

1991

Still more studies in Brownsville history

Milo Kearney

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, milo.kearney@utrgv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/regionalhist>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Economics Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

UTRGV & TSC Regional History Series, UTRGV Digital Library, The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UTRGV & TSC Regional History Series by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

STILL MORE STUDIES IN BROWNSVILLE HISTORY

EDITED BY
MILO KEARNEY

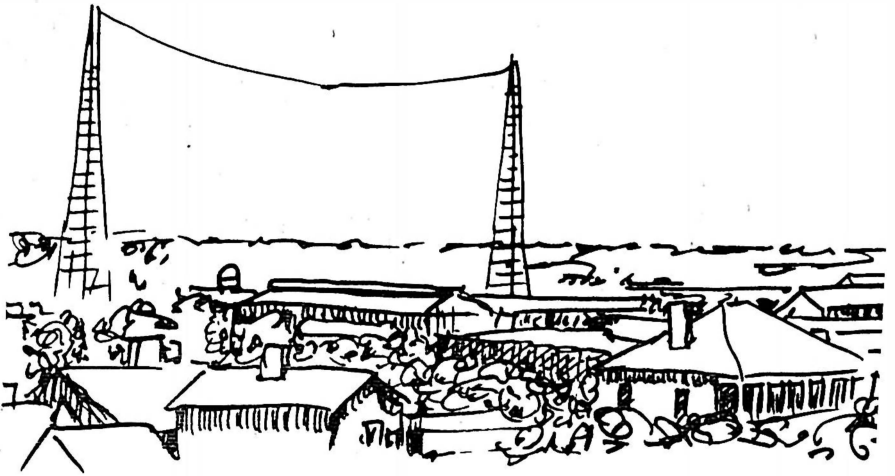


THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE



STILL MORE
STUDIES IN
BROWNSVILLE
HISTORY

EDITED BY
MILO KEARNEY



The old Fort Brown

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE

LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AT BROWNSVILLE
Brownsville, TX 78520-4991

Copyright © 1991 By The University of Texas at Brownsville
1614 Ridgely Road
Brownsville, TX 78520-4991

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the people who helped to make this continuing series a reality: to Dr. Homer J. Peña, President of The University of Texas at Brownsville, for his sponsorship and encouragement; to Dr. Peter Gawenda, Assistant to the President of UT at Brownsville for Research and Planning; to Dr. Phil Hamer, Head of the Department of Arts and Sciences; to Ms. Yolanda González of the Texas Southmost College Library Hunter Room for her invaluable help and suggestions; to Felipe Pérez, Marisa Gaytán, and José Luis Briones, Marisa Gaytán of the UT at Brownsville Computer Laboratory; to Dr. Leo Coronado, Abel González, and Connie Garza for use of the Education Department laser printer; and to my wife Vivian, my daughter Kathleen, and my son Sean.

"An Invitation"
An Early 20th Century View of the Valley

When the wintry winds are blowing,
and the earth is white with snow;
when the cold drops down to zero,
as it often does, you know;
it is then I long for Texas,
for that sunny southern land,
and a home among the beauties
of the Lower Rio Grande.

When the trying heat of summer
brings you worry, makes you fret,
when the beads of perspiration on
all your brow and face is wet,
then again I long for Texas,
knowing there I can be fanned
by the cooling sweet sea breezes
of the Lower Rio Grande.

So in summer, as in winter,
its the best place that I know,
so with me you're sure to like it,
and I ask of you to go
to that far famed state of Texas,
and there join that prosperous band,
who have found life's greatest blessings
in the Lower Rio Grande.

