establishment of a solid and permanent source of employment, the economic industralization of Mexico's northern frontier will play major role in Brownsville's future. However, "off-shore" industries are a

gamble at best, since they are themselves dependent upon world market fluctuations and the continued availability of cheap labor.

It should be pointed out that the same forces which institutionalized poverty in Brownsville in the early part of the 20th century, now call for its industrialization in order to off-set the growing poverty problem. In the first half of the 20th century, Brownsville's leadership was characterized by a no-growth mentality.[90]

The support of no-growth in Brownsville was intended to keep "out-siders" away from the economic prosperity of the day. Fortunes were made by a select few, who overlooked the need to develop a permanent economic base in Brownsville. As a result, Brownsville's retail and service economy must now support full employment activities in order to guarantee their own economic survival.

## SUMMARY

This paper has not intended to reveal any heretofore unknown facts about Brownsville-Matamoros history, nor has it attempted to revise the prevalent historical thought on the communities. It has, on the other hand, undertaken the task of examining the developmental histories of the border community from the perspective of their interdependence.

The U.S.-Mexico border is unique in many ways, but its irredent nature is certainly its most outstanding feature. That is, over the centuries and through wars and economic windfall and disaster, the border region and its people have developed a commonality which does not recognize political boundaries and is not divided by one. The Brownsville-Matamoros community developed along a river which did not serve as a dividing line, but rather as a life-giving artery flowing through both communities.

In many ways the U.S.-Mexico border is a paradox, an enigma, which makes little sense to the casual observer. However, it yields up its deep-rooted comlexities to the serious student. Symbiosis, although a biological concept, is the one term which most completely explains the riddle of the border.

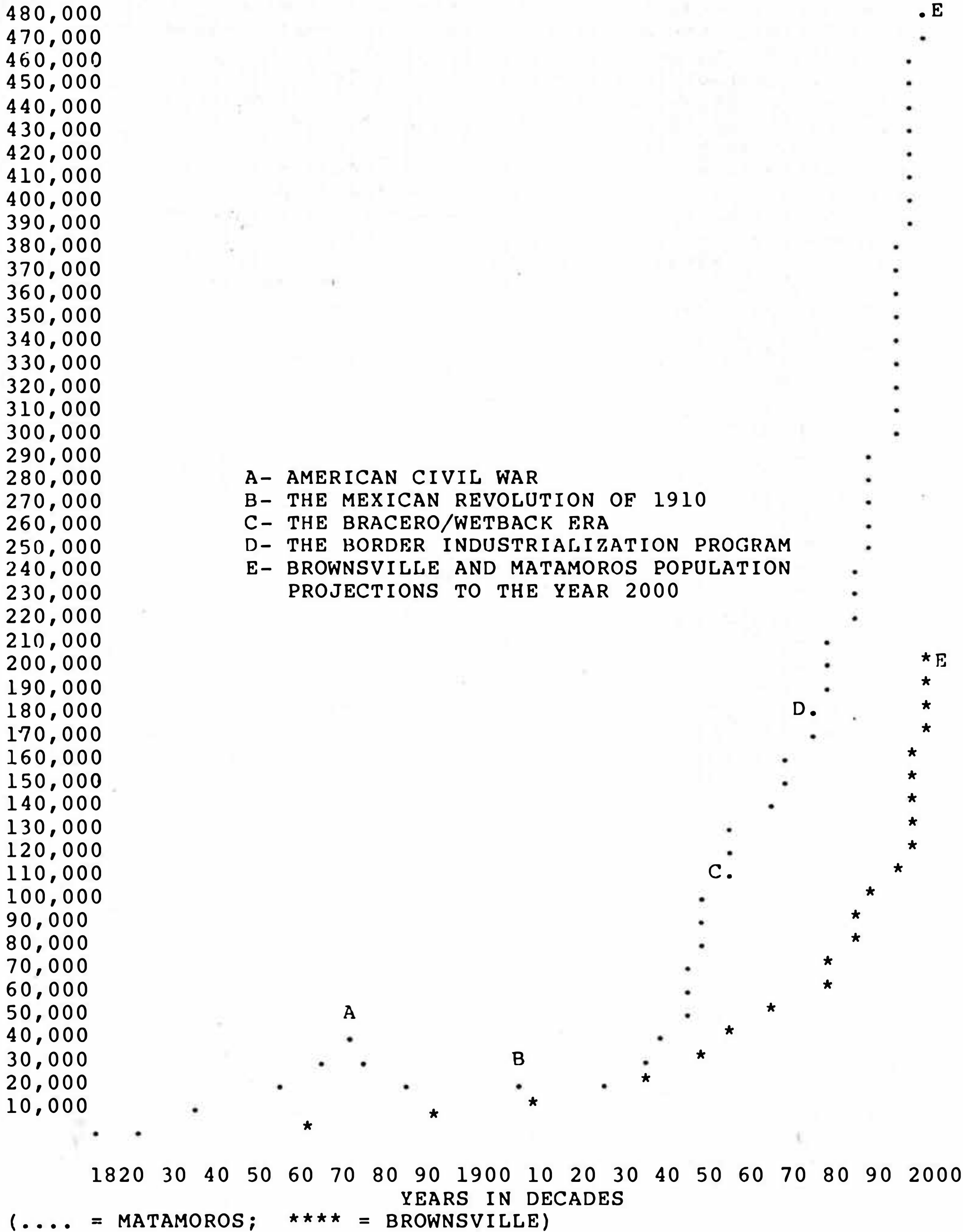
History is a tool with which the social scientist may explain the present and predict the future. The history of Brownsville and Matamoros clearly reveals their subtle evolution as central service centers, located at the crossroads between North and Latin America. Over a hundred years of intermittent warfare, of frontier status, of entrepreneurial spirit, and a cosmopolitan society, have all made Brownsville and Matamoros the queen sister cities of the lower river they are today.

When their economies and societies are examined through time, a definite pattern is revealed. Brownsville-Matamoros have survived from one speculatin or gamble to the next. Amazingly, after endless booms and busts, Brownsville and Matamoros have always seemed to attract one more speculative boom, when it was needed to sustain and bolster their economy. But as their population history shows, the accummulative effect of the last several booms has produced a very serious population problem. While the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) promises to alleviate the unemployment problems, the population growth rates in Brownsville and Matamoros far outstrip their ability to develop their economies at the same rate. The result is a very highly polarized society, that is characterized by the accummulation of wealth by a very small percentage of the population at the top, and the heightened growth of poverty at the bottom. Indeed, demographers and economists alike predict economic prosperity for Brownsville in the future. They also predict an increase in poverty.

> "A border is not only a line which separates, it is also a line which unities."[91]

In the case of the U.S.-Mexico border and her sister communities, Spanish/Mexican populations and their cultures came before the line was formed, while Anglo-American populations with their cultures came after. Time and history have united them.

> "Both Americans and Mexicans have apparently gained something by moving to the border area, where both sides live together in a symbiotic relationship not always appreciated or even understood in the halls of government in Mexico City or Washington."[92]


GRAPH OF BROWNSVILLE-MATAMOROS POPULATION HISTORY
480,000
470,000
460,000
450,000
440,000
430,000
420,000
410,000
400,000
390,000
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370,000
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A- AMERICAN CIVIL WAR
B- THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION OF 1910
C- THE BRACERO/WETBACK ERA
D- THE BORDER INDUSTRIALIZATION PROGRAM
E- BROWNSVILLE AND MATAMOROS POPULATION PROJECTIONS TO THE YEAR 2000
A
B
C.
D.
.E
*E
1820 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 1900 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 2000
YEARS IN DECADES
(.... = MATAMOROS; **** = BROWNSVILLE)

## ENDNOTES

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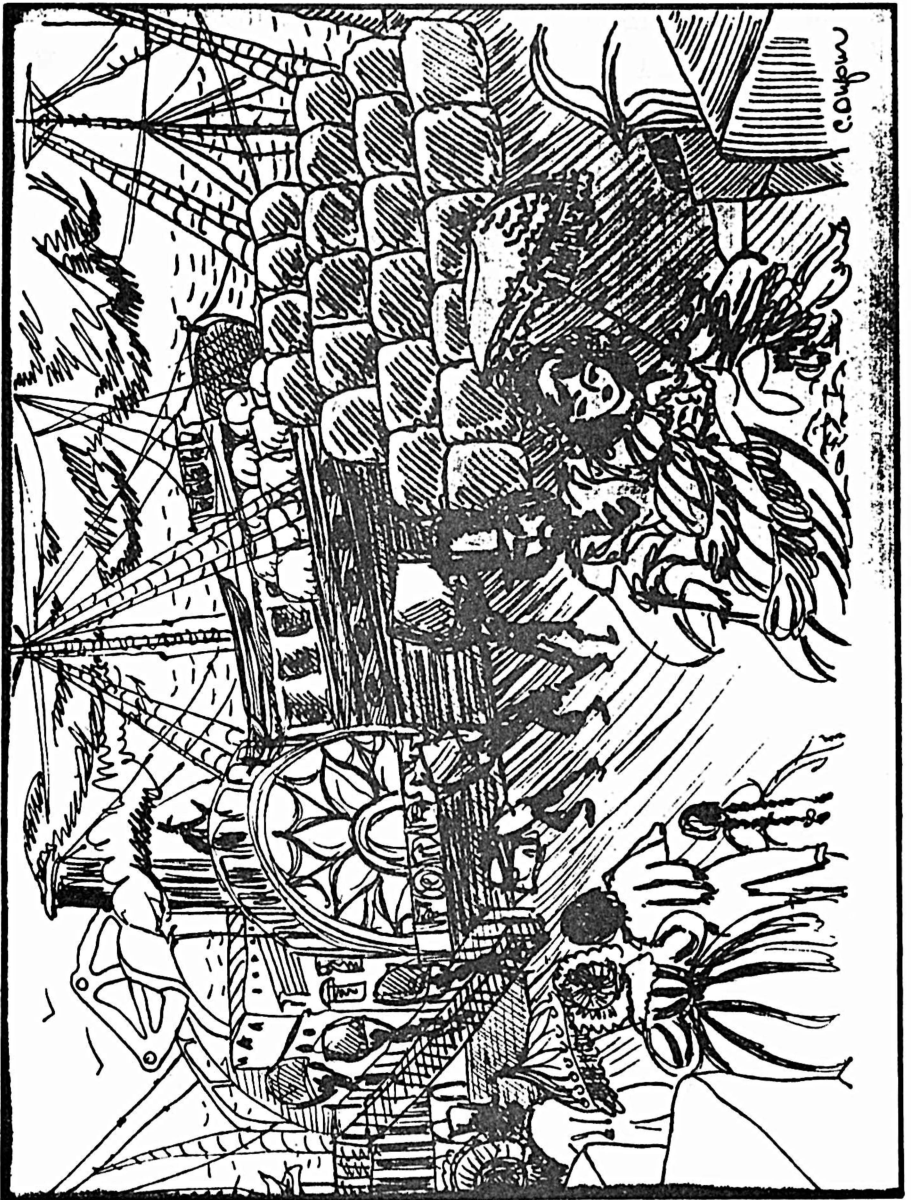


THE BAGPIPER

Told by Felipe Lozano in his barbershop to his customers and written down by Peter Gawenda.

Shortly after the Mexican-American War, in February of 1849, a terrible disease, the cholera, hit the little town of Brownsville. Every night the horse-drawn hearse would drive through the sections where the jacales and huts stood to pick up the victims of the disease. People who didn't have the money to bury their loved ones would place them in front of their house beside the street for pick-up. As the death rate could have led to a panic, the churchbell was no longer permitted to ring.

At that time there lived an old bagpiper in Brownsville. Nobody really knew where he had come from, but it was believed that he had arrived in this country as an emmigrant from Scotland or Ireland, and had ended up in this part of the country after his discharge from the Army.

Not one day passed without his getting drunk. And one night, he again had several drinks too many. When he stumbled into the night, he tripped, and fell into the gutter.

Early that morning the grave-diggers passed by with their hearse and saw him lying there. His bagpipe was firmly pressed under his right arm. Both men jumped down and shook him. But when they saw no sign of life in him they thought that he was dead. They threw him on the hearse, which already carried three bodies. Then they returned to the graveyard where they had dug out a large mass grave for the many victims.

After unloading the hearse they left again. Many hours later, after the bagpiper had slept off his alcohol, he woke up and suddenly recognized the horrible company that he was in. Terrified he yelled for help, but nobody came. He just knew that his last hour had come, and trembling all over he started playing the choral "Lord it's time for me to come."

When the hearse returned with a new freight that evening the grave-diggers heard a gruesome melody coming from the graveyard. Not being the bravest men, they fled that horrible place.

And the wretched bagpipes had to spend a long and lonesome night under the dead bodies. When it started to become daylight again and when he heard the grave-diggers return, he gathered all his strength and played for his life.

Fortunately the two diggers overcame their fear and followed the strange sounds. More scared than brave, they stared into the big grave and saw the old piper white as a sheet between the dead bodies.

At once they helped him back out of the grave. The piper thanked his two saviors and left stone sober.

It is said that he did enjoy a few more years of playing his bagpipe even in cantinas, but that nobody had ever seen him drunk again.

During this fateful February of 1849 and the first few days of March, over one hundred persons out of a population of fifteen hundred had died. The main causes for this epedemic were the catastrophic sanitary conditions and the contamination of the resacas and the drinking water. In Brazos Santiago, San Patricio and Bagdad, the epidemic caused as many deaths as in Brownsville and Matamoros. Unfortunately not many doctors were available to fight this disease. One name that stands out as a good Samaritan for many of the sick is a certain Doctor Wozencraft who spent many days and nights caring for whoever called him for help.

*The Bagpiper*

## THE DEVIL'S ROCK (La Piedra del Diablo)

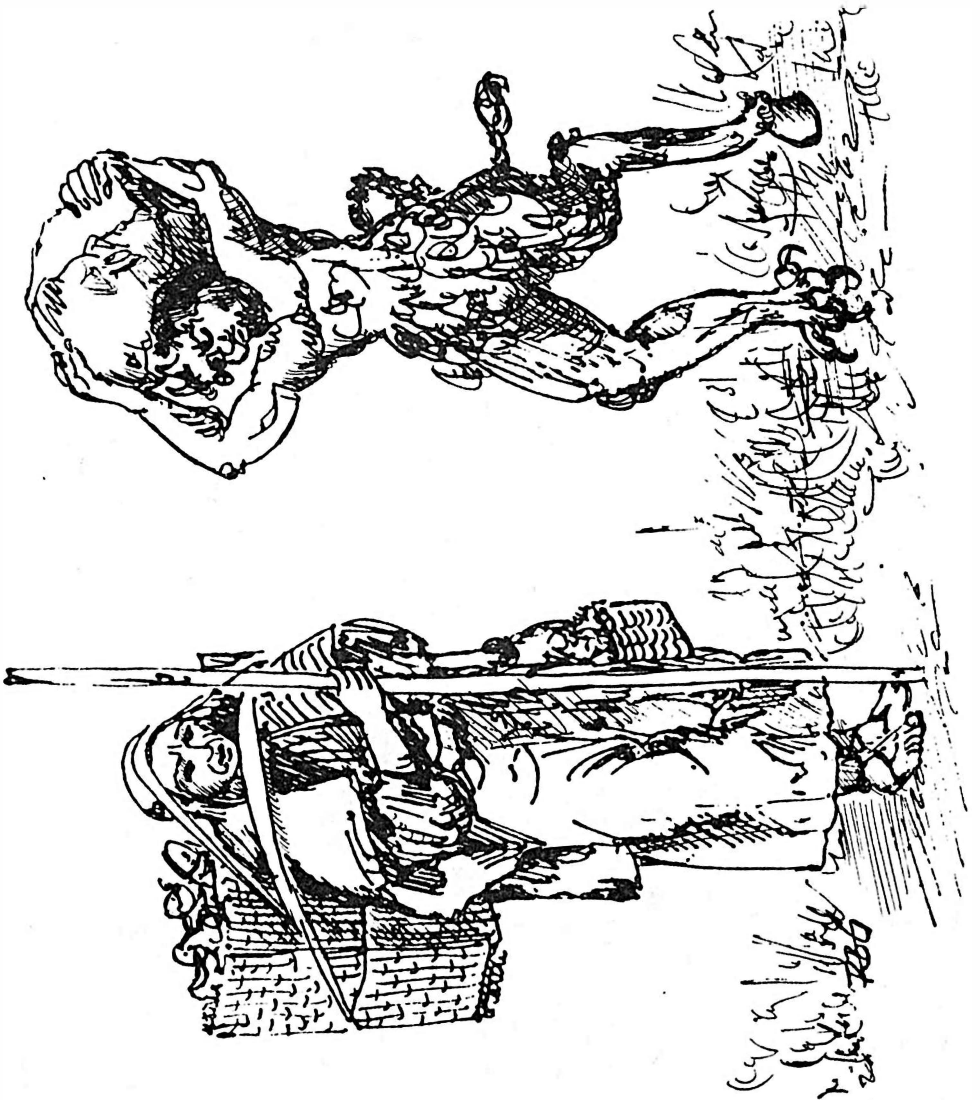
Told by Father Dan Laning at a first Communion in Mission, Texas, in May 1960 and written down by Peter Gawenda.

When the devil had to witness how the first church was built in Brownsville, he was so angry that he decided to destroy it. He did not want to lose control of so many people that were on the best path to eternal damnation.

In the cover of darkness he had picked up a large rock in one of the stone quarries farther up the valley and was hurrying toward Brownsville. At the crack of dawn he had reached a spot south of Olmito, where he met an old woman. She had a big "cesta para compras" (a basket for purchases) carried on her back and a smaller one on her arm. Both baskets were filled to the brim with old and torn shoes that the old woman was trading and buying in the farms and ranchitas all over the county. The devil, who already was angry and disgusted from carrying the heavy rock, asked in a harsh voice how far it was to the new church. The woman at once pricked up her ears, and then she recognized who that was in front of her. She answered slyly: "It is so far, that on my way up to here I have worn out all those shoes which I have in the baskets."

When the devil heard the answer he started to figure out how much further he would have to go, and he got furious. In a sudden rage of anger he took his stone from his shoulder and with a wild curse he threw it as far as he could. A moment later he had disappeared. Relieved, the old woman kept on walking. She was very happy that she survived that encounter unharmed.

For a long time, many, many decades, the rock remained lying in the same spot. It had a deep indention on one side that was colored black. This was possibly where Satan had his burning hand when he carried the rock. It is not known what happened to that rock, but it is possible that it is being used as a marker somewhere in or outside the city.



## LA CURANDERA

Told by a customer in Felipe Lozano's barbershop and written down by Peter Gawenda.

During the Mexican civil war around 1866, many refugees crossed the Rio Grande into Brownsville. Among them was an old woman, a healer and sorceress. Her powers became known very quickly, and people would respectfully refer to her as la curandera. Her language was only understood by a few people who had come from the same area of Mexico that she was born in. Although she needed money to support herself, she would only accept pay from those who could afford it.

All the young people knew that she was very able in the art of matchmaking. Especially young girls who were hoping to find a husband or those who were in love with a boy but whose love was not answered came to the curandera. The curandera would take white paper, because white is the color of purity and love, fold the paper and then cut out the figure of a man. If the girl approved the figure, the curandera would hang dark cloth in front of the windows, light incense in a bowl of clay and hold the figure over the burning incense. Then she would take deep breaths, inhaling the smoke and then blowing it at the paperdoll. After she had repeated this several times she would start singing in a strange language, rocking slowly back and forth caressing the doll. Finally she would give the doll to the young girl and tell her to carry the doll close to her heart so that the man of her desires would approach her. It is not known how many girls and boys were helped by the curandera, but it is known that nobody ever demanded his payment back or spoke badly about her.

But one time the daughter of one of the rich citizens came demanding that la curandera help her. She wanted the boy who was courting one of her cousins. She wanted him even if that meant death for her cousin -she wanted him. The curandera tried to change the girl's mind, but to no avail, and finally she declined the girl's demands. The girl left very angry, threatening to return with the sheriff to throw her into jail for trickery and fraud.

Not even an hour later the girl returned with one of the Sheriff's deputies. The curandera was given the choice of either following the girl's demand or going to jail. Once more the curandera asked the girl to change her mind, but in vain. She then warned the girl that in a triangle one person has to die and that the victim could be the girl herself. But now the girl started screaming and yelling that she

LA CURANDERA

didn't care, she wanted that boy.

This time the curandera lit two incense burners and started singing a very strange song that sounded more like a wailing. At the same time she was cutting out three paper dolls, two from white paper, one from black paper. Their shapes looked identical. La curandera knelt between the two incense burners, singing and rocking back and forth, inhaling the smoke and blowing it at the three dolls. The ceremony had lasted almost an hour and it had become very chilly when the deputy sheriff suddenly realized a figure was standing beside the girl. He was stunned when he was the figure put its arm around the girl and caress her. Then both rose slowly and as if in a trance left the curandera's house. The deputy was so petrified that he completely forgot to follow. Only after the curandera told him that the girl had found her "amante" did he come to his senses and storm out the door.

Frantically he ran towards town, but the girl was nowhere in sight. He went to the girl's house, her father's store, to her grandparents' house and even to the church, but he could not find the girl. When night fell and he still had not found the girl, he went back to her father's house and told him what had happened. Half crazy, the father ran to the curandera's house followed by the deputy. When they broke in, the incense in the two bowls was still smoldering, but the house was empty. The father ran through the streets calling his daughter, to no avail. When he returned to his house he saw his wife with empty eyes sitting on the front steps. Neighbors had found the girl hanging in the tree beside the house.

All the sheriff's deputy could stutter, when asked what had happened, was that the Angel of Death had suddenly appeared beside the girl and taken her with him. When she had accompanied the Angel, leaving the curandera's house, the black papes doll had suddenly been consumed in a bluish burst of flames.

The curandera had disappeared without a trace, and the girl's parents followed their daughter to the grave within days. The deputy's mind was so affected that he had to be released from his job. His fate is unknown.

## THE BLACK MARE (La Yegua negra)

Told by a fisherman, John (or Juan) Garreau, on Padre Island to a group of sun-bathers in 1967.

There once was a town called Bagdad located on the southern side of the delta of the Rio Bravo. It is said that its people were presumptuous, blasphemeous and at times very unfriendly to strangers. Some records even describe it as a Babylon of the Bible.

Right at the edge of town on the side towards Texas lived an old Indian with his black mare. It was known that he crossed into Texas quite often, and as people like to gossip, they said that he was kidnapping beautiful girls there and selling them to rich Mexicans. The Indian had heard peope talk, but he never contradicted them because he knew that not all the people were thinking badly of him.

One day when he had left for Texas, and, as usual, people were gossiping, strong winds arose and the waves grew ever larger and higher.

Some of the people decided to move inland, but most of them stayed. On the third night, it must have been past midnight, the storm was picking up speed and intensity. Tremendous lightening flashes illuminated the sky, and loud thunder roared through the night. The frightened people were huddled in their houses, when they heard the galloping hoofs of a horse and a man yelling: "Save your souls, a hurricane, save your soals a hurricane!" Those who dared to look out their doors saw the black mare fall, throwing off the Indian. No one dared brave the storm to help the man, who lay in the street with a broken back.

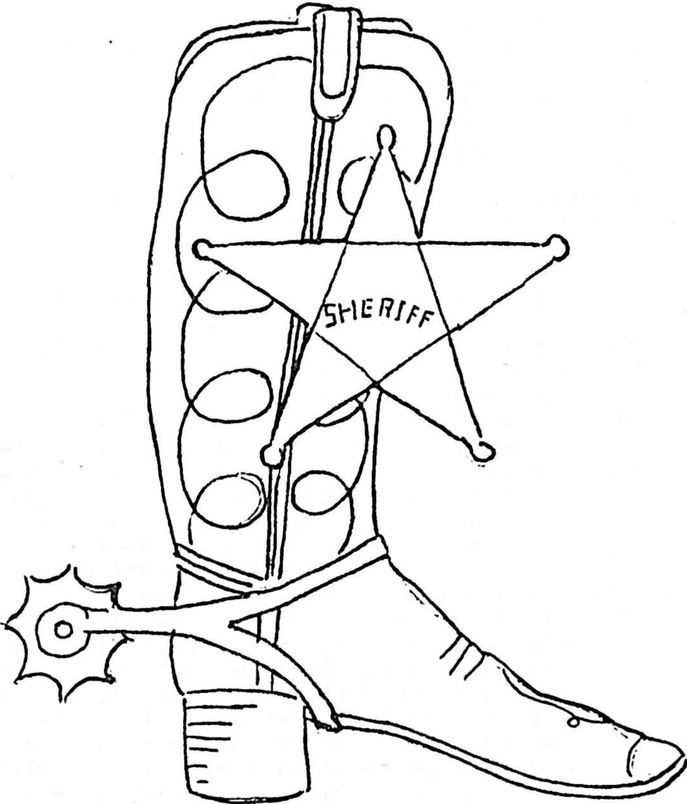
As we know today, the hurricane wiped the town off the face of this earth. The attempt of the brave Indian to save the people, who had treated him so badly, had cost him his life.

Some people say that they have seen the Indian on his black mare racing down the beach during stormy nights. He usually comes across the river, his horse's hooves hitting the tips of the waves. At times he has even been heard yelling: "Save your souls". Although there is no proof that he has warned people about on-coming hurricanes, many people along the Texan and especially Mexican coast insisted even as late as the nineteen sixties that they had been warned by... "un Indio con una yegua negra..." to take cover and therefore had survived the storms.

La Yegua Negra ....

It is kind of strange, though, that after many a storm people have seen tracks coming out of the water, disappearing farther inland, as far north as Boca Chica and Padre Island.

# LATE 19th CENTURY BROWNSVILLE



# Brownsville, Model City of Texas in 1879

by

Peter-Bodo Gawenda

Texas was an underpopulated state before the turn of the century and had to encourage immigration in order to keep up with the other states. As the cities were usually of primary interest to the European immigrants who had technical backgrounds or were craftsmen of sorts, Texan cities started to compete in Europe, actually establishing emigration offices. San Antonio feared to fall behind and therefore tried to wake up its citizens with series of articles in their newspapers that described other, more advanced cities. One of these descriptions appeared in the Saturday Morning edition of the San Antonio Daily Express on October 18, 1979:

"The City of Brownsville,
with about 6,000 or 7,000 inhabitants, made up of many Americans, Spaniards, Germans, French, and many of other nationalists, and, about two-third Mexican. In its general appearance, Brownsville is ahead of San Antonio. Many of her streets are paved; sidewalks are wide and well paved with brick, flagging, or a mesquite pavement of which I will speak further on. The streets are named at each corner, and well lighted with coal oil lamps. A great many shade trees line the sidewalks, and the business houses are mostly of brick, and two and three stories high. There are many beautiful residences, some with mansard roofs and finished in modern style. Many of the private grounds are most artistically laid off, and contain orange, lemon and lime trees, now laden with ripening fruit, the stately palmetto and date palm, the richly-verdured eboney, the prolific fig, trailing grape vines, and other flowing vines romantically clamoring over fences, trees, and the homes of the rich and the poor, and thousands of roses in full blossom, with hundreds of other rare and beautiful flowers enchanting the eye with their brilliant and varied colors, and filling the air with their seductive perfumes. You, of the chilly north, who are now shivering over a fire, and looking forward with dread to the rapidly approaching long and dreary winter, contrast your leafless trees, your snow and dead grass, with the foregoing picture, and then ask yourselves why you toil life-long to barely keep body and soul together. Long have I desired to visit the "sunny south," but never until now have I seen and realized the meaning of that poetic term. But go out of the city limits and you are in the wilds. Instead

of hundreds of thousands of orange and lemon trees, furnishing their delicious and healthy fruit to the millions of the north, you will find but one or two in each private yard, bearing not enough for home consumption. It is not the fault of the people. They have got "inertia" bad, and I fear very much that it is chronic. To tell the plain truth, to develop this country a new element has to get control of everything."

ELIZABETH STREET, CIRCA 1865.
BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS

# BROWNSVILLE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS
## One Century Ago (1875-1905)

by

Peter-Bodo Gawenda

The independence of Texas from Mexico was in part justified by Mexico's inability to provide public free schools. Immigrants to Texas therefore expected the state to assume responsibilities that were specifically mentioned in her constitution. But not until 1871 did the Texas Legislature pass an act organizing a system of public free schools. Even then they failed to establish mandatory attendance for all children within a certain age range. The State also neglected to require a system of teacher education that would have encouraged high standards from the earliest beginnings.

Texans opposed the idea of being taxed for the education of children that were not their own. Edward King, a traveller through Texas, wrote in Scribner's Monthly Magazine of February 1874 that of the 228,355 children living in Texas, only a total of 127,000 had been reported to the authorities and only approximately 80,000 had actually attended public school at some portion of that year. Thus 65 percent of all school-age children had not attended school. King also reported that in Texas of 1873 there were 70,895 white and 150,617 colored persons over ten years of age who could neither read nor write.[1]

The 1870's were one of Brownsville's periods of economic growth and physical expansion after two decades of border unrest under Cortina and after the Civil War. Immigrants from European Countries such as Austria, France, England, the German States and Italy had started to settle at the gate to Mexico and to Central America. Especially these population groups who had been exposed to well organized educational systems in their countries of origin supported the establishment of schools in the city. But when the public schools of Brownsville failed to materialize, the Catholic and Presbyterian churches provided education to young ladies from both sides of the border in the Convent of the Incarnate Word in plain sewing, needle work, embroidery and painting, and the three R's. But the two semesters which were offered rarely had more than one hundred fifty students, and very few students attended more than two years. In 1869 St Joseph's College was opened for young boys under the Fathers of the Oblates of Mary. It was closed for one year from 1871 to 1872 until three American fathers arrived from New Orleans and three Mexican fathers from Monterrey. It closed a second time in 1875 and reopened seventeen years later in 1892. The

subjects for boys included algebra, geometry, astronomy, history, languages, mental training, bookkeeping, composition, declamation and other subjects.[2]

During the closure of the College (College was actually just a fancy name for a grammar school) the nuns of the convent opened a second school for boys from 5 to 13 years of age. Both Catholic schools charged tuition, limiting enrollment to children of parents who had funds. The Presbyterian Mission School was free of charge and catered primarily to the Hispanic population. Although English was taught as a separate course, Spanish-language text books were used for all other subjects in primary and intermediate subjects. Instruction in the Presbyterian school was already highly individualized, ensuring that the best graduates or those who were advanced the most, could be used as teachers.

Some of the local families sent their children to schools in Matamoros (the Mexican border-town of 15,000 inhabitants) such as San Juan College which offered in addition to the academic subjects of Spanish, English, French, Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Philosophy, Geography, History, Physics, Music and Art, also the subjects of Bookkeeping, Telegraphy, Cosmology and Chronology. Other schools included the Hussey Institute and a missionary branch of the Presbyterian School. At the time when the capital of the State of Tamaulipas was moved from Victoria to Matamoros, the editor of the San Antonio Daily Express of October 28, 1873 described school situation in Matamoros as follows:

> "Their schools are something that surprised me. Our worthy governor could receive some advanced ideas on education here. They not only have a free school system, but it is compulsory, the police being authorized to pick up children on the streets during school hours and punish the parents for not complying with the school law....Where is our boasted superiority in civilization over the Mexican people? The accepted criterions of civilization of a nation the world over are the educational advantages offered to the masses. Taking this view, are there any towns in Texas so far advanced as Matamoros?..."[3]

The Public Schools of Brownsville were independent free schools under the Common School system, initially established in 1875. Because of a lack of school buildings, classes were conducted in different locations of the city in rooms which were rented by the schools' authority for that purpose. Teachers were frequently changed and due to the absence of continuous supervision students were at the mercy of their teachers and the teachers' personal ideas of teaching. Fifteeen years after the initial establishment of the schools the city fathers finally accepted the demands of the newly

hired Superintendent, Mr. Cummings, to build a centrally located school.

The State had provided funds for Brownsville's schools on a regular basis, but due to incomplete reports the amounts remained below the legally stipulated funds during the early years. In 1880 the sum of $2,116 was received, by 1884 the amount had more than doubled to $5,085 and by 1889 it had reached $7,276. The scholastic population was reported by different offices differently.[4] The State Board of Education in its Special Report for the years 1883 to 1884 stated that schools were not graded and no school buildings were maintained in Brownsville during the years 1882 to 1884. The scholastic population of 1,204 of the year 1882 to 1883 had dropped to 1,102 during the following scholastic year, 1883 to 1884. School attendance was reported as generally low.[5]

In August of 1888 E.H. Goodrich reports for Cameron County that fourty schools of different quality were initially available in the County before a heavy storm in September, 1887, had destroyed or damaged the majority of the buildings owned or rented by the county. Although the county had 1,736 children enrolled, the daily average attendance ranged around 920 or 53 percent of the enrollees. It is not surprising therefore that the State Superintendent had to report to the Texas Legislature that 68 percent of all of Cameron County's students who could not read at the beginning of the school term 1886 to 1887 still could not read at the end of the term, and that all students who started or joined during the year not knowing how to write still were not able to write at the end. Of those pupils who did not understand the elementary rules of arithmetic, 85 percent still did not understand them at the end of the school year.[6]

During the following year Brownsville conducted school in eleven different locations, two of which were intended for the city's black students. Only 480 pupils of the reported 1,818 school-age children actually attended school, that is slightly over one-fourth of the scholastic population. But academic achievements were not even promising for those of Brownsville's pupils attending school during the school year of 1887 to 1888. Thirty-four percent of the students entering as non-readers remained unable to read, fourty-five percent remained unable to write and sixty-nine percent still did not understand the four elementary rules of arithmetic at the end of that scholastic year.

The report also stated that parents were too poor to purchase books, slates or other school materials leading to varieties of "...books of every description and kind.." or teachers even using their private funds.[7] The buildings were in such "...poor condition, many of them unsuited for school purposes, being small, dark, and damp..." that parents

refused to send their children to school. [8]

One complaint which was often voiced was that the school-term was too short, a major obstacle to advancement. As nearly all of Cameron County's children were of Hispanic origin, and as their only knowledge and speaking skills of the English language were obtained in the public schools, the length of time when schools were closed -on occasion seven to eight months between terms- deprived the pupils from hearing and using English. Thus "...the commencement of each school term (found) them almost entirely ignorant of what they had previously learned..." 9

During the school year of 1887 to 1888 Cameron County reported 2,433 children of scholastic age of which 1,985 or 81.6 percent were enrolled. But unfortunately only 1,231 pupils or slightly more than half of all children of scholastic age attended school. At the end of that school year fourty-three percent of those who had entered school still could neither read nor write, sixty-four percent, i.e. more than half, still did not understand the four fundamental rules of arithmetic. 10 According to the reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Oscar H. Cooper, participation of students varied substantially in the different branches or subjects offered by local public schools (Tables 1 to 4). Arithmetic, Geography and English Grammar were frequented highest, although the number never was more than half of those attending school, while Algebra, Geometry, Natural Philosopy and Plysiology ranked lowest. The two activities, reading and penmanship were not reported regularly but seemed to be taken by more than half of all pupils attending school starting with the scholastic year 1887 to 1888. 11

As late as 1884 the Brownsville schools had only one teacher with a local first grade permanent certificate, no teachers with State Normal certificates and one teacher with no certificate at all. Eight teachers had second grade local permanent certificates, and seven had second grade county certificates. The scholastic population for that year was 2,262 (eight to sixteen year of age inclusive) of which only 528 (i.e. 23.3 percent) or less than one-fourth were enrolled. Brownsville's sixteen teachers received together $6,655 or an average of $415.94 per year per teacher. The pupils were taught in two school buildings or fifteen classrooms, one of which was for the few local black students. Only one of the buildings was owned by the city. As the seating capacity ranged around six hundred and fourty and as the school library contained only two hundred volumes, it must be assumed that Brownsville's schools were not equipped to accommodate more than one-fourth of its school-age children anyway. 12

The situation did not improve for the 2,341 school-age

children in 1895 or the 2,189 in 1898 showing 746 or one-third of the children enrolled and less than one-fourth attending school. The twenty-four teachers taught school on 169 days, no longer providing separate instruction for the few black children of scholastiic age. At this time 18 girls and 12 boys were reported enrolled in high school, constituting 1.4 percent of all school-age children. 13

At the turn of the century the scholastic population had decreased to 2,119 children of which only 700 or one-third were enrolled. During the school year less than one-fourth actually attended school on a regular basis. Classes were again provided to several black students. 14 After 1900 the scholastic population increased again, reaching 2,341 by 1906 of which 761 or one-third were enrolled in school and only one-fourth attend. High School still was not popular, showing students in only two grades. Brownsville employed twenty-eight teachers, two holding state certificates and twenty-six certificates, and increased its library buildings to 786 volumes. 15

For thirty years, only less than one-fourth of Brownsville's population attend public school and since the turn of the century one-hundredth of the population started to attend high school. Although the city had two parochial schools, the total number of school attendees did not increase substantially, leaving the majority of the population "educationally deprived."

Table 1

Number of Students, and Percentages of Scholastic Population, Enrolled Pupils and Attendees of Cameron County, for the Year Ending August 31, 1887.

| Subject | No. of Pupils | % of Scholast. Population | % of Enrolled | % of Attending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arithmetic | 546 | 21.8% | 29.3% | 32% |
| Geography | 854 | 33% | 44.3% | 48.5% |
| English Grammar | 404 | 15.6% | 21% | 22.9% |
| Composition | 217 | 8.4% | 11.3% | 12.3% |
| History | 211 | 8.1% | 11% | 12% |
| Algebra | 0 | - | - | - |
| Geometry | 0 | - | - | - |
| Natural Philosophy | 0 | - | - | - |
| Physiology | 0 | - | - | - |
| Orthography | 0 | - | - | - |
| Reading | 1,280 | 49.6% | 66.5% | 72.6% |
| Penmanship | 1,074 | 41.5% | 55.8% | 61% |
| Miscellaneous | - | - | - | - |
| Scholastic Pop. | 2,590 | - | - | - |
| Enrolled Pupils | 1,926 | 74.4% | - | - |
| Attending Pupils | 1,762 | 68% | 91.5% | - |

Source: 6th Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years ending August 31, 1887, and July 1, 1888. Austin: State Printing Office, 1888 pp. 51 and 53.

Table 2

Numbers of Students, and Percentages of Scholastic Population, Enrolled Pupils and Attendees of Cameron County, for the Year Ending July 1, 1888.

| Subject | No. of Pupils | % of Scholast. Population | % of Enrolled | % of Attending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arithmetic | 420 | 20.4% | 24.7% | 45.6% |
| Geography | 375 | 18.2% | 22% | 40.8% |
| English Grammer | 225 | 10.9% | 13.2% | 24.5% |
| Composition | 120 | 5.8% | 7.1% | 13% |
| History | 115 | 5.6% | 6.8% | 12.5% |
| Algebra | - | - | - | - |
| Geometry | - | - | - | - |
| Natural Philosophy | - | - | - | - |
| Physiology | - | - | - | - |
| Orthography | 920 | 44.8% | 54.1% | 100% |
| Reading | 730 | 35.5% | 42.9% | 79.3% |
| Penmanship | 360 | 17.5% | 21.2% | 39.1% |
| Miscellaneous | - | - | - | - |
| Scholastic Pop. | 2,055 | - | - | - |
| Enrolled Pupils | 1,701 | 82.8% | - | - |
| Attending Pupils | 920 | 44.7% | 54.1% | - |

Source: 6th Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years ending August 31, 1887 and July 1, 1888. Austin: State Printing Office, 1888, pp. 187 and 190.

Table 3

Number of Students, and Percentages of Scholastic Population, Enrolled Pupils and Ateendees of Cameron County, for the Year Ending August 31, 1889.

| Subject | No. of Pupils | % of Scholast. Population | % of Enrolled | % of Attending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arithmetic | 511 | 21.0% | 25.7% | 41.5% |
| Geography | 450 | 18.5% | 22.7% | 36.6% |
| English Grammar | 425 | 17.5% | 21.4% | 34.5% |
| Composition | 120 | 4.9% | 6.0% | 9.7% |
| History | 120 | 4.9% | 4.9% | 9.7% |
| Algebra | 3 | 0.1% | 0.15% | 0.24% |
| Geometry | 3 | 0.1% | 0.15% | 0.24% |
| Natural Philosophy | 3 | 0.1% | 0.15% | 0.24% |
| Physiology | 3 | 0.1% | 0.15% | 0.24% |
| Orthography | 1,230 | 50.6% | 62.0% | 99.9% |
| Reading | 920 | 37.8% | 46.3% | 74.7% |
| Penmanship | 710 | 29.2% | 35.8% | 57.7% |
| Miscellaneous | - | - | - | - |
| Scholastic Pop. | 2,433 | - | - | - |
| Enrolled Pupils | 1,985 | 81.6% | - | - |
| Attending Pupils | 1,231 | 50.6% | 62.0% | - |

Source: 7th Beinnial Report of the Superintendent of the Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years ending August 31, 1889 and August 31, 1890. Austin: State Printing Office, 1890 pp. 6 to 14.

Table 4

Numbers of Students, and Percentages of Scholastic Population, Enrolled Pupils and Attendees of Cameron County, for the Year Ending August 31, 1890.

| Subject | No. of Pupils | % of Scholast. Population | % of Enrolled | % of Attending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arithmetic | 920 | 35.5% | 47.4% | 74.8% |
| Geography | 550 | 21.2% | 28.4% | 44.7% |
| English Grammar | 422 | 16.3% | 21.8% | 34.3% |
| Compostion | 125 | 4.8% | 6.4% | 10.2% |
| History | 125 | 4.8% | 6.4% | 10.2% |
| Algebra | 5 | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Geometry | 5 | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Natural Philosophy | 5 | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Physiology | 5 | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Orthography | 1,230 | 47.5% | 63.4% | 100.0% |
| Reading | 860 | 33.2% | 44.3% | 69.9% |
| Penmanship | 740 | 28.5% | 38.1% | 60.2% |
| Miscellaneous | - | - | - | - |
| Scholastic Pop. | 2,592 | - | - | - |
| Enrolled Pupils | 1,940 | 74.8% | - | - |
| Attending Pupils | 1,230 | 47.5% | 63.4% | - |

Source: 7th Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years ending August 31, 1889, and August 31, 1890. Austin: State Printing Office, 1890, pp. 142 to 150.

## ENDNOTES

1. Edward King, "Glimpses of Texas", Scribner's Monthly, Vol II, No. 4, February 1874.

2. W.H. Chatfield, The Twin Cities. New Orleans: E.P. Brandao, 1983.

3. Ibid, and "Wanderings in West Texas", San Antonio Daily Express, Tuesday Morning, October 28, 1879.

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6. Oscar H. Cooper, Sixth Biennnial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years Ending August 31, 1987, and July 1, 1888. Austin: State Printing Office, 1888.