by James H. Cowan
Sales Manager of the Gulf Coast Security Company¹

1. Brian Robertson, "Poetry and Panorama Pushed Development During the Old Days," The Brownsville Herald Plus, 1 December 1990, 2.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Poem: "An Invitation" by James H. Cowen	forward
I. General Studies	1
A. An Historical Sketch of Fort Brown -- Bruce Aiken	3
B. A Brief History of Los Fresnos -- James A. Keillor	15
C. Olmito, Texas: A Town of Unfulfilled Dreams -- Tim Snyder	27
D. Water as a Magic Element in the Rio Grande Valley's History -- Brian Robertson	39
E. Brownsville's Sisters of the Incarnate Word -- Rosalinda Olivares-Sosa	41
II. Ethnic Studies	47
A. Outmarriage among Hispanics: Cameron County, 1870-1970 -- Randy Davidson	49
B. A History of Brownsville's Cuban Community -- Michael López	57
C. A Few Comments on the History of Blacks in Brownsville -- Cornelio Nouel	67
D. The Brownsville Jewish Community: From Generation to Generation -- Harriett Denise Joseph	<u>77</u>
E. A Historical Sketch of Brownsville's Franco- Americans -- Milo and Sean Kearney	85
F. A Historical Sketch of Brownsville's German- Americans -- Milo and Sean Kearney	103
III. The Period before 1846	129
A. Mr. A. E. Anderson, "The Father of Valley Archeology," and his "Indian Relic Collection" -- Antonio N. Zavaleta	131
B. The Leather Shields -- A Folktale told by Peter Gawenda	153
C. Comparación de Leyendas de México y la Frontera -- Graciela P. Rosenberg	157
D. Los Corridos Sudtejanos: Nuestra tradición milenaria -- Jorge Green Huie	163
E. Retablos for Patron Saints' Images -- Brian Robertson	167
F. Captain Thomas M. (Mexican) Thompson -- Jean L. Epperson	169
G. Antonio Canales and the Republic of the Rio Grande, 1839-1850 -- Roberto Mario Salmón	175
H. The Rio Grande Valley and South Texas in Handbooks for German Immigrants of the 19th Century (What Happened to Paradise?) -- Peter Gawenda	181

IV. The Late 19th Century	195
A. "The Great Western": The Heroine of Fort Brown in Fact and Fiction -- Joseph E. Chance	197
B. Memorandum Book -- Victor Egly	205
C. Civil War Era Letter -- Brian Robertson	217
D. The Brownsville Protest of January 1866 -- Roberto Mario Salmón	219
E. The Dishonest Servant -- A Folktale Told by Peter Gawenda	227
F. The Horse Thief -- A Folktale Told by Peter Gawenda	229
G. The River Machine -- A Folktale Told by Peter Gawenda	231
H. Brownsville's First Permanent Courthouse -- Brian Robertson	235
I. Brownsville's Wild West Atmosphere in 1894 -- Brian Robertson	237
V. The Early 20th Century	239
A. The St. Peter Motor Chapel -- Brian Robertson	241
B. Robert Runyon's Historical Photographs -- Brian Robertson	243
C. The Mexican Revolution and the Bandit Wars: The Lower Rio Grande Valley in 1915 -- William V. Wilkinson	245
D. The Bloody Bandit War of 1915 -- Chip Dameron	253
E. Dr. Dutro's Recollections of the Bandit Era -- Brian Robertson	257
F. Dr. McCain and the Smallpox Epidemic of 1915 -- Brian Robertson	259
G. Chattering Parrots at the 1916 State Fair -- Brian Robertson	263
H. Cotton and its Impact on Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley -- Sondra Shands	265
I. World War II Vigilance in Brownsville -- Brian Robertson	271
VI. The Late 20th Century	273
A. John Hunter: Local Patron of Learning -- Milo Kearney	275
B. Shelby J. Longoria: The Entrepreneurial Spirit on the Border -- Anthony Knopp	281
C. The Santa Elena Ranch Massacre (April 1989) -- Vivian Kearney	287
D. The Creation of The University of Texas at Brownsville -- Milo Kearney	291
E. Demographics of Spring Breakers Require a New Approach by South Padre Island Businesses -- Randall L. Florey and Leigh Ann Hanby	301
F. Tracking International Commerce in Brownsville -- Chris Clearman	307
Poem: "Christmas on the Rio Grande" by Bob Rose	325