7. Ibid.

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9. Ibid p. 297.

10. Oscar H. Cooper, Seventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years Ending August 31, 1889, and August 31, 1980. Austin: State Printing Office, 1890, p. 10.

11. Oscar H. Cooper, Sixth Biennial ... 1888, p. 187.

12. James M. Carlisle, Tenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years Ending August 31, 1895 and August 31, 1896. Austin: Ben C. Jones Co, State Printers, 1887, pp. 128-163.

13. J.S. Kendall, Twelfth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years Ending August 31, 1899, and August 31, 1900, p. 79.

14. Ibid pp. 170,183.

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MATH
HISTORY

# THE RIO GRANDE RAILROAD ROBBERY, 1891

by

Ruby A. Wooldridge

On August 13, 1870, a special act of the Texas State Legislature gave permission to the founders of the Rio Grande Railroad Company to construct a line from Point Isabel, located on the Laguna Madre, to Brownsville. Soon steamers of the Morgan Steamship line, a branch of the Southern Pacific Steamship Company, began carrying cargo to and from Point Isabel. Cargo and merchandise of all types were off-loaded at the Point, then transferred to the small, narrow gauge railroad, and finally forwarded to Brownsville for further transfer to valley ranches and points in northern Mexico. In addition to general cargo, large amounts of money and gold were shipped to Point Isabel to pay suppliers for goods received.

The large amount of currency and gold soon became a tempting target for would-be highway men. The money involved in these transactions became too great a temptation for one group of men. On January 11, 1891, J.S. and M.H. Cross, wealthy Brownsville and Matamoros merchants, delivered $10,500 in Mexican Eagle dollars and a package of gold valued at $9,110 to Simón Celaya and José San Roman, trustees of the Railroad company. On January 19 the valuables, destined for New Orleans, were placed on the regular train departing Brownsville for Point Isabel. At a point approximately fifteen miles from Brownsville, a gang of bandits attacked the slow-moving train.

When the train failed to arrive at Point Isabel on schedule, Bob Kingsbury, the Morgan line agent, and others began to worry. Kingsbury was particularly concerned as his brother Martin was the conductor of the train.

At the time of the attack, the bandits failed to notice one Pomposo Arriola, who was walking to Point Isabel. Arriola's approach on the scene was hidden by the Loma Trosada, a small hill that had to be cut in half during the laying of the rail line. Noting the activity, Arriola hid, but kept a watchful eye on the act. When the assault ended and the bandits left the area, Arriola noting smoke rising from a box car, hurried to the scene. Finding the train crew and passengers locked in the burning car, Arriola soon worked to free the victims. Continuing his heroics, he then proceeded to Point Isabel to report the robbery. A switch engine, located at the yards at the Point, was soon hooked to a flat car and a posse was organized; men headed home for their weapons; and hastened, via rail, to the scene of the

felony.

At the Brownsville terminal of the line, Oliver Hicks, the assistant telegraph operator, was replacing Clemente Martinez, the regular operator, who was at lunch. As soon as the message was received in Brownsville, Santiago Brito was asked to solved the robbery. Brito had been a former sheriff of Cameron County, but at this time was the City Marshal. He was asked to solve the crime because of his impressive record and well-known abilities as a detective.

Brito immediately formed a posse and moved to the scene of the robbery to initiate a search for clues. A scientific search for clues was not yet a common practice in those days of six-gun toting, quick-draw lawmen, but Brito was an exception. He quickly deduced that the robbers took cover behind the cleaved hill located on a curve. The rail spikes had been removed with some type of tool and rope tied to the loosened rails. The rope was tied to the horns of the robbers' saddles, and it pulled apart the rails as the train approached, causing the train to plunge from the rails onto the road bed. It was later reported that some members of the gang wanted to slay immediately the passengers and crew but were prevented from doing so by their leader. However, the victims were placed into a box car, and the robbers set some of the cars on fire.

Marshall Brito felt this was the work of local talent, residing in either Brownsville or Matamoros. The posse soon found a valuable clue, a tool, part crow-bar and part wrench. It was designed for removing the bolts with which the angle bars holding the railers were affixed to the ties. Brito recognized the handiwork of a Mexican blacksmith, who served the Punta del Monte, Las Animas, and other ranches strung along the "Old Alice Road." The blacksmith was located and gave the description of the individual who ordered the implement. It fitted that of one José Mosquedo. Brito set about to trace the associates of Mosquedo, who verified Mosquedo's activities prior to and after the robbery. As the investigation continued, Don Tomás Tijerina reported information he had acquired relative to the fact there were certain characters in town spending great amounts of money. They were men of little visible means. Concurrent with this development, Mike Brown and George Connor were attending "bailes" seeking information on suspected members of the gang. In a short time one of the robbers was located and persuaded to talk. The remainder of the gang was soon named and later identified by the crew and passengers. The leader of the band might have escaped conviction, but when he prevented his men from murdering the passengers durng the robbery, he too had left a clue; the victims recognized his voice.

By June, five months after the crime, five of the

bandits were behind bars. Three others, however, had fled into Mexico with their share of the loot.

Although Brito had an iron-clad case, it was felt that a local jury could not be empaneled in Cameron County; therefore, the five men were turned over to Nueces County authorities. All were convicted and given life sentence in the federal penitentiary in Detroit, Michigan for mail theft.

The "Great" Rio Grande Railroad Robbery had been solved and the perpetrators were punished.

Brito, however, did not have long to enjoy his growing fame, for within a year he was assassinated. This act was reportedly the result of a long-held grudge. Brito's murder had occurred when, with his two sons, he was returning from a baile that had been held in the eastern outskirts of Brownsville. As his open coche apprached the Thirteenth Street crossing of the "Town Resaca", the assassin stepped behind and fired two bullets into the back of Brito's head. Despite large rewards offered for information relative to the crime, his murderer was never caught.

Santiago Brito is remembered as one of Cameron County's finest sheriffs. In solving the train robbery he used clues, knowledge of local people, leg work, reasoning, and common sense--trademarks of a fine lawman.[1]

ENDNOTES

[1] Private collection of Ralph Schmeling's papers. Supplemental reading: Clarence La Roche, "Sheriff Brito Gained Reputation by Solving Valley Train Robbery, <u>The Brownsville Herald.</u> Private papers of Mrs. Harbert Davenport.

TRAIN ROBBERY

# A Brick-throwing Ghost

A Newspaper story of 1879
noted by Peter Gawenda

In August, 1879 Brownsville made headlines in the State of Texas when several newspapers carried a story which involved the home of the Glaevecke family in early August. The Daily Express of San Antonio carried the following story on Tuesday Morning, August 26, 1879 under the headline, "Brownsville's Big Sensation, Spooks and Brickbats, A Prominent Citizen's House Bombarded":

"Brownsville is just now dazed with wonderment at a startling manifestation of a spiritual character, which if not convincing to the skeptical are none the less violent to those who come within the range of the unseen battery. Last Monday the family of county clerk Glaevecke complained to him that the servants could not enter the yard without being attacked with a volley of brickbats, which a neighbor's servant would fire at them. There had been between the servants of the family of Mr. Glaevecke and that of Mr. Yznaga, a neighbor, some little difficulty, and to this cause was ascribed the attack. Mr. G. paid no attention to the complaint at the time, only remarking that as long as they were not seriously hurt the family had better not interfere. But after dinner the old man suddenly changed his mind; for on taking his chair into the back garden to enjoy a smoke, he was assailed by a shower of brickbats, he receiving two wounds. He immediately reported to the police authorities the circumstance and asked that an officer be put on the watch, that the offender might be arrested. The officers were unable to discover from whence the missiles came, but they continued to come--in fact they came so thick and fast that Lieut. Herrera, who was stationed on the tip of the roof, was obliged to descend and seek safety within the walls. This state of things continued up to Thursday, when Mr. G. swore out a warrant for the arrest of a servant belonging to Mrs. Yznaga on suspicion. In the meantime Mrs. G. and her daughter had become so alarmed that they fled to the rancho for safety, leaving behind the elder sister, who is more courageous. The arrest of the servant had no visible effect upon the throwing of brick, and they continued as before, with remarkable precision, generally coming through the open doorway, and when the doors were closed they came crashing through the windows. On Friday one was fired through the doorway, killing a parrot; while at supper one came booming over the table, scattering the china in all directions. On finding that the arrest of the neighbor's servant had no effect, Mr. G. ordered his release; but Mrs. Y., who is sorely perplexed, ordered him to Matamoros, until quiet shall be restored. This morning Mr. G. caused the arrest of another of Y.'s male servants, and for a time it seemed the firing ceased; but it was only temporary, and about ten o'clock today it recommenced.

In company with Mayor Carson, Sheriff Brito and others, a Democrat reporter visited the premises and witnessed an ocular demonstration of the singular performance. He found abundant evidence of the attack. On all sides were brick and fragments of brick, and sixteen shattered windows and broken crockery on every hand confirmed the rumors that had prevailed. He found Mr. G. haggard, his daughter careworn, and the servants trembling with fright. A boy servant, Anastasio, bore many wounds; his head was bandaged and one of his feet was swathed in linen and arnica, while his limbs and body bore abrasions and contusions. He seems to have been singled out by the enemy for an especial target, and whenever he appeared in the yard he received their fire. Mr. G. also had a wounded hand.

The objective point seems to be the kitchen and dining room, and this morning the firing was incessant, so that the family was obliged to abandon the kitchen and send to a neighbor's for breakfast. While we were investigating, a brick struck the house with considerable force, shortly followed by another. John Clark dodged into a corner, the servants scattered, the mayor tried to appear unconcerned but failed. The reporter was unmoved; he had come to see, and this was what he wanted. With the air of a veteran he walked to the door to obtain a better view. A full grown brick howled over the alley like a cannon ball; two more rebounded from the roof. The reporter had gratified his curiosity and was willing to go. Mayor Carson suddenly recollected that he had business at the office, and we were hastily joined by Mr. Clark, who appeared to think His Satanic Majesty had visited Brownsville to protest against the observances of the Sunday law.

At the time these missiles were thrown there were three policemen in the yard, who saw nothing of them until the concussion was heard. And of all that have been hurled none have been seen by those on watch till they reached the house. Not only have policemen been thus baffled, but squads and throngs of neighbors who have been on the qui vive, have been also deluded. This afternoon the daughter received a contusion on the head while overseeing the dinner, and the doors had to be closed and windows protected.

Among the many who were attracted to the strange scene this evening was Mr. Yturria, the extensive wholesale merchant on Elizabeth street. While awaiting developments he was hit, without warning, on the head by a brick, which inflicted a severe scalp wound. And tonight we learn that the fusilade is more brisk than ever.

The missiles fell at intervals during the day and up to about nine o'clock at night, which would seem to indicate that it is the work of human hands. On the other hand, every vigilance has been employed to discover the author without avail. Policemen and citizens have been hit while watching, and sufficient numbers have been on the alert to cover ordinary range. Clerk Glaevecke

discounts the idea that any supernatural agency is employed, and firmly believes it is the work of the neighbors' servants, who will be arrested tonight.

## THE LATEST

Quoted by The Daily Express from the Democrat, a few days later

The firing of brickbats at county clerk Glaevecke's house ceased on Saturday night, and the invisible fiend rigidly observed the Sunday law, and the occupants had begun to think that peace had come with the arrest of Mr. Yznaga's remaining servants. But on Monday, at about 10 o'clock, it recommenced. Mr. Yznaga returned home on Sunday, and aided Mr. G. in every way to discover the perpetrator, and arrest him. He called together all his servants, and while thus gathered the firing began again, which would seem to disarm any suspicion that might be directed against them. On Monday night but two were fired. On Tuesday the boy Anastasio was again hit on the head, and a hot brick fell in the yard, and several have been thrown today. The cook has become thoroughly alarmed at these strange manifestations and has quitted the house. No one has yet been able to discover the bricks in the air, or until they reach the house, and the trees and foliage surrounding the house are untouched by the missiles. Truly, it is a strange proceeding."

## EL PASTO DE LAS ALMAS

Told by Felipe Lozano in his barbershop to his customers in 1963. Written down by Peter Gawenda.

Way back, when Brownsville was still a small town, there used to be an empty area next to the old graveyard. People used to call it "el pasto de las almas", -the pasture of souls.

It all started in 1849, when during an epidemic of colera more than one hundred people died within a few weeks. As Brownsville did not have a priest yet and as the padre from Matamoros was busy across the border, many bodies had to be buried in mass graves or unmarked graves without the blessings of the church. And as the graveyard was too small anyway, the bodies were hurriedly burried right outside.

In later years, the 1860's and 1870's, when Cortina raided the town and countryside or when bodies of unknown desperados were left behind after shootouts, they also were buried beside those outside the graveyard.

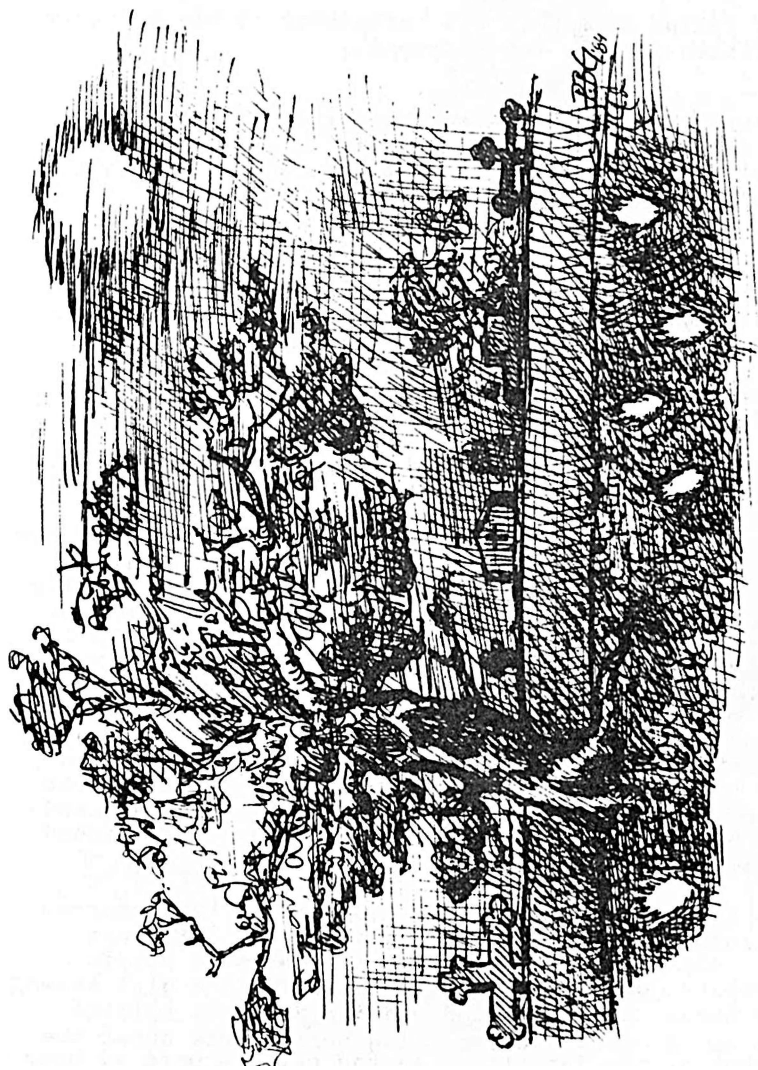
But around 1880, the night before All-Souls-Day, several people observed a very strange phenomenon. As it is a custom to care for the graves of the loved ones before All-Souls-Day, people were still planting flowers or arranging decorations on individual graves. A thin fog had started to settle around the graveyard and dusk was slowly replaced by darkness when suddenly a light popped out of the ground, right there where the "desconocidos" (unknown people) were buried. The light looked like the flame of a candle and it seemed to float back and forth very slowly. And after a few seconds it was gone.

Only two or three people had seen it, but the word got around quickly. And when suddenly another light appeared, then a second, a third and even a fourth one, and when the lights seemed to float towards the graveyard, everyone ran as fast as they could. Although people were afraid, some dared to pass the graveyard during the following nights. In some of the town's cantinas the very brave or maybe the drunk made bets that they would go visit the "Pasto de las Almas", even at midnight. And those that really did would return pale and sober.

Very quickly the word spread that the flames were the souls of those who could not find rest because they had been denied the last rites or were buried outside of the blessed earth. For several years afterwards the gruesome appearances would occur, especially around All-Souls-Day, until finally a

priest blessed that piece of land and a mass was read. Later, when the graveyard was expanded, this lot was included.

Nowadays only on very rare occasions can one see one of these flames pop out of the ground, then slowly wander over several graves, then stop or slowly float back, and then disappear. If you should ever see one, please say a prayer, so that the wandering soul might find rest.



El Pasto de las Almas

## LA ABUELA

Told by Felipe Lozano in his barbershop to his customers in 1963. Written down by Peter Gawenda.

Before the turn of the century several incidents occurred on ranchitos around Brownsville in which children and young mothers were helped by an old woman. Two of these have been related as follows.

The Garzas lived in one of the ranchitos right outside of Brownsville. Every morning they would head out into their fields and work all day long. Their only child, the four-year-old Consuelo, would be with them and usually play at the edge of the field or under the mesquite trees. She would chase butterflies. Very often one could see her interrupt her activities to look for her parents, and only after she saw them would she continue her play.

One day, though, when chasing a butterfly, she started wandering off, and neither the parents nor she herself realized that she was getting lost in the mesquite brush. When dusk set in, the parents called their daughter, but they did not receive any response. As they were always walking the same way to the fields and then home again, they finally hoped that Consuelo had already found her way to the house. But this was not the case; the parents looked and called in vain. They walked to all of the neighbors, but no one had seen or heard Consuelo. The father went to the sheriff's department for help, and that same night a search party was assembled to look for the girl. Three days later the search was discontinued, and Consuelo was given up as having died either from hunger and thirst or from attacks of coyotes or snakes. The parents and relatives were broken-hearted, and especially the mother blamed herself for not having watched the four-year old.

On the fifth day, right after the parents had returned from church and were preparing to again search for their daughter, an old frail-looking woman in a strange outfit approached the house, led by little Consuelo. The girl showed no signs of hunger or thirst and was in excellent spirits. In fact she was flowing over, telling her parents about the nice treatment by the "abuela". As the parents were so busy caressing and kissing their daughter, they had completely forgotten to take notice of the old woman. When they finally turned around to thank her, she had disappeared. All three ran first inside the house, then to the back, but in vain. The girl's "abuela" was gone.

The grateful parents made a novena at the church and the

La Abuela

father set up a marker where the girl had been returned from the mesquite brush. But the old woman never returned, although the girl would always remember her "abuela", even when she herself was already in her seventies. She would always remember a beautiful smile.

Another incident happened right across the river on the road from Matamoros to Reynosa where a woman was about to deliver a baby in one of the desolate little farms. The young woman's husband had gone to town on his horse to get the mid-wife, but was held up for an unknown reason. As the young woman was in pain she had screamed several times, and suddenly an old woman wearing an old outfit had walked into the hut. Without saying a word she quickly boiled water, put cold compresses on the young woman's head, massaged her abdomen to ease the pain, and then helped a healthy little boy into this world. The old woman then washed the baby, cleaned the young woman, and left the son with his mother.

By the time the young father returned with the partera (mid-wife), he found only his wife and his son, both sound asleep.

The mother always remembered the beautiful and very soothing smile of the old woman, who was lovingly referred to as their "abuela".

In all such incidents, the outfit of the "abuela" was described to be similar to an old Indian costume as can be seen on some of Mexico's ruins. Some of the people therefore believed that she must have been and maybe still is the good spirit of an Indian medicine woman.

THE MAN WITH THE SHOVEL

Told by an old gentleman referred to as Jefe in the barbershop on Marketsquare in 1968; retold by a student in 1982. Written down by Peter Gawenda.

Several times during the past one hundred twenty years a strange appearance has saved peoples' lives and at other occasions the reputation of young ladies. Two of these incidents are still being told in detail.

It must have been in the year 1892 or 1893, when a man named Alfonso or Alonso returned from one of his usual visits to one of the town's cantinas. It was a very stormy night, and he tried to get home as quickly as possible. He had only five blocks to go when he suddenly saw this man without a head surrounded by a pale bluish light. The man had a shovel in his hands and was drawing a line across the street. Alfonso sobered up immediately and was ready to run, but the figure had disappeared. Hesitantly he kept on walking, but when he approached the mark across the street his feet seemed to become as heavy as lead, and no matter how he tried to move, he couldn't. While he was still attempting to move, suddenly a tremendous lightening turned the night into day. And then he saw this large object crash onto the ground only thirty to fourty feet in front of him. It was the roof of one of the houses right there on Second Street.

Needless to say, he was the first in church the next morning to attend the six o'clock mass. Very faithfully did he light a candle every Sunday for the following year, thanking our Lady for this miraculous rescue. He knew that our Lady must have had her hand in his survival, as his wife prayed to Mary every day.

Another incident happened in the early thirties. A very hot-blooded admirer of a Brownsville girl had come from Matamoros and was walking down St. Charles towards Second Street. He knew that the girl's parents had left town to visit a sick aunt in Port Isabel, and he was looking forward to this night. The weather was bad; again it was very stormy and pitch dark. Suddenly he saw a strange figure with a shovel. The figure had no head and was wrapped in a black cloak. A strange bluish light surrounded the figure, which was drawing a line across the street. Thunderstruck, the young man, named Salvador, stopped, but the figure disappeared.

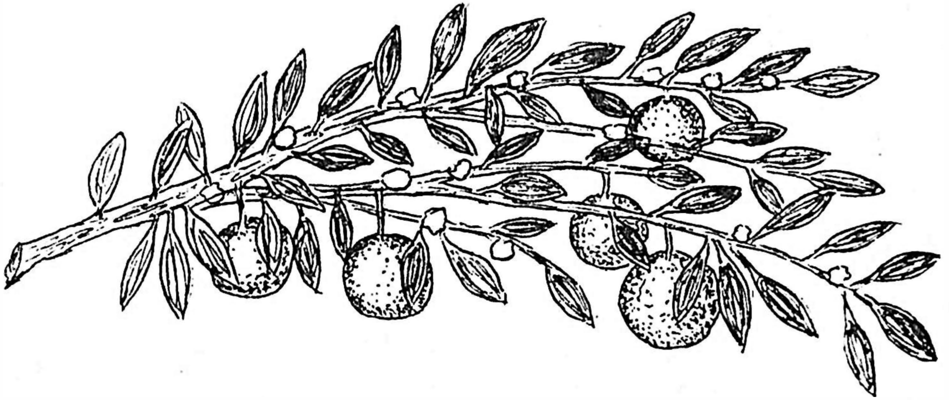
Quite scared, Salvador started running towards the house of his girl. But as if held by a magic force he was stopped at the line. Again and again he tried to cross the line, but

in vain. He therefore turned around, ran back to Third Street, ran down Third, turned into Levee and suddenly saw the figure. Again a line was drawn across the street, and Salvador was held at the line. And when he tried to approach the girl's house through Elizabeth street and once more saw the headless man with the shovel, fear overwhelmed him, and he quickly returned to his home in Mexico.

Quite often he had to think of this frightful experience, which he confessed to the padre on his deathbead.

It is said that the headless man with the shovel has drawn lines to prevent people from falling into the flooded Rio Bravo, or into waterfilled ditches, but it has also prevented young men from approaching unprotected young ladies. In one instance the figure is said to have prevented the abduction of a girl to Mexico. In this last case the boy was so frightened after seeing the headless man that he tried to escape into Mexico. The people that fished his body out of the river said they never had seen such fright in any dead man's face.

# 20th CENTURY BROWNSVILLE



# THE BROWNSVILLE RAID: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ASSESSMENT

by

Walter Pierce

One of the most fascinating aspects in studying history is to see how the events of the past stand up against the glaring light of the present. For despite the thundering dictums of Leopold von Ranke and the dreary denouncements of undergraduates, history does not remain a static subject. New evidence often alters or annihilates accepted ideas. Technology has yielded many new tools to assess the events of the past and challenge traditional interpretations. Both the Cliometricians and the Revisionists are products of the past colliding with the present. Even more important than the development of technology and the discovery of new evidence, however, is the peculiar period in which the historian writes. Notice that I did not say "of" which he writes but rather "in" which he or she writes. When Carl Becker mounted the podium of the American Historical Association annual convention in 1932 and delivered his famous "Everyman His Own Historian" address, he fired the first salvos in a historical debate that still simmers today. His bold assertion that every generation views the past from the myopic eyes of their present and thus rewrites their history shattered many sacrosanct credos about the immutability of Clio. The battle cry of the new historian no longer reads "Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist" (Tell it like it was) but rather "Wie es eigentlich ist" (Tell it like it is). Apparently Becker's forces won the field, for concomitant with the study of history one discovers, much to the horror of graduate students, the fecund field of historiography. This paper will attempt to trace the historical coverage of an event that occured in Brownsville, Texas in 1906 and to examine how this "Brownsville Affray" has been treated in the secondary sources. While I do not purport to offer any new evidence on the event itself, I do feel that an analysis of the coverage of the affair offers one an insight into the vagaries and varieties of the historian's craft.

Few areas in Texas can compare with Brownsville for significance in the military history of the United States. The Mexican War, which would bring vast lands in the West and Southwest under American control, began in April, 1846 when Mexican forces clashed with units of General Zachary Taylor's troops along the Rio Grande. The last official engagement of the Civil War is recorded as a clash between Union and Confederate forces in the Brownsville area one month after Lee and Grant met at Appomattox. While both of these events would add to the military lore and tradition of the nation and state, another clash in August, 1906 would begin a

historical debate that still simmers today. When shots were fired in the alleys of the streets adjoining Fort Brown on the night of August 13 a chain of events would unfold that would damage the position of President Theodore Roosevelt and the Republican party, divide the black community, and further disclose the racism and prejudice that flowed through all levels of American society and government.

Although the causes and culprits of the "Brownsville Affray" are still shrouded in mystery, certain facts are incontrovertible. In July, 1906 three companies of the United States 25th Infantry arrived at Fort Brown. The presence of black troops in a southern border town led to several isolated incidents between individual soldiers and citizens. Reports of soldiers antagonizing and, in one instance, attacking local women heightened tension. Confrontations also occured with local businessmen who strictly enforced the "Jim Crow" laws of the South and local customs officials.[1]

Two weeks after the arrival of the troops, on the night of August 13, approximately 100 to 200 shots were fired into homes and businesses in the area adjacent to Fort Brown. After ten minutes of sporadic gunfire one man lay dead and a police officer was left seriously wounded. During the course of the shooting, soldiers at the fort were ordered to form ranks since some officers assumed the fort was under attack. After holding ranks for an hour Major Charles Penrose, the post's commander, ordered some soldiers into town to investigate the source of the shooting. The troops returned, accompanied by the mayor, Fred Combe. Mayor Combe insisted that various witnesses had identified black soldiers as the raiders. Although skeptical of these charges, Major Penrose ordered a personnel check. Finding nothing to implicate the soldiers of his command, Penrose ordered the troops to their barracks to await a weapons inspection. The following morning Mayor Combe returned to the fort with spent cartridges and bandoliers found in the area of the shooting. This evidence, although circumstantial, created doubt in the minds of the officers over the activities of their soldiers.[2] While the military commander of Fort Brown vascillated over the complicity of his troops, the citizens of Brownsville voiced no such reservations. The day following the raid a Citizen's Commission, appointed by the mayor, heard testimony from witnesses who placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the black soldiers. Letters and telegrams poured into Washington insisting on the immediate withdrawal of the three companies from Brownsville. Four days later, on August 14, Major Augustus Blocksom, Assistant Inspector-General of the Southwestern Division arrived to uncover evidence on the events of August 13. One week later the Texas Rangers appeared on the scene in the person of Captain Bill McDonald. Despite the attempts of these various military and civilian agencies, no individual soldiers were indicted for the deaths

and destruction. On August 25 the entire battlion boarded trains for reassignment to Fort Reno, Oklahoma.[3]

Major Blocksom issued the results of his investigation in late August. Although not accusing any individual soldiers, he charged that the raid was the work of members of the 25th Infantry Division and further held that a conspiracy of silence existed among the troops. He theorized that the motive of the attack was revenge for the abuse and insults heaped upon them by the Brownsville citizenry. In order to discover the individuals responsible for the act, Blocksom recommended that the entire battalion be threatened with the dismissal from the army. President Roosevelt, concurring with Blocksom, ordered the Inspector General of the Army, General Ernest Garlington, to Fort Reno with an ultimatium: the guilty parties would be produced or the entire battalion would be summarily discharged without honor. After no one appeared to confess or divulge the names of the conspirators, Roosevelt ordered the Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, to begin discharge procedures. On November 6, Special Order No. 266 was published. One hundred sixty-seven soldiers of Companies B, C, and D of the 25th Infantry, many of whom had seen action in Cuba and the Philippines, were dismissed without honor from the army . Barred from future reenlistment or employment with the U.S. government were six holders of the nation's highest military award, the Congressional Medal of Honor.[4]

The nature and circumstances surrounding the discharge of the members of the 25th Infantry stirred much controversy across the United States. Collective punishment appeared to many a gross distortion of the principles of law and justice. Others accused the president of playing politics with the fate of the discharged soldiers. Why, many asked, did Roosevelt wait until after the congressional elections to publish the dismissal order when he had signed it prior to that time? Was he attempting to line up southern support for his hand-picked successor Taft and, as since the time of Grant, taking the black vote for "granted"?[5]

During the first wave of reaction to the Brownsville Incident little mention was made of the question of the guilt of the condemned soldiers. When the Constitution League, a civil rights organization, dispatched investigators to Brownsville and Fort Reno, however, doubt over the methods and manner of the previous investigations surfaced. As the 59th Congress (second session) convened in December, 1906 Senator Joseph Foraker, a fellow Republican but not fellow traveler, presented a resolution insisting upon full disclosure of the War Department's evidence and an investigation of the president's actions into the events surrounding the entire Brownsville affair. For the next month Roosevelt and Foraker sparred and jabbed over this issue until finally a compromise was reached. In January,

1907 the Senate approved a resolution calling for the Committee of Military Affairs to investigate the incident at Brownsville.[6]

For the next year the Senate Committee of Military Affairs delved into what was labeled as the "Affray at Brownsville". The results of their investigation, presented in March, 1908, illustrated serious reservations over the conduct and conclusions of the army and the president. A majority opinion held that Roosevelt's actions were correct and the guilt of the soldiers was beyond question. Several members of the majority also recommended that the president extend the deadline of his earlier decision to allow reenlistment of those soldiers who could prove their innocence to the Commander-in-Chief's satisfaction. The minority report, on the other hand, argued that the inability of the Cameron County Grand Jury to indict any soldiers, the insistence of the officers on the innocence of their troops, and the "indefinite, conflicting, and unsatisfactory" testimony of the witnesses to the events proved that absolute guilt had not been established. They recommended that the soldiers be reinstated into the army with a full restoration of rights. A third section of the report further maintained that the soldiers were innocent of all charges. Senator Foraker, the author of the third report, called upon Congress to create a Court of Military Inquiry to review the testimony and certify those soldiers eligible for reenlistment. After several embarrassing and unsuccessful attempts to establish the guilt of individual members, Roosevelt finally relented and approved the establishment of a Court of Inquiry.[7]

Between May, 1909 and April, 1910 five generals, constituting the Court of Inquiry, heard testimony. Holding hearings in both Brownsville and Washington, the Court of Inquiry listened to testimony from every conceivable civilian source but only allowed eighty-two of the more than 150 soldiers who requested to testify. Finally on April 6, the report on the Brownsville Affray was published. Once again the guilt of the soldiers was confirmed without pointing to any one individual. Fourteen former members of the disgraced companies were allowed to reenlist even though some of them had never appeared before the Court of Inquiry. Thus the Brownsville Affray come to an end or, at least, appeared closed.[8]

When surveying the historical coverage of the Brownsville Affray one encounters little to challenge the findings of the Court of Inquiry until almost forty years after the fact. Local and state historians are almost unanimous in their support of the official findings of the government and military. Frank Johnson's _A History of Texas and Texans,_ published in 1914, included a mention of the "notorious Brownsville raid by colored soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth United Stated Infantry".[9] Over fifty years

later Seymour Connor, in his Texas: A History, labeled the events of 1906 as "one of the nation's most publicized race riots".[10] This change in the focus of the affray, however, did little to alter Connor's opinion on the guilt of the soldiers. Not distinguishing between a dishonorable discharge and a discharge without honor, Connor maintatined that the "riot" began when

> ...a group of Negro troops stationed at Ft. Brown wounded the chief of police and killed a white barkeeper. In response to a conspiracy of silence that prevented federal investigators from determining the underlying facts, three Negro companies were charged with the assault, and one hundred sixty troops were dishonorably discharged.[11]

While textual references tend to be sketchy and heavily dependent on official sources, periodical accounts offer a more balanced picture. Even local historians present some of the problems one encounters in dealing with this issue. In the 1927 volume of the Texas History Teacher's Bulletin, Doris Martinal, a Brownsville resident, presented the traditional interpretation of "The Negro Raid". Incensed over their treatment at the hands of local saloon owners who "politely" informed them that their business was not wanted, irritated over the taunts of local children, and infuriated over attacks upon them for insulting local women, some "sixteen to twenty-five soldiers...commanded by a non-commissioned officer"[12] went on a shooting spree. Twenty six years later, in 1963, an Edinburgh teacher, Mrs. Bonnie Devries, opened her article on the affray with the warning that

> The incident...is a controversial subject in Brownsville. Almost every source presents a different account of the incident. Prejudice and a lack of reasoning seem to account for the greatest differences of opinion.[13]

After analysis of the various testimony and hearings Devries concluded with the assertion that while the soldiers were not cleared of the charge of shooting up the town, "Foraker's evidence seemed to prove their innocence."[14] The culprit in the tragedy of Brownsville, as the author stated, was a government that "did not realize that Brownsville was a city entrenched in southern customs."[15] The previous record of black troops stationed in Brownsville shortly after the Civil War should have illustrated to the authorities that

> When the government sent Negro troops to a city in the South, especially one along the Mexican border, trouble frequently resulted between the citizens and troops.[16]

While both Martinal and Devries viewed the circumstances surrounding the Brownsville Affray from local perspectives, other scholars attempted to frame the events of August, 1906 into a more national setting. Two articles, in the fifties, focused on the political repercussions of the raid. In an article in the Journal of Negro History, James Tinsley, who wrote a master's thesis on the subject, argued that the president's actions displayed a violation of the long standing principles of Anglo-American law. What led Roosevelt, the architect of the Square Deal, to issue such a raw deal to the soldiers at Fort Brown? After all, prior to the summer of 1906, the president's policies and position in the black community were highly progressive and praised. Was it not Roosevelt who dented the color line at the White House when he invited Booker T. Washington for dinner? Tinsley charges that two factors were responsible for the president's actions. First the withering criticism Roosevelt received for that dinner invitation led the president not only never to attempt such a move again but also to seek some "subconscious compensating impulse." When the Brownsville incident occured Roosevelt

> jumped into it as he did because, in his subconscious mind at least, he had long been waiting for a chance to compensate for the Washington dinner and maintain his usual balance for being fair to the Negroes on the one hand but not pampering them on the other.[17]

A second factor in explaining the president's position can be found in what Tinsley labels as Roosevelt's "distrust of the law". Drawing upon the numerous biographies of Roosevelt, the author charged that Roosevelt, always renowned as a man of action, railed against the slowness of the wheels of justice, and refused to accept the rules of jurisprudence when they failed to secure justice. Since he was convinced that some of the soldiers were guilty of the shooting yet none would confess,

> he exercised the most extreme penalty at his command-discharge without honor-even though he was aware that many of the men dismissed were innocent of any complicity in the affray.[18]

Another area of interest to scholars concerning the Brownsville Affray is the reaction of blacks to the president's policies. Emma Lou Thornbrough, in a 1957 volume of the Mississipi Valley Historical Review, analyzed the impact of the black vote in the wake of Roosevelt's discharge order. Although the Brownsville incident did bring about heavy criticism of the president's actions, he was able to keep black leaders such as Booker T. Washington in his camp. While some prominent blacks, notably W.E.B. DuBois, defected from the Republican party, neither Roosevelt nor his successor William Howard Taft suffered major losses. Since

the Democratic party offered an unpalatable alternative for most blacks and because of Washington's efforts to minimize the effects of Roosevelt's actions and maximize the standing of Taft within the black community, the Republicans could still count on the black vote.[19] It did appear, however, in the weeks and months following the affray that there was a

> real threat to the traditional loyalty of Negroes to the Republican party. There is abundant evidence that the members of the race were aroused over the treatment of the soldiers as they had not been aroused by the action of any other president.[20]

Thornbrough's seminal article on the national effects of the Brownsville Raid were expanded greatly in 1971 with the publication of Ann Lane's monograph The Brownsville Affair: National Crisis and Black Reaction. Although at a loss to identify either soldiers or civilians as responsible for the raid, Lane condemned Roosevelt for his refusal to pursue the case on its merits. When Senator Foraker, a powerful rival to Roosevelt and a potential Republican presidential aspirant, assumed the status of defender of the soldiers, the entire episode

> ...was placed in a political setting...the issue became a contest between two powerful forces; in the process, the unfortunate men played a relatively minor role. The justice of the case became secondary. Of primary concern were such matters as political ambition, presidential aspirations, threats to authority, executive versus congressional control, intra-party factionalism, personality differences.[21]

In addition to Roosevelt, Lane reserved much of her historical wrath for Washington's role in the affray. Fearing that his influence within the administration and thus his position in the black community would suffer, the apostle of accomodation pushed his philosophy to its illogical limits in supporting the president's actions and silencing criticism within the black community.[22]

One year prior to the publication of Lane's work, the most controversial work on the subject appeared. John Weaver's The Brownsville Raid compared the events of 1906 to the infamous Dreyfus Affair. Boldly asserting that the raid was not the work of soldiers stationed at Ft. Brown, Weaver traced the roots of the attack to the desire for vengenance by citizens for the attack upon a white woman the evening prior to the shooting.[23] Leveling charges at the participants as well as the perpetrators of this grave miscarriage of justice, Weaver closed with the plea

> The soldiers were never exonerated, and by the time a handful were reinstated in 1910, Brownsville was of

so little interest to white newspaper readers that most editors wasted no space on the story. Since then, two generations of youngsters, black and white, have been reared in ignorance of this massive assault by two Presidents on the civil rights of one hundred and sixty-seven black Americans. They lived and died in the black man's limbo. Alive, they were denied the equity of the white man's justice and, dead, the vindication of his Jim Crow history.[24]

Weaver's account rekindled interest in the Brownsville affair. One of those influenced by his findings was a California Congressman, Augustus F. Hawkins. In 1971 he introduced a bill to revise the discharges of the dismissed soldiers to honorable status. By September, 1972 the Department of Defense had acted and honorable discharges were placed in the records of the former soldiers. While no back pay, pensions, or benefits were awarded to relatives and no presumption of innocence was implied by the changes in discharge records, the army did admit that the method of mass punishment "has for decades been contrary to Army policy and is considered gross injustice."[25] When it was discovered that two of the discharged soldiers were still alive, Hawkins organized a ceremonial reunion of the accused and the accusers. On February 11, 1973 Dorsie W. Willis, formerly of Company D, Twenty Fifth Infantry, faced General DeWitt Smith in order to receive the official apology of the United States Army.[26]

The doubts raised by the publication of Weaver's work and the subsequent action taken by the army have done little to uncover any new evidence on who the guilty parties were on that fateful evening. A 1982 history of the city of Brownsville, prepared by two local residents, reflects the same belief as that of the residents of 1906 and mentions nothing of the army's review of the case. Ruby Wooldridge, one of the authors of _Brownsville: A Pictorial History_, maintains that the Weaver book was prepared with little local research or interviews. Oral history tapes, collected by Dr. Denise Joseph, a historian at Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, confirm the strong local belief that only the soldiers could have committed such an outrage.[27]

While local opinion appears to have changed little over the years, recent historical references to the Brownsville Affray offer various explanations for the actions taken by the government and the president. The resurgence of interest in Theodore Roosevelt, following the publication of Edmund Morris' _The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt_ in 1979, has brought the events of Brownsville back into the textbooks. Robert Divine's _America: Past and Present_ offers a strictly factual account of the president's position but does charge that Roosevelt acted "quickly and on little evidence".[28] The fifth edition of the celebrated text _The National Experience_

focused on Roosevelt's "zeal for discipline and morale" as the key factors in the president's policies. Regarding the dismissal of the soldiers as "hasty and unjust" the authors also offer the Brownsville affray as an example of the "racism of both the President and the army".[29]

Thus while the events of that August evening have yet to be fully explained, their legacy has left us with many insights into the social and political mores of the period. Historians who have attempted to unravel the mystery of the Brownsville Affray over the past decades have also reflected the changes in attitudes that have evolved toward Afro-Americans and their role in American society and history. Viewing these shifting sands of historiography, one might be forced to alter Santayana's prophecy by predicting that those who remember their past are destined to rewrite it.

## ENDNOTES

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[2] Weaver, Raid, pp. 36-63; Lane, Affair, pp. 18-20.

[3] Weaver, Raid, pp. 72-87: Lane, Affair, pp. 20-22; Tinsley, "Roosevelt", pp. 44-45.

[4] Weaver, Raid, pp. 88-102; Lane, Affair, pp. 22-23; Tinsley, "Roosevelt", p. 46.

[5] Weaver, Raid, p. 102.

[6] Weaver, Raid, pp. 104-144; Lane, Affair, pp. 25-31; Tinsley, "Roosevelt", pp. 50-53.

[7] Weaver, Raid, pp. 144-233; Lane, Affair, pp. 33-52; Tinsley, "Roosevelt", pp. 55-57.

[8] Weaver, Raid, pp. 145-265; Lane, Affair, pp. 53-66: Tinsley, "Roosevelt", pp. 61-62.

[9] Frank Johnson, A History of Texas & Texans 5 vols. (New York: American Historical Society, 1914) 2:616.

[10] Seymour Connor, Texas: A History (Arlington Heights, Ill.: A.M. Publishing, 1971), p. 378.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Doris Martinal, "The Negro Raid", Texas History Teacher's Bulletin 14 (no. 1 University of Texas Bulletin, no. 2746) 1927: 129.

[13] Bonnie Devries, "The Brownsville Raid of 1906", The Junior Historian 24 (1963): 9.

[14] Ibid., p. 16.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Tinsley, "Roosevelt", p. 63.

[18] Ibid., p. 64.