Illustrations

	<u>Page</u>
Old Fort Brown--by Peter Gawenda	cover
Frontispiece: Melon Seller--by Peter Gawenda	
General Studies--by Milo Kearney	1
Map of Fort Brown ca. 1845/1846	Between 14 and 15
Map of Fort Brown April 25, 1846	Between 14 and 15
Map of Fort Brown, 1854	Between 14 and 15
Map of Fort Brown in 1867	Between 14 and 15
Map of Fort Brown ca. 1869	Between 14 and 15
Map of Fort Brown in 1881	Between 14 and 15
Plano de Matamoros y Brownsville, 1890	Between 14 and 15
Los Fresnos Library--by María Garza	Facing page 15
River Steamboat--by María Garza	Facing page 40
Nun with Children--by María Garza	Facing page 41
Ethnic Studies--by Milo Kearney	47
Mexican-Anglo Marriage--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 56
Arrest of Cuban expedition--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 57
Early Black Tribe on Rio Grande-by María Garza	76
Service in Temple Beth-El--by Vivian Kearney	Facing page 84
Local French pirates--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 85
Local slap-dance--by Mike Clark	128
The Period Before 1846--by Milo Kearney	129
Photograph of A .E. Anderson	152
Figure 1: Anderson Letter	Between 152 and 153
Figure 2: Anderson sites	Between 152 and 153
Figure 3: Sites near ship cannal	Between 152 and 153
Figure 4: Price Letter	Between 152 and 153
Figure 5: Price Letter	Between 152 and 153
Figure 6: Price Letter	Between 152 and 153
Figure 8: Lithic Artifacts	Between 152 and 153
Figure 10: Shell Pendants	Between 152 and 153
Figures 11 and 12: Lithic Artifacts	Between 152 and 153
Figures 13 and 14: Pottery	Between 152 and 153
Figures 15 and 16: Pottery	Between 152 and 153
Figures 17 and 18: Shell Ornaments	Between 152 and 153
Figures 19 and 20: Necklace and Implement	Between 152 and 153
Figures 21 and 22: Shell and Bone Artifacts	Between 152 and 153
Figures 23 and 24: Gorget and Pendants	Between 152 and 153
Figure 25: Projectile Points	Between 152 and 153
Archeological relicts--by Robert Angell	Between 152 and 153
A Leather Shield--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 153
Una Llorona--by Robert Angell	Facing page 162
Corrido Singers--by Cynthia Pierce	Facing page 163
Antonio Canales' Soldiers--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 180
German Immigrant Hunter--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 181
The Late 19th Century--by Milo Kearney	195
The Great Western--by Gary Hatcher	204
The Brownsville Protest--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 226
Brito and Scruffy--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 227
The Horse Thief--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 230
The River Machine--by Peter Gawenda	Facing page 231

Barber Shop--by Peter Gawenda	234
The Early 20th Century--by Milo Kearney	239
The St. Peter Motor Chapel--by Maria Garza	Facing page 242
Train in Brownsville--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 243
Local bandidos--by Cynthia Pierce	Facing page 252
Bandit shoot-out--by Maria Garza	Facing page 253
Horses taken to Mexico--by Peter Gawenda	256
Dr. McCain Treating Patients--by Cynthia Pierce	262
Cotton Currency--by Robert Angell	Facing page 270
Working in the cotton fields--by Bernardo Reyes	Facing page 271
The Late 20th Century--by Milo Kearney	273
Olmiteo home--by Letty Rendón Jamar	280
1974 PAU-B Faculty Meeting--by Milo Kearney	290
Brownsville artists--by Cynthia Pierce	300
Charro Days Dancer--by Letty Rendón Jamar	306
Endpiece: Brownsville Story Teller--by Peter Gawenda	326

GENERAL STUDIES



An Historical Sketch of Fort Brown

by

Bruce Aiken

THE WAR WITH MEXICO

Fort Brown, Texas, was founded by General Zachary Taylor on March 28, 1846. Although relatively small in size, this military establishment was destined to have a major impact on the history of the United States for the ensuing 100 years.