[19] Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The Brownsville Episode and the Negro Vote", The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44 (1957): 490-492.

[20] Ibid., p. 493.

[21] Lane, Affair, p. 167.

[22] Ibid., pp. 167-168.

[23] Weaver, Raid, pp. 266-278.

[24] Ibid., p. 278.

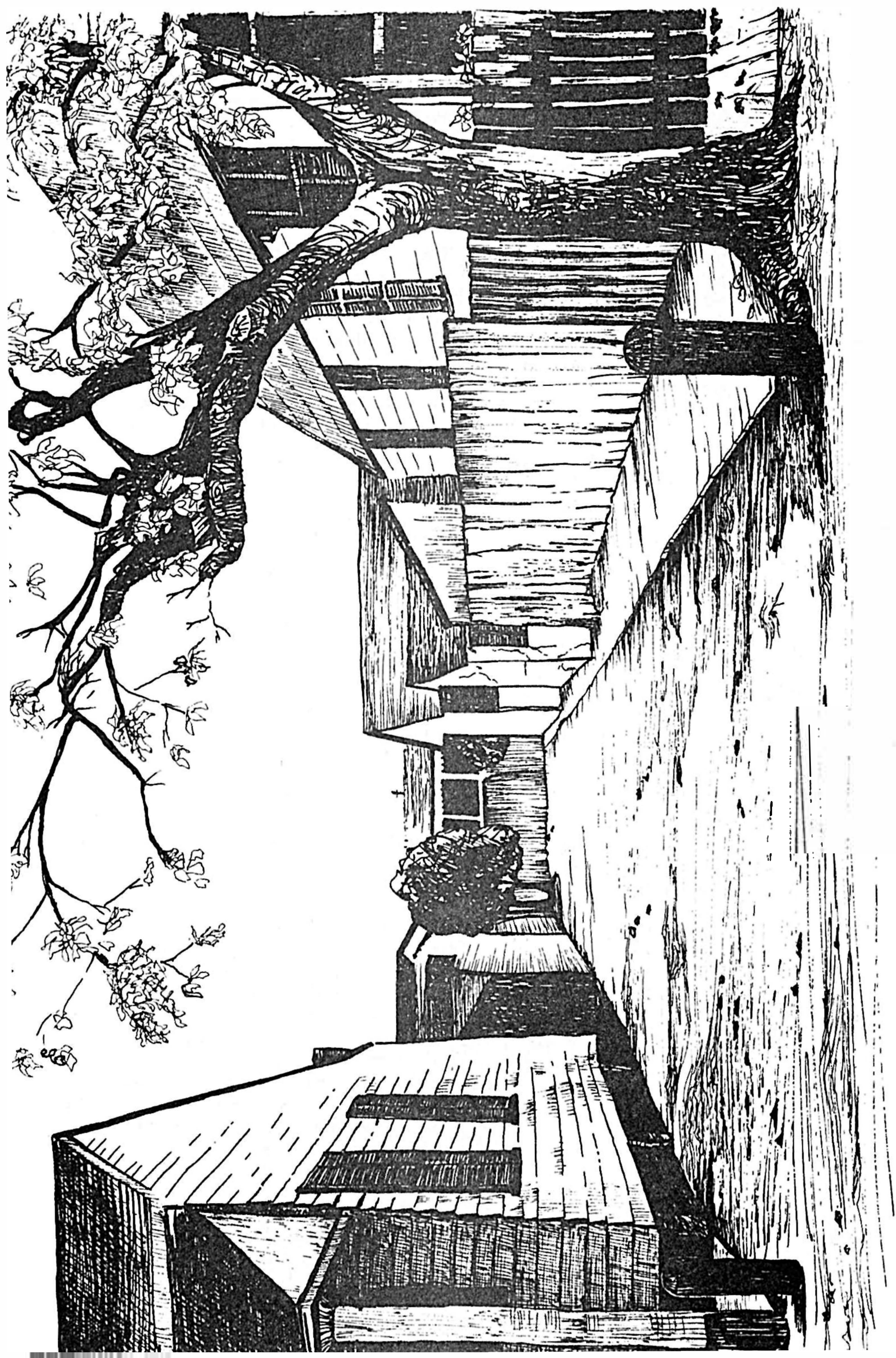
[25] Ibid., p. 321.

[26] Ibid., p. 322.

[27] Interviews conducted with Ms. Wooldridge and Dr. Joseph. Some residents still subscribe to the theory that those soldiers reinstated were responsible for more shootings in Houston although there is no evidence to support this.

[28] Robert Divine et alles, America: Past and Present (Dallas: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1984):668.

[29] Arthur Schlesinger et alles, The National Experience: A History of the United States Since 1865 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978):565.



# TEMPLE BETH-EL, 1931-1981

by

Harriett Denise Joseph

Brownsville, Texas had a Jewish population at least sixty years before Temple Beth-El was built. Few in number and limited in economic resources, Jews in this border town for many decades had to use private homes or depend upon the hospitality of other groups for a place to congregate. By the late 1920's the American Legion Post was being used for Friday night (Sabbath) services. High holy day (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) observances and the religious school were held in the Masonic Temple. While grateful for the use of these and other facilities, local Jews understandably wanted a house of worship of their own. Parents were especially concerned about providing their children with a proper sense of Jewish tradition and identity. So strong was this concern that the Jewish community decided in 1931 to build a Temple despite the worst depression in their nation's history.[1]

Some of the Jewish women in Brownsville formed the Temple Beth-El Sisterhood. On June 9, 1931 the legally chartered organization purchased from Ben and Ethel May Freudenstein, in trust for the religious association known as Temple Beth-El, the tract of land described as Lot 1, Block 4, West Brownsville Addition and located at the corner of West 8th and St. Francis. W.F. Goodwin, architect, was hired to compile specifications of labor and materials for a one story tile and stucco building at that location. Contractor S.W. McKensie agreed to build the structure as specified in Goodwin's blueprint for $4265 payable fifteen days after completion. McKensie also agreed to include a kitchen and "toilets" for an additional $40.[2]

The Sisterhood was cautious about undertaking this costly endeavor during such adverse economic times without assurance that the entire Jewish community in Brownsville would support it. Representatives of the organization canvassed their co-religionists in the area. They not only verified that "sentiment favors immediate building of the Temple" but also collected several donations toward that end. Consequently, Mrs. Julia Gruenwald and Mrs. Frank Berwald, acting in their respective capacities as Sisterhood President and Secretary, signed all of the necessary papers for construction to begin. The project was financed through loan #9104 from the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company in Greensboro, North Carolina. The first payment to Jefferson Life was made in March 1932 with other payments continuing throughout the decade. Money to repay the loan and to

operate Beth-El was raised in a number of ways. Membership dues and voluntary contributions were important but financial support provided by the Sisterhood and its companion organization, the Brotherhood, were also critical.[3]

Brownsville merchant Sam Perl acted as lay Rabbi for the congregation. Following the wishes of the majority, Perl conducted services in the reformed or liberal manner. In the 1940's when Jewish servicemen were stationed at the two military bases in the Brownsville-Harlingen area, the Temple opened its arms to them. Coming from states like New York, these young men were accustomed to more traditional religious practices. They asked that Hebrew be included prominently in Temple services and that the Rabbi wear a "tallis" (prayer shawl) and "kipah" (skull cap). The Jewish Welfare Board provided these items along with appropriate prayer books. A soldier began to share the pulpit with Perl and services were conducted both in English and in Hebrew. When World War II ended and these servicemen returned home, religious observances at Beth -El reverted to being more reformed again. However, some traditional practices persisted, such as Rabbi Perl's continuing to wear a prayer shawl and skull cap.[4]

The new building served not only as a house of worship but also as a religious school. The first confirmation class, consisting of four youths, graduated in 1933. By the 1940's Mrs. Corrine Perl, assisted by Lewis Stein, was offering biblical studies to nine or ten students divided into three grades.[5]

While the temple fulfilled many of the needs of its membership through the years, the physical plant proved inadequate for the growing congregation to have certain gatherings, such as wedding receptions or communal Seder dinners to celebrate Passover.[6] In 1951 congregants embarked upon the project of building a social hall, which in conjunction with the sanctuary, would be adequate for religious, educational, and social functions.

In January 1951 the Sisterhood received title to Lot 2, Block 4, West Brownsville Addition--adjacent to the Temple--from Ralph Ratcliff. Mrs. Julia Wood paid for the property with the understanding that the social hall would be named in honor of her mother, Pauline Bollack. Acting on behalf of the Beth-El membership, Isadore Dorfman hired W.D. Ferguson to build the structure at a cost of $20,898, acquired through a bank note guaranteed by several congregants. Furnishings, kitchen equipment, an air-conditioning system, and other items brought the grand total for the enterprise to $34,494.66.[7]

Faced with debts accrued from the social hall project and with the day-to-day costs of operating the Beth-El

complex, the congregation found itself in financial difficulties. Mrs. Wood agreed to pay the note at the bank. The congregation immediately reimbursed her all monies over $20,000 and contracted to repay that amount over a ten year period at 4% interest. Julia Wood received a mortgage on the Temple property as security, and a special fund was established at the First National Bank for retirement of the $20,000 debt. This was accomplished with the last payment being made to Mrs. Wood in January of 1959. Again monies were raised primarily through membership dues, donations from the Sisterhood and Brotherhood, and memorial contributions from members of the congregation.[8]

In 1951, the same year that the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building was constructed, Temple Beth-El took steps to form a tax-exempt corporation for "support of public worship." An August 4 letter to each family in the congregation included a ballot listing heads of household eligible to serve on a Board of Directors to attend to administrative affairs of the Temple. Congregants were asked to elect nine men from the list. The Presidents of the Sisterhood and the Brotherhood were automatically members of the Board. Upon their installation, the new Directors occupied themselves with the incorporation of Beth-El. At a general membership meeting on November 30, 1951, Sam Perl reported that the secular affairs of the institution could best be administered by a religious corporation chartered under the laws of Texas. When he moved that the Board proceed to make Temple Beth-El a body corporate, the motion passed unanimously. Members signed a charter, which was sent to Austin, Texas and filed on December 7, 1951. To fulfill other legal requirements the congregation also approved of transferring title to Lots 1 and 2, Block 4, West Brownsville to a Board of Trustees composed of Isadore Dorfman, Ely Holtzman, and Jean Wiedermann.[9]

Another major task of the Board of Directors was to compose a constitution to govern the secular operations of the Temple. Ruben Edelstein, Ben Freudenstein, and Joseph Kolmen were appointed to formulate a set of regulations to use as a starting point. At a Board meeting on August 20, 1952 the proposed By-Laws were discussed, clarified, amended, and accepted. Copies were then sent to the membership for their approval at a congregational meeting on September 17. The constitution was approved by a vote of 23-2.[10]

According to the By-Laws, anyone of the Jewish faith was eligible to join Beth-El. Administrative power was placed in a Board composed of nine elected members and one named by the Sisterhood. Powers of the Board included making expenditures of $300 or less without membership approval, appointing the governing body of the Sunday School, naming a committee for supervision and maintenance of the Hebrew Cemetery, and setting the dues to be paid for qualified membership in the

Temple. The document also provided for an elected Board of Trustees to hold title to real and personal property owned by Beth-El. Said ownership could not be conveyed without approval of a majority of the qualified congregants.[11]

The cemetery referred to in the By-Laws dated back to the 1860's when Brownsville founder Charles Stillman deeded the land to the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros. In 1929 Jews in the area executed a Quick Claim Deed transferring the title to the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Brownsville to enable the local community to exercise control over the property. Several individuals, primarily those with family buried in the grounds, volunteered to care for the cemetery. By the 1950's many of these people had moved, were deceased, or were ill. This combined with a lack of operating funds resulted in the land being neglected and the graves poorly maintained.[12]

Interested congregants of Beth-El were invited to attend a meeting on June 9, 1953 to place the burial ground "on a sound and practical basis for proper perpetual care." New Board members for the Hebrew Cemetery Association (HCA) were selected and were the same as the Temple Board officers. Joseph Kolmen and Ruben Edelstein were named to oversee the maintenance of the tract and to establish regulations for its governance. In 1954 Edelstein was named Custodian of the cemetery, a post he still holds. By-Laws for the HCA declared membership to be limited to congregants of Temple Beth-El with contributions paid or pledged for the current year. Religious services at funerals were to be conducted by a professional or lay Rabbi in accordance with Jewish tradition and only Jewish symbols were allowed on tombstones. The document also stipulated that five percent of all Temple dues were to be placed in a fund to maintain and support the existing cemetery and to purchase a new burial site at a later date. Thus, in the 1950's the Beth-El congregation assumed responsibility for the Hebrew Cemetery even though they did not own it.[13]

During this same decade the house and two lots next to the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building came on the market. After much deliberation, the membership in August 1955 authorized the Temple Board to purchase Lots 3 & 4, Block 4, West Brownsville Addition from W. Joseph and Dorothy V. Gerhards. To finance the endeavor a loan was negotiated with First National Bank for one year with the signatures of several congregants required as guarantors. The note was later renewed but retired before the end of the decade.[14]

Having acquired the house along with the two lots, the expanding Jewish community decided to use it for a Sunday School. A committee was formed to oversee the repair and remodeling of the structure for that purpose. Morris Edelstein directed the project and provided the labor and

materials at no cost. The Sisterhood donated $350 for desks, and many other contributions were received as well. An auction was held on furnishings such as desks and blackboards. The highest bidder on each item got to attach an inscribed nameplate telling in whose memory the furnishing was donated. The formal dedication of the completed Sunday School building was held in September 1956 with the Sisterhood hosting a supper in honor of the occasion.[15]

With its physical plant complete, Beth-El celebrated an even more auspicious occasion less than three months after the dedication of the Sunday School. In December of 1956 the Sisterhood sponsored an open house to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Temple.[16]

As the only house of worship for Jews in Brownsville during this first twenty-five years and the next twenty-five as well, Temple Beth-El served a diverse congregation. The members came from areas as dissimilar as Russia, Mexico and the Northeastern United States. They had different cultural backgrounds, spoke different languages, and had different philosophies of Judaism.[17] As lay Rabbi from 1928-75, Sam Perl was very conscious of this situation and tried to avoid controversial religious practices that might alienate any group. He described the Temple as having

> a mixed congregation--some of them of the reformed branch--many from the conservative and some from the orthodox--so we conduct our service in a manner that will be pleasing to most of them--[18]

In 1956 Ruben Edelstein, who served as assistant lay Rabbi from the 1950's to 1975, wrote that

> We use [the reformed] Union Prayer Book but strive to conduct a service acceptable to Conservative and Orthodox as well.[19]

The Temple needed the support of all its members and tried to satisfy as many of them as possible.

Although Sam Perl with the assistance of congregants such as Edelstein did an exceptional job as lay Rabbi, Brownsville's Jewish population always aspired to have an ordained Rabbi or at least a professional Hebrew teacher. This did not come to pass for many decades, however. A Rabbi from Pennsylvania accurately analyzed the situation when he observed in 1954 that qualified professionals weren't interested in a small Southern community without much prospect for a future and with the nearest source of Kosher meat almost three hundred miles away. He also noted that only someone "adventurous" would be interested, especially since Beth-El could not afford to pay a living wage.[20] No

such adventurous person appeared, so the Temple continued under Perl's able ministrations and members of the congregation continued to serve on a voluntary basis as religious school personnel.

The number of qualified members of Beth-El fluctuated considerably over the years. Documents for the period 1931-35 contain about two dozen family names although not all indicate dues paid or residence in the area for the entire period. Ledger entries for 1935-40 list about thirty families with notations that some had moved or failed to pay dues. By October 1941 the Temple had 21 paying members, 2 honorary members--Perl, lay Rabbi, and David Abelman, associate lay Rabbi--3 other non-paying members, 2 associate Matamoros members, and 1 associate "refugee." In the 1950's heads of household varied from around thirty-five to fifty-two. The following decade individual and/or family memberships reached as high as sixty-five and dropped as low as forty-seven. Then, the Jewish population in Brownsville boomed in the 1970's with over one hundred families as congregants by 1975.[21]

The significant population expansion of the 1970's both enabled and required the Beth-El congregation to set the goals of purchasing a suitable location for the construction of a new, larger physical plant and of hiring a qualified educational director for the Temple.[22] Both goals proved difficult to attain.

In 1972 Beth-El bought 7 1/2 acres, Block GG, Brownsville Land and Development Subdivision, from José and Josefina Gómez for the eventual erection of a new sanctuary, recreational hall, and Sunday School. However, dissatisfaction with this location, financial problems, and other considerations led to this tract later being resold rather than being used for the purpose intended.[23]

In regard to the second goal, the Board hoped to find a Director of Education without having to affiliate with any of the national branches of Judaism. Ruben Edelstein, Board President at the time, was concerned that

> We're in no position at this time to become affiliated with any branch of Judaism and, yet, keep our Jewish community intact and working together as it is today.[24]

A number of approaches were used to find applicants including inserting advertisements in metropolitan newspapers and writing numerous letters to individuals and agencies around the country. When no satisfactory candidate applied, it became evident that affiliation was a prerequisite to filling the position. After studying the requirements of the national organizations and taking into consideration the

philosophies of Beth-El's membership, the Board in 1973 recommended that the Temple join the reformed Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). This recommendation was approved at a congregational meeting by a vote of 48-1.[25]

Affiliation brought results. In 1973 Rabbi Harry Lawrence accepted a two year contract as Director of Education. When Sam Perl's health failed during that period, Lawrence assumed full rabbinic responsibilities until his resignation in December of 1975. Three ordained professionals subsequently held the position of Rabbi: Jonathan Gerard, 1976-79; Mathew Michaels, 1981-85 and Arthur Rutberg, 1985 to the present.[26] From the mid-1970's on, then, a long-awaited dream became a reality. Beth-El finally had full-time professionals to conduct services, officiate at joyous functions, offer succor at times of sorrow, oversee a quality educational program for youth and adults, serve as liason to other religious groups in the area, and perform a variety of other critical duties.

Acquiring an ordained Rabbi, while a major milestone, did not solve all of the congregation's problems. As Edelstein had forecast, the decision to affiliate with the liberal movement of Judaism created difficulties. Rabbi Jonathan Gerard and many of his congregants felt that an institution belonging to the UAHC should follow modern religious practices. He was especially anxious to allow women greater participation in services. Gerard called women to the pulpit for "aliyas" (honors) during regular and high holy day services, which was intolerable to more orthodox Jews.* During the period from 1976-79, the proper role of women in the religion and other philosophical issues were hotly debated at Board and membership meetings and in private gatherings.[27] The Sunday School was disrupted by a

> profound division of opinions concerning matters of ritual and implementation of Jewish living in the realm of the Temple's religious and cultural activities.[28]

During this period a few disaffected congregants even talked of leaving Beth-El to form a separate synagogue.[29]

Several factors served to prevent an irrevocable split in the Brownsville Jewish community. Gerard's successor was advised at the time of his hiring of the tensions within the

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*In orthodox synagogues women often not only are prohibited from participating in Torah reading services but also are required to sit in a section separate from the men.

congregation. While adhering to basic reformed observances, Rabbi Michaels exhibited a conciliatory attitude and tried to heal the breach among the members. He succeeded to a degree. Realistic considerations also served to prevent any extreme action on the part of the alienated members. Supporting one temple with an ordained Rabbi strained the resources of the community; supporting two would have been virtually impossible. Therefore, while some congregants continued to find liberal reforms in the Temple objectionable, they retained their membership in Beth-El for lack of any other realistic alternative.

Besides persistent tensions over different philosophies of Judaism, another major area of concern for the Temple throughout its history was finances. As an independent Jewish house of worship, it received no financial support from outside sources. As previously noted, the Sisterhood and the Brotherhood, the major internal fund raising groups, were especially important in the early decades. Both organizations not only donated money to Beth-El on a regular basis but also could be called upon in times of need, as in 1953 when the institution had a deficit and the Directors requested funds from the Sisterhood and Brotherhood to make a payment on the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building. The significance of the support provided by the two groups can easily be demonstrated. From 1951-59 Temple expenses totalled $71,364.02. For that same period Brotherhood contributions amounted to $7,465.85, and the Sisterhood gave $6,952.08. Congregants worked energetically through these organizations to raise funds by having cake sales, rummage sales, raffles, dinners, poker nights and other profitable functions.* Additional monies also came from individual donations to various endowments and funds. People gave money to honor happy events--Bat and Bar Mitzvahs, confirmations, weddings, births--and to offer sympathy upon sad occasions--illness or death. Also, significant sums were contributed in memory of loved ones who had died, as exemplified by Julia Wood's paying for the land on which to build a social hall named for her mother.[30]

Membership dues, which not surprisingly increased drastically from 1931-81, were also an important source of revenue. In the 1930's most families paid $2 a month, a figure that remained the norm well into the next decade, although some members paid as little as $1 and others as much as $3.50. New building projects in the 1950's, notably the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building and the Sunday School,

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* Although the Sisterhood is still an active, viable organization today, the Brotherhood was dissolved in the 1960's.

necessitated larger sums being required from congregants. In the 1951-52 fiscal year dues ranged from $36 to $250. Then, with the Board using its power under the 1952 By-Laws to designate the amount paid annually by each family, assessments increased. In 1956 the minimum was raised to $50. In the 1960's, though, despite a major renovation of the sanctuary that cost over $9,000, minimum dues remained about the same as in the previous decade.[31]

The dual objectives in the 1970's of acquiring a new Temple site and hiring an educational director were expensive undertakings. As a result of affiliation with UAHC, Beth-El was required to pay a percentage of its annual membership dues to that national organization. Having a professional, full-time Rabbi meant not only paying a substantial salary but also entailed offering costly fringe benefits. It also necessitated the acquisition of a parsonage at Lot 35, Palo Verde Resubdivision, Section 1. While dues in 1971 totalled $6,000, the estimated budget for 1972-73 called for mandatory membership contributions of $18,000. To insure that growing financial obligations were met, a Dues Committee of the Board was formed to determine the amount each family within the congregation would be required to pay annually. The Committee was also to review assessments periodically to raise or lower them as appropriate in view of budgetary needs and changes in individual member's financial status. Under this system, dues by 1978 ranged from $50 to $1200. The following year of a gross revenue budget of $49,379, obligatory contributions provided $36,630.[32] Dues had increased significantly and become an indispensable major source of revenue to meet growing financial obligations.

Problems with dues collections were a fact of life that at times required firm action. Upon incorporation in 1951, all delinquent dues of previous years were forgiven, but from that point on the Board adopted a hard-line attitude. The By-Laws were eventually amended to define qualified members as those who paid their assessments by a specified date in each fiscal year. While anyone could attend regular Sabbath services regardless of dues status, Jews who lived in Brownsville but did not pay the obligatory amount forfeited certain privileges in the Temple and had to make a "modest contribution" in order to attend high holy day services. Members unable to pay could apply to the Dues Committee on an individual basis for reduction or remission of their dues.[33]

Significantly, failure to pay dues was not always caused by financial exigencies. Through the years some congregants felt that assessments were made arbitrarily and inequitably based on such considerations as the type of car one drove, the area where one lived, and what the Directors believed a person's income to be. These feelings--whether correct or mistaken--caused resentment and, at times, refusal to pay the full amount levied. In the late 1970's the Board attempted

to aleviate the situation by finding a less controversial but equally productive method for determining mandatory membership contributions. These efforts, however, did not result in any permanent change in the system.[34]

In 1981 the Jewish community of Brownsville celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Temple Beth-El. The years from 1931-81 had been eventful to say the least. During that period, local Jews had the faith to erect a house of worship despite a severe depression and later to add a social hall and religious school. Congregants worked through the Sisterhood and Brotherhood to support the institution in countless ways. Individuals not only provided generous financial assistance when necessary but also gave of their time to serve as lay Rabbis, Sunday School personnel, Board members, and in other capacities. A congregation of about two dozen families grew to well over one hundred and acquired a full-time ordained Rabbi. These same years were not without growing pains, however. Serving a diverse congregation with differing philosophies of Judaism at times caused Beth-El to be a scene of conflict. The financial obligations of building and operating an adequate religious facility often proved burdensome. Methods of dues assessment and problems with collections sometimes created friction. Taking everything into account, though, the members of the Temple in 1981 justifiably could and did take great pride in what they and their predecessors had accomplished in half a century. Sharing their pride, Mayor Emilio Hernandez designated August 30, 1981 as Temple Beth-El Day in Brownsville in honor of that institution's fiftieth anniversary.[35]

In 1981 the congregation looked to the future as well as the past. The rapidly growing membership voted to purchase a lot in the Land O' Lakes Subdivision and begin construction within three years on a new physical plant also to be named Temple Beth-El. Peso devaluations in Mexico, recession in the United States, and a depressed economy in the Rio Grande Valley subsequently caused the project to be delayed but not abandoned.

One fact is certain. Whether located at West 8th and St. Francis or in Land O'Lakes, whatever its location, Temple Beth-El will continue to serve as the center of Jewish religious, educational, and social life in Brownsville.

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* The possibility of work beginning on the new facility in the near future improved considerably when the Morris Steins left a generous bequest to Beth-El in 1983. They stipulated that the funds be used to erect a new Sunday School building in memory of their son Lewis Stein, the only Jewish serviceman from Brownsville to die in World War II.

## ENDNOTES

1. Interview, Ruben Edelstein by Harriett Denise Joseph, 18 and 20 November, Brownsville, Texas.

2. McCallum to Rentfro & Cole, 6 June 1931; Assignment of Deed of Trust, Temple Beth-El Sisterhood to Board of Trustees, 1 December 1951 [Temple Beth-El hereinafter cited as TBE]; W. Frank Goodwin, Architectural Drawing for Jewish Community Center, 1931; Contract, S.W. McKenzie and TBE Sisterhood, 26 September 1931; Addendum to Contract, McKensie and TBE Sisterhood, 25 September 1931. Unpublished written materials cited in this and subsequent endnotes are part of the Temple Beth-El papers, which include legal documents, ledgers, receipt books, cancelled checks, minutes of meetings, correspondence, and other items. Most of these materials are stored in the Temple complex but some are in the possession of private individuals. Indication of location will be made for those unpublished written items not housed in the religious facility.

3. Perl to Gruenwald, 6 October 1931; Gruenwald to Perl, 7 October 1931; Loan Agreement, Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company and TBE Sisterhood, n.d.; Journal J-999, [1931-1941].

4. Interview, Edelstein, 1985; Interview, Corrine Perl by Harriett Denise Joseph, 20 November 1985, Brownsville, Texas.

5. Interview, Betty Rubinsky by Harriett Denise Joseph, 20 November 1985, Brownsville, Texas.

6. Ibid.

7. Promissory Note, Isadore Dorfman to Ralph Ratcliff, 25 January 1951; Wood to Dorfman, January 1951; Legal Document, Julia and A. Wayne Wood, 29 February 1951; Minutes, TBE Membership Meetings, 3 August and 30 November 195?; Transfer of Mechanic's Lein, W.D. Ferguson to Julia Wood, 11 December 1951; TBE Financial Statements, 1 August 1951 to 31 July 1952, 1 September 1951 to 29 July 1959.

8. Interview, Edelstein, 1985; Transfer of Lein, Ferguson to Wood, 1951; Minutes, 30 November 195?; Financial Statement, 1951-52; Minutes, TBE Board Meeting, 24 July 1952; Check #98, TBE to Julia Wood, 2 June 1952; Checks #683 and 684, TBE to Julia Wood, 15 January 1959.

9. TBE to "Dear Member," 4 August 1951; Ballot, 4 August

1951; Minutes, TBE Membership Meeting, 30 November 1951; Charter, Temple Beth-El, Inc., 30 November 1951; Wood to Sheppard, 5 December 1951; Ross to Edelstein, 29 September 195?; Davenport to Wood, 20 December 1951.

10. Minutes, TBE Board Meetings, 13 and 20 August 1952; Minutes, Membership Meeting, 17 September 1952.

11. "By-Laws for Temple Beth-El," 17 September 1952.

12. Interview, Edelstein, 1985.

13. Minutes, Meeting of Hebrew Cemetery Association, 5 June 1953 [hereinafter cited as HCA]; Notice, Edelstein to "all interested in HCA. . . ," 5 June 1953; Interview, Edelstein, 1985; "By-Laws of HCA of Brownsville," 9 June 1953; Minutes, TBE Membership Meetings, 14 May 1953 and 19 May 1954.

14. Minutes, TBE Membership Meetings, 19 May 1954 and 26 October 1955; Warranty Deed, W. Joseph and Dorothy V. Gerhards to TBE, 29 October 1955; Minutes TBE Board Meetings, 3 October 1955 and 10 September 1956; Note #2215, TBE and First National Bank, 28 October 1955; TBE Financial Statements, 1951-59 and 1 August 1959 to 31 October 1959.

15. Minutes, TBE Board Meetings, 6 February, 7 May, and 5 August 1956; Anon., Specifications for TBE Sunday School Building, Brownsville, Texas; Interview, Edelstein, 1985; Pleason to Edelstein, n.d.; Minutes, TBE Membership Meetings, 25 April and 19 November 1956.

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22. Dues Committee to "Dear Member," 13 May 1972, RE; Minutes, TBE Board Meetings, 24 April and 4 May 1973, RE.

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26. Minutes, TBE Board Meeting, 2 July 1973, RE; Blank Contract, Educational Director, 1973, RE; Edelstein to Video Systems, Inc., 2 September 1976, RE; Interview, Edelstein, 1985; Denise Joseph and Mathew Michaels, "Brownsville's only synagogue celebrates 50th anniversary," Brownsville Herald, 30 August 1981.

27. Minutes, Meeting of TBE Board, 13 August and 10 September 1979, Zelman Joseph files, [hereinafter cited ZJ]; Proxy Form, November 1977, RE.

28. Silberman to TBE Board, 13 August 1979, RE.

29. Stock to "Dear Friend," 7 December 1979, RE.

30. Edelstein to Sisterhood and Brotherhood, 7 April 1953; TBE Financial Statement, 1951-59; Interview, Rubinsky, 1985; Interview, Edelstein, 1985. Numerous TBE Documents, such as ledgers, receipt books, bank deposit books, and financial statements, contain ample proof of the critical role that the Sisterhood and Brotherhood played as fund raising organizations and also show the importance of voluntary contributions from members of the Temple.

31. Journal J-999, [1931-41]; American Official Money Line Receipt Book, #4500, [1940-41]; Protecto Duplicating Receipt Book #557, [1941-42]; "Universal" Book, No.

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32. Minutes, TBE Board Meeting, 17 April 1973, RE; Contract of Sale, Randy D. Edington to TBE, 2 August 1973, RE; Minutes, TBE Board Meeting, 24 April 1973, RE; Minutes, TBE Membership Meeting, 19 May 1972, RE; Dues Committee to "Dear Member," 13 May 1972, RE; Dues Committee to "Dear Member," 15 May 1972, RE: TBE Financial Statement, 1978-79, ZJ.

33. Minutes, TBE Board Meetings, 2 September 1951, 1 June 1953 and 17 May 1954; TBE Board to Congregation, August 1953; TBE Board to "Dear Member," 3 February 1954; Minutes, TBE Membership Meeting, 17 February 1954.

34. Minutes, TBE Board Meeting, 13 August 1979, ZJ; Interview Edelstein, 1985.

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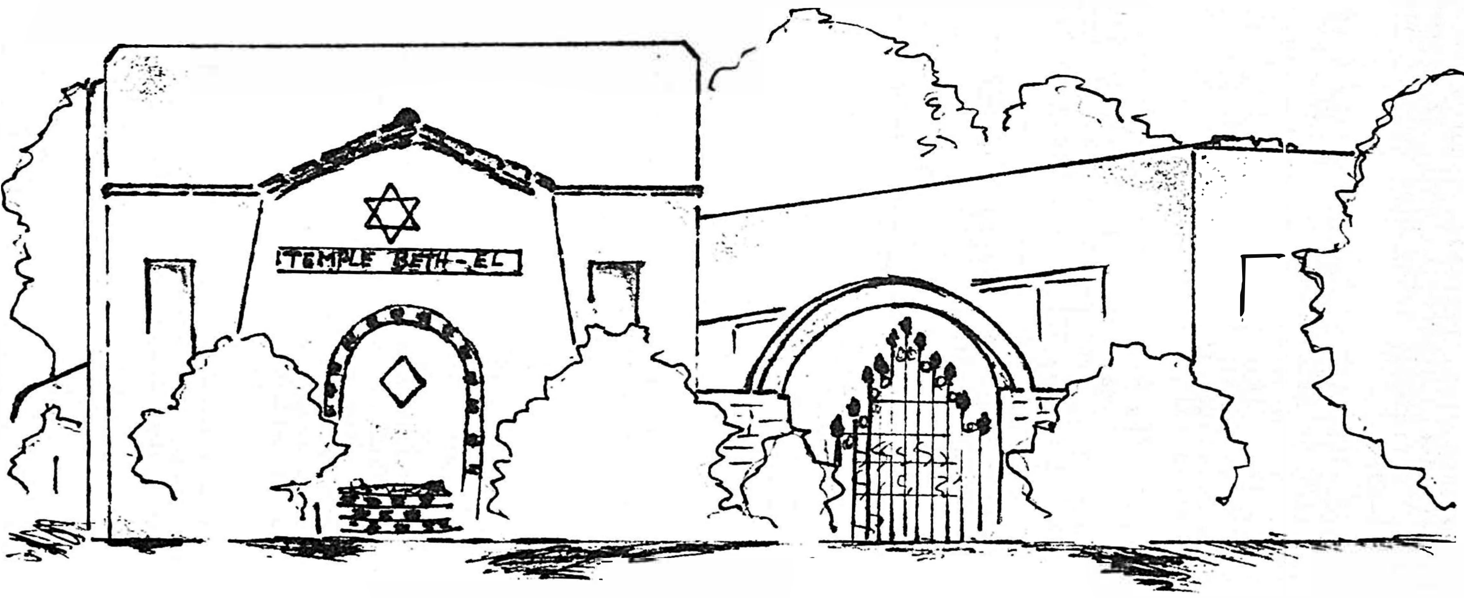
TEMPLE BETH-EL

# WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS

by

Robert S. Lewis

Remember the good old days? You remember. The days when men like Louis Lepeyre and Jim Mills were at each other's throats, offering charges and countercharges about what was good for the town and what was strictly for self interest. You don't remember? Ahhhh.... let me refresh your memory.

Think back to those golden days of yesteryear, about the 24th of August, 1972, when Louis Lepeyre became mayor of the city. Remember how he took over when Dr. Earl B. Griffey had resigned for reasons of ill health? And doggone if there wasn't controversy right away with Jim Mills claiming Lepeyre was unfit to be mayor due to conflict of interest. Conflict of interest? Well, wasn't it true the Lepeyre was advisory director of Amigoland, Inc.? And wouldn't this conflict with Lepeyre's new mayoral duties? Lepeyre responded he wouldn't have been elected as a commissioner if the people felt there was a conflict of interest. Commissions Filemon Vela chimned in that if there was a conflict of interest, it would be better to have Lepeyre as mayor than as commissioner because as mayor Lepeyre couldn't make motions.[1]

Wait a minute. Before I get into this too deeply, let me introduce the cast of characters in this tall tale and explain how Lepeyre got to be mayor in the first place. Mills had earlier that same night nominated Commissioner Ed Manzano for mayor, which turned out to be counter productive as far as Mills was concerned. Manzano declined the nomination and then Manzano nominated Lepeyre. Vela seconded the nomination. Mills voted against the appointment, but to no avail. He was outnumbered two to one. Lepeyre became mayor and his commission seat was vacated[2], to be filled by Dr. Ramiro Barron sometime later.

In his opening remarks after becoming mayor, Lepeyre sympathized with Mills but at the same time stated that Mills represented the faction opposed to the development of Amigoland. The next day's issue of the local newspaper told us that Mills had been elected to the city commission on a different ticket than Vela, Manzano, and Lepeyre.[3] Now we've divided up the sides.

Back to the story. Lepreyre becoming mayor wasn't the only thing that concerned Mills that first night. In fact that night is going to set the tone for the entire Lepeyre administration. Mills voted solo against two measures

approved by other commissioners.[4] However, it wasn't until about a year later that things really began to heat up.

On September 13, 1973, the city commission voted to annex Amigoland. Neither Mills nor Lepeyre voted on this annexation: Mills because he believed he didn't have enough information and Lepeyre because he had an interest in Amigoland.[5]

Apparently feeling that over a year of Lepeyre was enough, Mills within a few days announced a full slate for the upcoming city commission elections. With himself running for mayor, Mills introduced four other candidates for city commissioners. His reasons for the new party--which becomes known as the "New Party"--were contained in his allegations of certain conflict of interest "between public service and private financial gain" and citing the part Lepeyre had in two real estate companies one of which is "handling Amigoland."[6]

At the next city commission meeting Mills charged the annexation of Amigoland as the "biggest giveaway of taxpayers' money for financial benefit of a special interest group in the history of Brownsville." It should be noted that Mills had publicly been very consistant in his objection to the annexation because of the assumption by the city of Amigoland's bonded indebtedness.[7] Mills continued by implying that city employees had been told if Amigoland was not annexed they could forget about getting raises.

While all this talk is going on -- you guessed it -- every word is being recorded as part of the public record. Manzano accused Mills of using this information in public as a political move. Dr. Barron mantained it was a waste of taxpayer money to use a public meeting for political purposes.[8]

At the next meeting, charges and counter charges fill the air. Its more like a political rally than a public meeting, with most of the flak this time going against Mills. There was a motion to strike Mills' statement from the record because Mills wouldn't provide proof of his accusations. Mills was again accused of indulging in a political campaign at a public meeting. Dr. Barron concurred and accused Mills of having paid cronies in the audience to turn the meeting into a political rally.[9] What a mess!! I mean if this keeps up these guys won't be friends anymore.

Ahhh, yes, I miss those good old days when men were men and could really get it on politically. Those of us who lived through these thrilling times may not agree on who was in the right, but we do agree on one thing: it wasn't dull.

By the way, Jim Mills won the next election.

END NOTES

[1] The Brownsville Herald, August 25, 1972.

[2] Ibid., August 25, 1972.

[3] Ibid., August 25, 1972.

[4] Ibid., August 25, 1972.

[5] Ibid., September 14, 1973.

[6] Ibid., September 18, 1983.

[7] Ibid., October 14, 1973.

[8] Ibid., September 28, 1973.

[9] Ibid., October 12, 1973.

# The Family History of Senator Hector Uribe: a Study in Mexican-American Heritage

by

Karen E. LeFevre

This paper is a study of the family history of State Senator Hector Uribe of Brownsville, Texas and, as such, will encompass information concerning the families of both parents: Blas Maria Uribe III of San Ygnacio, Texas and Maria Aida de León of Brownsville, Texas.

The second chapter deals with the lineage of the Uribe-Garza family and the third with that of the De Léon-Vàsquez family. The discussion will be in the form of a genealogy of each family branch. A direct ancestor's name will be underlined the first time it appears in full and capitalized when listed with the issue of a particular family.

## The Pastoral Pioneers

In any discussion of Mexican-American history, one must take into account the unique nature of the settlements on the Rio Grande in the mid 18th century. A complex series of events enabled many families to settle in the area which now lies on both sides of the border of the United States of Mexico and the United States of America.

In the early 1730's, the Spanish government decided to undertake the conquest and settlement of the Seno Mexicano, a vast territory which had heretofore been a "colonial void". It encompassed the land north of Tampico, bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the east, by the Sierra Madre Oriental (called Tamaulipas by the Indians) on the west, and on the north by the Rio Nueces, which separated the Seno Mexicano from the Province of Texas.[1]

Many considerations were made by the government, such as the threat of the Indians and the French, both of whom were considered hostile by the Spaniards.[2] But even facing these threats in a virtually unknown land, the promise of fertile land, rich rivers and valuable minerals won out.

The land was dominated by the Rio Grande (also called Rio Bravo and Rio del Norte) and the Rios Salado and San Juan, which bring water from the Sierra Madre to the Rio Grande.3 Together with the Rio Nueces, the Rio Grande Plain

was able to support enough vegetation to "...supply nourishing pastures for livestock throughout the year".[4]

In 1738, various plans were submitted for the conquest of the Seno Mexicano, all of which suggested the use of encomiendas as the solution to the Indian problem. King Fernando VI rejected the use of encomiendas and the Junta de Guerra y Hacienda in Mexico found all the proposals inadequate, which delayed the beginning of settlement.[5]

After the appointment as Viceroy of the Conde de Revilla Gigedo, Juan Francisco Güemes y Horacasitas, the conquest began in earnest. Colonel José de Escandón had proven himself a good soldier and organizer, a leader who "pacified the Sierra Gorda" and "had a way with Indians".[6] He was Revilla Gigedo's choice as conquistador, capitán general and governor of the new province of Nuevo Santander, named for Escandón's land of origin. On September 3, 1746, he was appointed lieutenant to the viceroy, a position which gave him great authority and decision-making power close to that of viceroy.[7]

On January 7, 1747, Escandón left Querétaro with soldiers, mules and supplies in order to explore the territory. A rendezvous with other troops (7 columns with 765 soldiers)[8] was planned for February 24 at the mouth of the Río Grande.[9] Escandón realized the importance of his primary dealings with the Indians and carried with him trade items to "... speed the pacification and conversion of the Indians", as well as arms and ammunition to use against those who rejected conversion.[10]

At the appointed time, six of the scouting parties had reached Escandón.[11] By that time, Escandón had chosen many Indian allies. He was encouraged by his reception along his travel route. He was fortunate enough to engage two Indian chiefs as scouts for his expedition.[12]

During the next few weeks, Escandón considered the reports of his captains regarding proposed settlement sites. They recommended areas on the three principal streams which emptied into the Río Grande: the Salado, the Alamo and the San Juan, due to the possibility of irrigating the surrounding land.[13]

Although in 1745, the Marqués de Altamira, auditor de guerra for New Spain, described the Indians as "barbarous... apostates...unconverted...With their murders, thefts, fires, and all kinds of human atrocities, they desolate entire jurisdictions",[14] the Coahuiltecan Indians along the Río Grande were "...not very aggressive".[15] These Indians, often described as docile, had been forced into the territory by the ferocious Karankawa from the Gulf Coast and were kept there by the threat of the warlike Lipan Apaches who, in

turn, rode so far south to avoid the Comanches moving in from Colorado in the 1730's.[16] Later, in the 1750's both the native Coahuiltecans and the settlers from New Spain would have trouble with the Comanches and Apaches.

Escandón's reaction to the Coahuiltecans was that they presented much less of a problem than he had expected. He estimated a population of approximately 2,500 Indians on the Río Grande.[17]

> However, there were many tribes and they spoke different dialects which made communication with them difficult. Although migratory according to seasons, they felt that much of the land belonged to them, so the problem of satisfying the natives on this point was one which Escandón used great tact and discretion in solving.
>
> He had given strict orders that no Indian was to be forced or taken from his settlement and that arms were made to be used only for self-defense. The plan was to induce the Indians to move into the missions where they could be congregated.[18]

Unfortunately, although many Coahuiltecans were brought into Spanish missions, and some were absorbed into the Spanish and mestizo populations, many succumbed to European diseases, such as smallpox.[19] Some Carrizos survived longer than other tribes. In the late 18th century, twenty-seven Carrizo families lived at the mission at Dolores,[20] but by 1930 the last known survivor of the Carrizo tribe, Doña Panchita, died. Some other Carrizos are now believed to be living in the San Miguel area.[21]

Escandón's exploration of the Río Grande territory convinced him that it was an ideal area to ranch. This was due to the fact that he encountered bands of wild burros, cattle and horses all along the river.[22] He returned to Querétaro in the spring with every man alive and well. He proposed the establishment of fourteen settlements north of Tampico. In his plan, their administrative organization would include a capitán de guerra with soldiers to protect the settlements, and a chief justice, justicia mayor.[23]

Many incentives were given to encourage potential colonists to settle the territory.

> Colonists would enjoy a remission of taxes for ten years, and special grants of money were to be made each settlement to support garrisons and the clergy...
>
> Each colonist was to receive a flat subsidy of 100 to 200 pesos. The royal treasury was to pay captains an annual salary of 500 pesos, sergeants 250 pesos, privates 225 pesos, and priests an

average of 350 pesos.[24]

The captains of the reconnaissance told prospective settlers about the rich and fertile soil, the mild climate, and the friendly Indians, and the effect of this promotion effort

> "...was so successful that the problem ... was more one of selecting suitable families than the securing of adequate numbers. The promise of free land, remission of taxes, a subsidy, and the opportunity to grow with a new country were persuasive inducements.[25]

Escandón's plans were approved on May 13, 1748 and so in December 1748, the entrada began. Spaniards, criollos and mestizos from Querétaro, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí and Los Charcos brought their livestock, farming tools and household possessions[26] to start a new life in a new land, full of hope. These pastoral pioneers had a strong desire to find a place to put down roots, to expand, raise their families and, since they loved the ranching life, to raise their sheep and cattle as well. Other families from Linares, Villa de Valle, Tampico, Cerralvo and San Juan Bautista joined the party or went directly to specified locations.[27]

On the way to the Río Grande, several settlements were established, among them Burgos on February 20, 1749.[28] On March 5, 1749 Escandón founded Camargo, then Reynosa on March 14, 1749 on the banks of the Río Grande.[29] Colonel Escandón then proceeded southward and, on the return to Querétaro, founded San Fernando on April 27, 1749.[30]

During the following year, Escandón returned to the Río Grande and established settlements at Dolores on August 22, 1750, at which time a huge land grant was made to Don José Vásquez Borrego, and at Revilla (later renamed Guerrero) on October 10, 1750.[31] In January, 1753, Escandón established Carnestolendas (present day Rio Grande City)[32] and Mier on March 6, 1753.[33] On May 15, 1755, Laredo was founded, with the permission of Escandón, by Don Tomás Sánchez.[34]

In all, by the date of Escandón's final report on August 8, 1755, twenty settlements had been established (instead of the fourteen proposed) all over Nuevo Santander.[35] The colonization was considered a complete success.

## Uribe-Garza Lineage

In 1757, an inspection was made of all the settlements of Nuevo Santander. At that time, a census was taken. The records of the Revilla census of July 27, 1757 include the information: "Don Javier de Uribe, ausente con licencia,

casado con Dña. Maria Bermúdez, ocho hijos, armas, cuarenta caballos y dos burros".[36]

Don Javier de Uribe is believed to have come to Revilla from Guadalajara[37] and may have been the brother of Dña. Catarina de Uribe, who married Tomás Sánchez and settled in Laredo,[38] and of Tomás Uribe, a Laredo grantee in 1755.[39]

Javier de Uribe was born circa 1720 and was married to Dña. María Apolinaria Bermúdez. Of their eight children, one was named José Luis Uribe, born circa 1750. He married Magdalena Gutiérrez de Lara, sister of Col. Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara. They had several children: a son who died young; a son who became a priest; and José Dionisio Uribe, born ca. 1780 in Revilla.[40]

Dn. José Dionisio Uribe married Dña. Ygnacia Gutiérrez de Lara[41] (a cousin), who may have been the daughter of Manuel María Gutiérrez. Their issue was:

Rafael
Juan Martín[42]
BLAS MARIA I, b. 2-3-1811 in Revilla (Guerrero)
Juan José, b. 1813[43]

There was an Uribeño ranch in Guerrero directly across the river from La Perla.[44] The old Uribeño ranch bordered that of Manuel M. Gutiérrez.

Dña. Ygnacia was widowed while quite young. In 1822, with two young sons, Blas María Uribe I, eleven, and Juan José, nine, she moved across the Río Grande to establish her new ranch on the northern banks of the river.[45] This was in keeping with the system of expansion which allowed settlers to obtain more porciones for farming and ranching once several young couples agreed to take the step and prepared to band together for safety.[46]

Blas María Uribe I married Juliana Treviño, b. 1809 in Guerrero, the eldest of three daughters (the others were María Dionicia and Trinidad) of Dn. Jesús Treviño, an alderman on the City Council in Guerrero, who in 1830 purchased the ranch of San Ygnacio in the southwest corner of the Borrego grant.[47] Don Jesús built a stone fort in order to protect the settlers of the new village.[48]

After his marriage to Dña. Juliana, Don Blas moved to San Ygnacio and embarked on an amazing career. His brother continued to ranch Uribeño which, until its inundation in the 1950's following the opening of the Falcon Dam, was still ranched by his descendants.[49]

Don Blas María Uribe,... immediately after his arrival as a member of the San Ygnacio colony,

began to expand and to demonstrate his rare abilities as a leader and a businessman. He moved his livestock over to the San Ygnacio lands and lauched into cattle, goat and livestock raising on a large scale, and after the death of his father-in-law in 1842, became the active head of the colony and the patriarch of San Ygnacio.[50]

Don Blas enlarged the stone fort in order to fight off the continual Comanche raids. He set the pine roof beams in the added rooms and on one of the huge beams is carved the motto: "Paz y Libertad Obremos",[51] a goal set forth by the pioneers.

Don Blas and Dña. Juliana had a family of six children:

Fernando
Manuel María, b. 10-10-1836
TRINIDAD I, b. 9-10-1838 in Guerrero
José Dionisio II
José María, b. 12-10-1846
María de Jesús[52]

After the death of Dña. Juliana, he married Tomasita Gutiérrez. There were no children from that marriage.[53]

Don Blas began to export the products of farming and ranching to Brownsville, Corpus Christi and Monterrey. In 1860, his goods were transported to Brownsville by way of freight boats. This was accomplished normally when the Río Grande was at full flood, but occasionally the boats were pulled on 150 foot lines by "strong men" (known as cordelle power).[54] Merchandise was carted to and from Corpus Christi and Monterrey on the backs of mule trains. Only when the Texas-Mexican railway was completed in 1881 was the journey to Corpus Christi discontinued.[55]

He was an industrious and ambitious man and he evidently loved San Ygnacio. He donated land for the site of the Catholic church in 1872 and for the town plaza and cemetary as well.[56] By the time of his death April 24, 1895 on his ranch "El Ranchito", he "... had acquired more than half the San Ygnacio subdivision of the Borrego grant with his holdings in two counties - Webb and Zapata".[57] His will divided approximately 37,000 acres among his children, their heirs, and the sisters of Dña. Juliana. He even included a special clause saying that he would die believing that his children would follow his wishes and not utter one word against his will - "... espero que no hablen ni una palabra ni un murmuro sobre mis determinaciones".[58]

Trinidad Uribe I married Francisca Garza, b. 6-4-1843 in Guerrero, the daughter of Antonio Garza and Gertrudis Peña of Guerrero, Tamaulipas. They had a family of nine children:

Guadalupe (f), b. 12-12-1862
María del Refugio, b. 2-8-1866
Margarita I, b. 1868
BLAS MARIA II, b. 9-15-1870 in Guerrero
Adela, b. 11-25-1872
Aureliano, b. 4-26-1879
Primitivo
Serafín, b. 1884
María Cristina I, b. 7-24-1886[59]

Trinidad and Francisca had an interesting marriage. Trinidad was a strong, rugged man outside his home. He was once even wounded by an Indian.[60] Inside his home he was so gentle that he hated to get angry with his wife or children. He would go upstairs and stay there, sometimes for two days, until his friends, sent up by Francisca with cards and trays of food, could get him in a better frame of mind.[61]

He was so attached to his children that he dreaded his daughters marrying. Through ranching, he probably knew he would work closely with his sons after their marriages, but when his daughters' weddings approached he would be on his ranch and would have to be convinced that he should come home and get ready.[62] When his wife Francisca died on February 28, 1909 in San Ygnacio, he died only five months later on July 30, 1909, in Laredo. In June 1978, his remains were moved from Laredo to rest with Francisca's in the Uribe Cemetary in San Ygnacio.[63]

Francisca loved jewelry and collected many fine pieces. One of the Uribe family traditions is for the young bride to wear her heirloom necklace on her wedding day.[64]

Blas María Uribe II married Petra (Petrita) Garza, b. 10-23-1874 in Guerrero, Tamaulipas. Petra's paternal grandfather was Don Rafael de la Garza, born ca. 1790 from Agualeguas, Nuevo León. He married Dña. Cipriana Villareal and their son Pedro Garza Villareal, b. 1823 in Aqualeguas, N. León, settled in Guerrero.[65] There he met and married Refugia Flores Buentello, whose parents have a romantic history.

Refugia's father was Antonio Flores, an Indian from San Luis Potosí. Her mother was Ignacia Buentello, a Spanish woman who was descended from settlers of the region. When they were very young, they fell in love and wanted to marry but their families did not approve. In those times, while it was common for a Spanish man to marry an Indian woman, the reverse was very rare. So they each married someone their families did approve. Antonio married an Indian woman and had a daughter Refugia Flores (1). Ignacia married a Spanish man named Garza and had a daughter, Albina Garza. Then they were both widowed and met again in later years. This time,

older and wiser, and still remembering the love of their youth, they married and they had nine children:

Anselmo
Manuela
Estanislao
Juan Evangelista
Cesáreo
Pedro
REFUGIA (2) } twins
Jesucita }
Martina
all born in Guerrero.[66]

Refugia Flores (2) Buentello and Pedro Garza Villareal had six children:

GREGORIO I, b. 11-17-1846 in Guerrero
Pablo
Hipólito
Serapio
Martiniano (Martín)[67]
Antonia

After Refugia's death, Pedro married Placida Medina and had three children: Rafael, Casiro and Petra. Pedro died in 1884 in Guerrero.[68]

Gregorio Garza Flores I married Salomé Martínez, b. 10-22-1849 in Guerrero.[69] Salomé's heritage traces back to the founding of Revilla in 1750 through the Gutiérrez line of both her grandmothers, the sisters Josefa and Martina Gutiérrez Villareal. Their great-grandparents were Don Cristóbal Gutiérrez de Castro and Dña. Ysabel Benavides,[70] who appear in the 1757 census of Revilla.

Don Cristobal came from Canaleño, south of Agualeguas, Nuevo León, where his family lived as dueños of 1600 hectareas of land. Dn. Cristóbal and Dña. Ysabel had four children:

MARIA OLAYA
María Angela
María Jabiela[71]
Santiago

María Olaya Gutiérrez de Benavides married Juan José Gutiérrez de Castro (probably a cousin) and had three children:

Nicanor
EUGENIO
José Obito[72]

Eugenio Gutiérrez de Castro married Guadalupe Villareal in Guerrero in 1802 and they had twelve children:

María Feliciana
María Trinidad
María Juliana
MARIA JOSEFA
José Geronimo
María Teodora
José Antonio
María Agapita
José Ysidro
María Juana
MARÍA MATIANA (MARTINA)
Maria de Jesús[73]

Salomé's paternal grandmother, Josefa Gutiérrez Villareal, married José Antonio Martinez and they had nine children:

Policarpo
María Nepamucena
MARGARITO, b. 6-10-1816 in Guerrero
José María
María Alejandra
María Gregoria
Juan
Agapito
Marcos[74]

Her maternal grandmother, Martina Gutiérrez Villareal, married Manuel Ramírez Martínez, b. 1799 in Guerrero, the son of José Luis Ramírez and Bacilia Martínez. He was called "El Cautivo" because of his kidnap by Indians as a young man.[75] His fascinating story will be discussed later. Manuel Ramírez Martínez and Martina Gutiérrez V. were the parents of Petra Ramírez, b. 10-19-1824 in Guerrero.

Petra Ramírez married her first cousin Margarito Martínez and they had six children:

Tereas
Policarpo
Juan
SALOMÉ, b. 10-22-1849
Antonio
Enedina[76]

Petra Ramírez died on 9-11-1899 and Margarito Martínez on 3-29-1907, both on their ranch "Las Ovejas" in Texas. Theirs was a very musical and poetic family. Margarito played the accordion and all their children learned to play the guitar. Some of the cousins even greeted each other in

verses, which came spontaneously.[77]

Salomé Martínez and Gregorio Garza Flores I had five children:

Alvaro
Toribio
PETRA (PETRITA), b. 10-23-1874 in Guerrero
Fernando
Juanita, b. 8-3-1880[78]

Gregorio was a powerful man. Once, when he saw a carriage horse go berserk, endangering the lives of the passengers, he ran and struck the horse on its head with such force that it was knocked unconcious. It fell to the ground and the passengers all escaped unharmed.[79]

Salomé died when her youngest daughter was two years old on 9-18-1882 in Guerrero. Gregorio then married Salomé's elder sister, Teresa, who was a widow, and moved the family to San Ygnacio. Her two little girls had died young, so she naturally treated Juanita as if she were her own.

Petra, at a very sensitive age, did not take well to the idea of her aunt replacing her mother and she became very close to her father. Consequently, she went with him wherever he went, riding double on his horse. She learned to ride quite young and, in later years, couldn't stand to ride in a carriage, saying that it made her feel ill. Instead, she preferred always to ride horseback, unconfined.[80]

Petra Garza and Blas María Uribe II had a large family of thirteen children:

Trinidad II, 1-29-1895 to 4-6-1972
Amador, 10-11-1896 to 8-24-1979
Corina, 9-12-1898 to 11-9-1965
Derly, 10-14-1900 to 8-8-1984
Delia, 11-5-1902 to 9-27-1965
Adelaido, 10-26-1904 to 5-25-1972
Margarita II, 11-15-1906 to 9-14-1984
Francisca, 12-8-1908
María Cristina II, 3-28-1911 to 11-23-1968
Celia, 1-5-1913 to 2-10-1932
Ninfa Ema, 2-4-1915
BLAS MARIA URIBE III, 2-16-1917
María Consuelo, 5-1919 to 5-1919[81]

all born in San Ygnacio, Texas.

Blas María II spent his life ranching and was a hard-working husband and father, who took great pride in his family. He died at 70 on 10-12-1940 in San Ygnacio.[82] Petrita lived on for thirty more years, a strong woman who enjoyed the quiet, simple life of San Ygnacio. She always

had the love and respect of her children and grandchildren.[83] She died on her 96th birthday on 10-23-1970 in Laredo.

Blas and Petrita are buried in the Uribe cemetary in San Ygnacio. Forty-six grandchildren and over 100 great-grandchildren are their descendants.[84]

## DeLeòn-Vasquez Lineage

The 1757 census records of Burgos list several De Leòns: Don Josè, Juan,Santiago,Bernardo and Doña Marìa.[85] This family is believed to have come from Burgos, Spain and settled in Burgos, Tamaulipas (Nuevo Santander) which was named for their home city.[86]

Although at this writing no direct connection has been made, there were several members of the same generation as Don Felipe de Leòn, born circa 1810 in Burgos?, appearing in the San Fernando and Cruillas church records: Dn. Juan de Leòn, b. 1807 in Burgos; Dn. Sinforiano de Leòn I; Dña. Leonor de Leòn, b. 1817 and Dña. Gertrudis de Leòn, b. 1820.[87] This family closely intermarried with the families De La Garza and Galvàn.[88]

About 1845, Don Felipe de Leòn married his cousin Marìa de la Garza (who is possibly Marìa Felisitas de la Garza, b. 1819-d. 1856 leaving two sons).[89] One son of Don Felipe and Marìa was Don Severo de Leòn Garza, born in 1849.[90]

Don Severo married Tomasa de la Garza, b. 1860 in Cruillas.[91] The De la Garza family was quite large and settled in Cruillas, possibly Burgos, and San Fernando. These three towns form a triangle and were very inviting to ranching and business interests. San Fernando grew quickly as it was en route to the Port of Matamoros from the south.

Tomasa's parents[92] Don Felipe de la Garza, b. 1821 and Juana de la Garza were first cousins. One of the two was the sibling of Marìa de la Garza mentioned above, giving Don Severo and Tomasa a first cousin relationship as well.[93]

Don Felipe de la Garza and Juana de la Garza had seven daughters and one son:

Rogaciana
Sofìa
TOMASA, b. 1860 } twins
Marìa de Jesùs, b. 1860 }
Marìa Herlinda, 1863-1868 in Cruillas
Juana II, b. 1866
Josè, b. 1870 in San Fernando

Francisca Constancia[94]

The first six girls were born in Cruillas, but the family moved to San Fernando, where the last two children were born, by 1868.[95]

Don Felipe was a very protective father. He was concerned about his daughters maintaining their social status after marriage. He told them: "There is a difference between silk and manta. You are the silk."[96] He never seemed to approve of the girls' suitors. They lived on the main square of San Fernando in a house with second-story balconies and, when the young men would serenade the girls in the evening, Don Felipe would empty water from the porcelana on them.[97] This eccentric gentleman died in San Fernando on September 13, 1897 at 76 years of age.[98]

Tomasa de la Garza and Don Severo de León, as newlyweds, moved to Matamoros and had their family. They lived next door to the Cathedral on the zócalo and, being sociable people, were founding members of the "Casino Matamorense".[99]

Don Severo was a court scribe until he retired, at which time he opened a grocery and housewares store called "La Colmena" in Matamoros. As a side interest, he had a small private loan business and had rental properties as well.[100]

Tomasa became the mother of five children:

Severo II
Eriberto
JOSE TOMAS, b. 9-18-1884
María del Refugio
Zacariaz Isabel (changed to Octavio), b. 8-12-1890

all born in Matamoros.[101] She died an untimely death at the age of thirty due to a complication of childbirth on August 12, 1890.[102] The two youngest children were reared by their aunt Rogaciana in Monterrey.[103]

During the Mexican Revolution, Don Severo moved to Brownsville to live with his son José and his daughter-in-law. The house in Matamoros, left vacant, was ransacked by the Carranzistas and most of the furnishings were either stolen or destroyed.[104] It was during his exile in the United States that he mentioned that his ancestors had been of the Jewish faith, although they didn't practice it anymore.[105] This correlates with the belief that the De la Garzas were of Sephardic origin and would explain the repeated cousin marriages in the family.[106] The Spanish conversos were always careful to marry other New Christians.[107] Don Severo died in Brownsville on December 5, 1914.[108]

On November 10, 1910, José de León Garza married Rosa Carmela Vásquez, born 7-16-1890 in San Fernando, Tamaulipas.[109] Three of Rosa's grandparents were descended from ranching people who settled in and around San Fernando.

Her great-grandfather was Teodoro Vásquez, born ca. 1800. He married Simona Alvarado.[110] They had several children:

TEOFILO I, b. ca. 1830
BARBARA, b. in 1830
Cruz ?
Teófila ?[111]

Teófilo Vásquez I married María Josefa González and they had a family of nine children:

Margarito
Guadalupe (m)
SIMON
Juan
Panchita
Josefa
María
José Espindión, b. 1-1867 in San Fernando
Eusebio, b. 9-1870 in San Fernando.[112]

Simón Vásquez, Rosa's father, was a rancher and he loved to play the violin. He played for all his friends and neighbors. He died of sunstroke near the age of thirty, ca. 1898, in San Fernando.[113]

Rosa's maternal grandmother was Bárbara Vásquez, mentioned above, the daughter of Teodoro Vásquez and Simona Alvarado and the sister of Teófilo Vásquez I. Bárbara was born in 1830 in San Fernando and she married Fernando Dávila around the age of sixteen. They had seven children:

Leonides
Cayetana
Florentino
Carmen
José Manuel, b. 1857 on Ranch of San Ysidro
María Luisa, 3-1860 to 5-1860, b. on Ranch of Soledad
María Herlinda (Hermelinda), b. 1865 San Fernando.[114]

Bárbara was widowed around the age of thirty-five. then in 1867, she married Andrés Barguiarena.[115]

Andrés and his brother Juan were tradesmen who tooled leather. They came to the New World as young men from Santander, Spain to "find their fortune".[116] They entered

Mexico through the Port of Matamoros and travelled south to settle in San Fernando, in the middle of a cattle-producing area. Even a hundred years after the founding of San Fernando, the motives of new settlers were the same:

> "...tradesmen were eager for a new outlet for their services and goods; and as always..., there were a large group of adventurers looking beyond, for pastures greener than those which they then occupied."[117]

Whether their parents came with them or joined them later is not certain, but the entire Barguiarena family was apparently living in San Fernando by about 1854.[118] The parents, Don Luis Barguiarena, b. 1791 in Spain and d. 1856 in San Fernando, and his third wife Dña. Josefa Rivera[119] had six children:

José María, 1829-1859
ANDRES, b. ca. 1830
Tomasa
Juana Gertrudis
Juan, 1837-1913
Antonio[120]

Andrés and Bárbara had two daughters:

AURELIA, b. 9-18-1868 in San Fernando
María Tomasa, b. 1870 in San Fernando[121]

Andrés got involved in ranching in San Fernando. He also opened a grocery store and built a stone house in the city for Bárbara and his little girls. This house has roof beams which bear his name and the date of the house's completion.[122] Andrés kept a box of gold coins under the counter and Aurelia and Tomasa played with them as children.[123]

While they were still young girls, their father died and Bárbara was once again a widow. As an old woman, Bárbara came to live with her children in Brownsville where she died at 85 on May 18, 1915.[124]

Aurelia Barguiarena married her first cousin Simón Vásquez and returned to the ranching way of life. They had six children:

Guadalupe II (m)
Andrés
ROSA CARMELA, 7-16-1890 to 8-23-1977
Teófilo II, 12-16-1892 to 10-3-1974
Manuela, 7-16-1901 to 5-31-1966
Simona, 7-5-1904 to 5-11-1967.[125]

all born in San Fernando, Tamaulipas.

After Simón's death, Aurelia tried to ranch and rear six children while she was still in her late twenties. That life proved to be a great struggle, so she and her brother Florentino Dávila came to Brownsville. In those days, there was no immmigration and people travelled across the Río Grande on ferries loaded down with furniture and household goods. Aurelia and Florentino opened a grocery store and the older children attended school in Brownsville. When Florentino got married, he left Aurelia and the store and Aurelia successfully supported her family with her talent for crocheting, embroidery, needlework, and making lace. She never remarried.[126]

When her daughter Rosa married, Aurelia moved to San Antonio where she lived for nearly thirty years before returning to Brownsville, where she died on May 30, 1960.[127]

Rosa and her husband José were introduced by Rosa's brother Andrés. They soon fell in love. Rosa was a beautiful young woman whose auburn hair grew past her knees. Although José's father wanted him to follow the family tradition and marry a cousin (which his brother Dr. Severo de León Garza did),[128] he married the young lady of his choice and they had eight children:

Benita Margarita, b. 3-21-1912
José Luis, 1914-1915
Benigno José, b. 3-13-1916
Ana María, b. 9-21-1918
Andrés, 2-3-1921 to 1-22-1977
MARÍA AIDA, b. 6-26-1923
Arnoldo, b. 5-30-1927
Rosalinda, 1929-1929[129]

all born in Brownsville, Texas.

José was a merchant and he owned and operated a general merchandise store on the corner of Monroe and East 14th Street in Brownsville. He was a successful businessman and had some rental properties in Matamoros.[130] José was a rather formal man. He and Rosa spoke to each other in the "usted" form and he always expected his children to dress for dinner.[131]

He died at the age of forty-seven on 1-8-1931[132] leaving Rosa a widow with six children. Rosa never remarried and devoted herself to making sure that the inheritance her husband left her was used to provide for and educate her children. She took their education so seriously that, when school was interrupted in Brownsville due to the hurricane of 1933, she moved her children to San Antonio for an entire school year.[133]

Rosa died 8-23-1977 in Brownsville at age 87, the grandmother of thirteen and the great-grandmother of twenty-six.

## La Tierra Tan Fina

In the days of Nuevo Santander, life was extremely difficult. The settlers had a great love for the territory and endured many hardships in order to make the area livable. At first, they lived in "...jacales pequeños de palos y horcones cubiertos de yerba".[134] Jacales are crude shelters built of brush and small limbs of mesquite and other trees, something like log cabins.[135] They can still be seen after two-hundred years along the road from Matamoros to San Fernando. These structures were eventually replaced by stone buildings in order to find protection from Comanche raids, as in the case of San Ygnacio.[136]

The Comanches gave the Río Grande settlers nothing but heartbreak. They burned jacales, stole livestock but, worst of all, killed and kidnapped the young men who tended the livestock in outlying pastures.

One incident involved a young Comanche brave who was collecting enemy scalps in order to reach a certain number and compete for the position of chief in his tribe. In order to get another scalp, he killed a young shepherd in San Ygnacio. Some of the townsmen rode after and captured the young Comanche, who was described as handsome riding a white horse. They took him off his horse and forced hinm onto the ground, and then one townsman got his knife poised to cut his throat. At this, the Comanche said in Spanish, "Tú mi padre". The man hesitated a moment and then proceeded to slit the young brave's throat.[137]

Another story of interest is that of the capture of Manuel Ramírez Martínez (mentioned above), a direct ancestor of Héctor R. Uribe. One day in 1819, Manuel was captured by Comanches while herding cows and goats on his father's ranch, Ramireño. After weeks of travel to their main camp on the Brazos River, the Comanches began a trip to Trinity with Manuel tied to his horse. In Trinity, he was sold by the chief to a man named Macurine, who then headed for Louisiana with plans to make a profit on his new buy in the 1820 annual slave auction.

In Natchitoches, Louisiana at the auction, a planter named Mr. Denis spotted Manuel and, knowing Spanish, asked him his story. Mr. Denis sympathized with the unfortunate young man and purchased him with the understanding that he would recuperate and then return to the Río Grande. Manuel worked for Mr. Denis for one year to repay his ransom and

then returned home where, after two years, he was reunited with his family and friends.[138]

These stories indicate that the hostility that the settlers felt for the Comanches was, in most cases, justified. This does not imply that all Indians were despised by the settlers. In fact, the talents and abilities which so many Indians had were very much respected by the Spanish settlers. Anselmo Flores B., the eldest brother of Refugia Flores Buentello, had remarkable perception which he is thought to have learned from his Indian father, Antonio Flores.

Once Anselmo was called into court by a judge in order to settle a dispute by two ranchers over a cow. The judge believed that if anyone could determine on which ranch the cow belonged, it would be Anselmo. Anselmo visited the first ranch and said that the cow did not belong there. On the second ranch, however, he pointed out the mother, aunt and brothers of the cow. The judge awarded the cow to the second rancher.[139]

On another occasion, he predicted rain after a long and serious drought. When asked by his son how he knew it would rain, he replied that it was not only going to rain but that there would be a flood because the ants were making nests high up in the trees and carrying their eggs up to protect them. That night it began to pour and the cattle, which were dying, had water to drink.[140]

The hard life made many widows and orphans. In those days, orphans on the frontier were quickly adopted by relatives or neighbors. Many people reared children throughout their lives, often will into old age. At one time in their later years, for example, Margarito Martínez and Petra Ramírez had a houseful of children: the three of their son Policarpo (who accidently stabbed himself while butchering beef); and the five of their daughter Salomé. It is said that Petrita's brother Toribio became quite tyrannical with his grandmother and made her give him a special merienda every afternoon or he would climb atop the roof and shout that she was killing him with hunger.[141]

The plight of ranching widows was indeed a difficult one. Dña. Ygnacia Gutiérrez must have endured many real difficulties: bad weather, illness, and the threat of Indian attack. She was fortunate in that she had the cooperation of her young sons and neighbors like the Ramírez family who could help her.[142]

The obstacles faced by Bárbara Vásquez and Aurelia Barguiarena must have been extremely difficult to handle. Each had a large family to support. These two generations of widows both faced problems due to loss of money and livestock

inherited from their husbands through theft and deceit. The third widow in the line, Rosa Carmela Vásquez, had learned from the misfortunes of her mother and grandmother to be very careful with her inheritance and not to invest her money foolishly. The only investment she made was a sound one in the education of her children.[143]

Hardships in settling the land and keeping it were not the only things that made widows and orphans. Several wars have been fought since the founding of Nuevo Santander: the Mexican War of Independence, the Texas War of Independence, the Mexican-American War and the Mexican Revolution, all fought in part within its original boundaries.

The brothers of Rosa Vásquez: Guadalupe, Andrés, and Teófilo, all maintained close ties to San Fernando even though they grew up in Brownsville.[144] Andrés was an avid aficionado and participated in amateur bullfighting in San Fernando, where he was known as "La Potencia".[145] It was in San Fernando that he was killed by the Federales for refusing to denounce the revolutionary cause. This event prompted Teófilo Vásquez II to fight for the Mexican Revolution, in which he attained the rank of colonel.[146]

With so much of the border territory changing hands over the years, many descendants of the settlers of Nuevo Santander were unaware of their actual citizenship. Civilization, it must be remembered, had moved up to the Río Grande from the south, and so, for many generations, the children of the settlers of San Ygnacio and the small nearby settlements were born in Guerrero.[147]

Blas María Uribe II discovered late in his life, in the 1930's, that he had the right to vote in United States elections.[148] His grandfather Don Blas María Uribe I had become a United States citizan as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in February, 1848. The treaty provided that those people who owned land north of the new Mexican-United States boundary could choose to retain their Mexican citizenship (if they declared their intention within one year), or could acquire United States citizenship "...to the enjoyment of all its rights".[149]

Whether the land was called Nuevo Santander, New Spain; Tamaulipas, Mexico; or Texas, United States of America, there can be no doubt that the settlers and their descendants loved the land.

Once, Petrita Garza and a friend were sitting on the screened-porch of Petrita's home in San Ygnacio. The friend remarked how dusty it was saying, "'Que tierra!" To this Petrita replied, "Yes, but where else can you find 'tierra tan fina'?", which in Spanish means two things, "such fine dust" or "such beautiful land". It is easy to understand

what she was saying, how much she loved "la tierra tan fina".[150]

## Conclusion

Blas Marla Uribe III and Marla Aida de León were married on June 20, 1943 in Brownsville, Texas. They had three children:

Blas Marla IV, b. 9-18-1944
HECTOR ROLANDO, b. 1-17-1946
Aida Marla, b. 11-10-1954

all born in Brownsville, Texas.

Both Blas III and Aida attended Draughon's Business College in San Antonio, where Blas received a degree in Business Administration and Aida a secretarial diploma. Blas attended Texas Southmost College and both have attended the University of Miami.

Blas Maria Uribe III worked for Pan American Airways for thirty-eight years in Brownsville, Miami, and New York City, as a management supervisor. He is now retired.

Marla Aida de León worked for the University of Miami for sixteen years. For ten of those years, she was an administrator for various research grants in the Department and School of Medicine. She is now involved in community work in Brownsville.

Throughout their lives, they stressed the importance of education to their children. They have eight grandchildren.

Blas Marla Uribe IV has a Master's Degree in urban and regional planning from Florida State University. He served for four years in the U.S. Air Force, attaining the rank of captain. He now works for the Department of Transportation in Fort Worth, Texas. He is married to Peggy Frances Batty and they have one son:

Blas Marla Uribe V, b. 12-15-1965 in Miami, Florida.

They live in Arlington, Texas.

Hector R. Uribe received the degree of Juris Doctor from the University of Miami School of Law in 1970 and has practiced law for sixteen years in El Paso, Harlingen and Brownsville, Texas. On April 7, 1978, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in a special election. While in the House, he served on the Health Services Committee and the Judiciary Committee. He was elected to the Texas Senate on February 24, 1981, also in a special election, and was re-elected on November 2, 1982, after running unopposed. In

the Senate, he has served on the Education Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Natural Resources Committee, and as Vice-Chairman of the Health and Human Resources Committee. He is married to Karen Eileen LeFevre and they have four children:

Echo Uribe, b. 11-13-1967 in Miami, Florida
Brandan LeFevre Uribe, b. 2-14-1973 in El Paso, Texas
Alán DeLeón Uribe, b. 2-14-1973 in El Paso, Texas
Danu Mara Uribe, b. 5-8-1977 in Brownsville, Texas.

Their home is in Brownsville, Texas.

Alda María Uribe has a Bachelor's Degree in history from the University of Miami. She is married to Bradley Scott Loomis and they have three daughters:

Daniele Alda Loomis, b. 7-4-1976 in Falls Church, Virginia
Coleen María Loomis, b. 8-22-1981 in Ithaca, New York
Julie Rosemary Loomis, b. 2-15-1983, in Rochester, New York.

They live in Rochester, New York.

These children share with all their many cousins the proud heritage of the Río Grande pioneers. Wherever the leaves of this family tree may scatter, the roots remain firmly planted in the soil of Nuevo Santander.

## ENDNOTES

[1] J.B. Wildinson. Laredo and the Rio Grande Frontier, p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

[3] Ibid., p. 13.

[4] Ibid., p. 14.

[5] Ibid. The encomienda system provided for the division of land among Spaniards, with any Indian occupying the land required to work as a slave for the Spanish masters or face death.

[6] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 15.

[9] Florence Johnson Scott. Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande, pp. 12-13.

[10] Jerry Thompson. Sabres on the Rio Grande, p. 9.

[11] Scott, p. 14.

[12] Ibid., p. 15.

[13] Ibid., p. 16.

[14] Wilkinson, p. 11.

[15] Ibid., p. 12. Compare opposing view of Thompson in Sabres on the Rio Grande, Chapter 1.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Scott, pp. 16-17.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Thompson, p. 3.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Virgil N. Lott and Mercurio Martinez. The Kingdom of Zapata, pp. 226-227.

[22] Wilkinson, p. 17.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 18.

[25] Ibid., p. 19.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Publicación del Archivo General de la Nación, Tomo XIV. Estado General de las Fundaciones Hechas por D. José de Escandón en la Colonia del Nuevo Santander, Tomo I, p.30.

[29] Ibid., pp. 31-32 and Scott, p. 28.

[30] Wilkinson, p. 21. Date differs from Fundaciones de la Colonia, p. 29.

[31] Fundaciones de la Colonia, pp. 34-35 and Scott, p. 39.

32 Scott, pp. 41-42.

33 *Fundaciones de la Colonia*, p. 33.

34 Wilkinson, p. 25.

35 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

36 *Fundaciones de la Colonia*, p. 422.

37 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

38 Thompson, p. 23.

39 Scott, p. 76.

40 Jorge Alberto Uribe.

41 Jorge A. Uribe and Lott and Martinez, p. 98.

42 Jorge A. Uribe.

43 Lott and Martinez, p. 98.

44 Scott, map between pp. 78 and 79.

45 Lott and Martinez, p. 98.

46 Scott, p. 42 and Wilkinson, pp. 36-38.

47 Thompson, p. 18.

48 Ibid.

49 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

50 Lott and Martinez, p. 99.

51 Thompson, p. 18.

52 Lott and Martinez, p. 101. Dates from Jorge A. Uribe.

53 Jorge A. Uribe.

54 Lott and Martinez, pp. 171-172.

55 Ibid., pp. 101-102.

56 Ibid., p. 101 and Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

57 Lott and Martinez, p. 101.

58 *Will Records, Vol. 1.* Zapata County, Texas, pp. 79-83.

59 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez and dates from Jorge A. Uribe.

60 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez, told to her by Derly Uribe.

61 Blas Maria Uribe III.

62 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

63 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez, dates from family Bible records given to her by Petra and Juanita Garza.

64 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

65 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez, family Bible records.

66 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez, told to her by Adelfa Garza de Martinez and Teodoro Martinez in 1971.

67 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

68 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

69 Ibid.

70 *Fundaciones de la Colonia*, p. 419.

71 *Gutiérrez Genealogy* by Victor Salinas Garza from the Archivos de Agualeguas y C. Guerrero, 1926.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

75 Lott and Martinez, p. 93. Manuel Ramirez Martinez died in 1882 in Guerrero, p. 96.

76 Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid. Gregorio Garza Flores I died in San Ygnacio on 8-14-1938.

80 Blas Maria Uribe III and Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

81 Ninfa Uribe ramirez and Jorge A. Uribe.

[82] Ninfa Uribe Ramírez.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Jorge Alberto Uribe, from his Uribe geneological study.

[85] Fundaciones de la Colonia, Tomo I, pp. 458-461.

[86] A.B.J. Hammett. The Empresario: Don Martín de León, pp. 1-2.

[87] No. 1, Libro de Entierros, Matrimonios, y Bautismos. Cruillas. San Fernando, p. 6.; Libro No. 5 Entierros. Cruillas. San Fernando, p. 72, entry 46; No. 1, Libro de Matrimonios del Año 1822 al 1868. Cruillas, p. 114, entry 7 and p. 125, entry 9.

[88] No. 1, Libro de Matrimonios. Cruillas, pp. 114 and 125.

[89] Libro No. 5, Entierros. Cruillas. San Fernando, p. 90, entry 119.

[90] Libro de Bautismos, Núm. 25. Matamoros, folio 75, entry 191; Death Records, Book 7, City of Brownsville, entry 686.

[91] Libro de Defunciones, Núm, 9. Matamoros, folio 323.

[92] Libro de Bautismos, Núm. 25. Matamoros, folio 75, entry 191.

[93] Margarita de León de Marroquín and Aída deLeón Uribe.

[94] Numbers 1, 3, 6 and 8 appear in Libro de Confirmaciones, No. 1. San Fernando, Tamaulipas, pp. 6, 7, and 27. Number 5 appears in No. 1, Libro de Entierros. Cruillas, San Fernando, p. 15. Numbers 7 and 8 appear in Libro No. 6, Bautizos, San Fernando, pp. 54 and 81.

[95] Libro de Confirmaciones, No. 1. San Fernando, pp. 6, 7, and 27.

[96] Aída deLeón Uribe.

[97] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[98] Libro de Defunciones, No. 1. San Fernando, Tamaulipas, pp. 30-31.

[99] Aída deLeón Uribe.

[100] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[101] *Libro de Defunciones, Núm. 9*. Matamoros, folio 323.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Aida deLeón Uribe, told to her by her mother Rosa Carmela Vásquez deLeón.

[106] *De la Garza Family History* by María de la Garza Dellinger, the daughter of Eleuterio de la Garza, first cousin of Tomasa de la Garza, p. 2.

[107] Martin A. Cohen. *The Martyr*, pp. 39-40.

[108] *Death Records, Book 7*. City of Brownsville, entry 686.

[109] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[110] *Death Records, Book 7.* City of Brownsville, entry 868.

[111] *Libro de Defunciones, No. 1*. San Fernando, Tamaulipas, p. 19.

[112] Rosa Vásquez (first cousin of Rosa Carmela Vásquez) and *Libro Núm. 6 Bautizos*. Parroquia de San Fernando, p. 32, entry 154 and p. 151, entry 643.

[113] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[114] *Libro Núm. 4, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 67, entry 147; *Libro Núm. 5, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 93, entry 265; *Libro Núm. 3, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 126, entry 55; *Libro Núm. 6, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 45, entry 219. *Libro Num. 5, Entierros.* Cruillas. San Fernando, p. 9. Names 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 confirmed by Margarita deLeón de Marroquín and Guillermo Garza.

[115] Andrés appears as godfather to Ma. Herlinda Dávila on 12-29-1867 in *Libro Num. 6, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 45, entry 219.

[116] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín and Guillermo Garza.

[117] Scott. *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande*, p. 26.

[118] *Libro Num. 1, Bautizos.* San Fernando. Juan and Dña. Juana Gertrudis appear as godparents in 1854. *Libro Num. 4, Bautizos.* San Fernando. Dn. Juan, Dña. Tomasa and Dn. Antonio appear as godparents in 1856 and 1858, pp. 5, 13, and 30.

[119] *Libro Num. 5, Entierros.* Cruillas. San Fernando, p. 70, entry 37.

[120] Ibid., p. 166, entry 48 and p. 168, entry 56. *Libro de Defunciones, No. 1.* San Fernando, Tamaulipas, p. 19 and p. 53, entry 53.

[121] *Libro Num. 6, Bautizos.* San Fernando, p. 120, entry 519. *Libro de Confirmaciones, No. 1.* San Fernando, p. 13.

[122] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín, told to her by Luz de los Santos, daughter of Tomasa Barguiarena.

[123] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín and Aida deLeón Uribe.

[124] *Death Records, Book 7.* City of Brownsville, entry 868.

[125] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín and Aida deLeón Uribe.

[126] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín.

[127] Aida deLeón Uribe and *Death Records, Vol. 12.* City of Brownsville, Texas, p. 476.

[128] Aida deLeón Uribe.

[129] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín; Aida deLeón Uribe; *Death Records, Book 7.* City of Brownsville, entry 800; *Register of Deaths, Vol. 2.* City of Brownsville, Texas, p. 48.

[130] Margarita deLeón de Marroquín and Aida deLeón Uribe.

[131] Aida deLeón Uribe.

[132] *Register of Deaths, Vol. 2.* City of Brownsville, Texas, p. 48.

[133] Aida deLeón Uribe.

[134] *Fundaciones de la Colonia,* p. 434.

[135] Wilkinson, p. 20.

[136] Lott and Martinez, p. 99 and Thompson, p. 18.

[137] Story told by Juventino Martinez in summer, 1971.

[138] Lott and Martinez, pp. 92-95.

[139] Derly Uribe and Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

[142] Lott and Martinez, pp. 93 and 98.

[143] Margarita deLeón de Marroquin and Aida deLeón Uribe.

[144] Margarita deLeón de Marroquin.

[145] Aida deLeón Uribe.

[146] Margarita deLeón de Marroquin and Aida deLeón Uribe.

[147] Blas Maria Uribe III

[148] Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

[149] Scott, pp. 138-139.

[150] Ninfa Uribe Ramirez.

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