In 1845, when Texas was preparing to be admitted to statehood, disagreement developed between Mexico and the United States as to the rightful border between Mexico and Texas. The United States took the stand that the Rio Grande, the rightful border between these two countries along its upper sector, should continue to the mouth of the river at the Gulf of Mexico. Mexico, on the other hand, claimed the border followed the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande) downstream until it reached the area near the headwaters of the Nueces River. There they felt the border moved to that river, continuing to its mouth near Corpus Christi. Between these two rivers was a vast area of undeveloped territory (Bauer 1974).

Formal diplomatic negotiations were initiated to resolve the question; however, little or no progress was made. As time became critical, due to the rapidly approaching date for ratification of the statehood issue, the President of the United States ordered army troops into the disputed territory to reinforce the United States' position. The orders as received by General Taylor at his post in Louisiana were very general in nature. They specified that he was to take a position on the Rio Grande, the exact spot being left to his discretion.

Movement of Taylor's forces were scheduled to coincide with the ratification vote by Texas. Taylor elected to move his infantry, artillery, and support units by steamship out of the port of New Orleans to Corpus Christi. His dragoons were sent overland via San Antonio to join the main body on the Texas coast sometime later. Generally speaking, the movement took place without incident (Eisenhower 1985).

The area south of Corpus Christi was undeveloped, with little more than a few minor roads and trails. In order for Taylor to scout the area, and at the same time build up his supplies, he decided to winter at this seacoast location. This site proved to be most difficult for the officers and men. The terrain offered no protection from the harsh cold fronts that were an ongoing nuisance to the encampment. Firewood was both scant in quantity and poor in quality. Health problems were exceeded only by boredom and low morale (Eisenhower 1985).

As the soft breezes of spring drifted over the camp, rumors spread with fury throughout the command. The march to the Rio Grande was approaching and the troops could feel it. When the

orders were finally issued, both officers and men were ready.

During the winter, information brought back by the various scouting units resulted in a site immediately across from Matamoros being selected as their destination. After studying several alternatives, the old trade road paralleling the coastline some 10 miles or more inland was chosen (Eisenhower 1985).

The army set out in regimental serials, marching one day apart. Taylor left with the last regiment and moved at a speed that would allow him to overtake each serial and reach the lead regiment prior to reaching the Rio Grande. The march was uneventful until the lead regiment reached the Arroyo Colorado, a drainage stream located some twenty-odd miles north of Matamoros. Here they encountered Mexican troops, a group of irregulars known as rancheros. The commander of this group ordered Taylor to depart from what was called Mexican soil. Although Taylor was unsure of the total size of the force (the Mexicans deployed buglers throughout the brushland to create the image of a large army), Taylor called their bluff. He brought forward his artillery and placed his guns on the bank to cover his crossing. The Mexicans elected not to resist and withdrew. The crossing was made without resistance (Smith 1919).

As the army moved closer to the Rio Grande, Taylor and some of his dragoons left the column to inspect Point Isabel, the site selected as his supply base. He found it in order--the commander of the naval forces had arrived, and work was underway to establish the base. With this assurance, Taylor rejoined the main body and led the column to the river. Under the eyes of a large, curious group of Mexican citizens lining the right bank of the river, the army arrived with bands playing and flags flying.

The commander of the Mexican forces in Matamoros, General Mejia, let little time elapse before dispatching his first of many formal dispatches to Taylor, each one stating a firm order to withdraw from the Rio Grande. Taylor respectfully but firmly declined each letter. With every claim by Mexico to the territory occupied by the Americans, Taylor restated the United States' position that he was rightfully on U.S. soil. With the intensity of every Mexican letter growing, coupled with the positioning of Mexican artillery pieces on the bank of the Rio Grande pointed at Taylor's camp, it became inevitable that military action was at hand (Sides 1942).

The first response by Taylor was to place several of his heavier artillery guns in position to fire upon Matamoros. Following this, he ordered his chief engineering officer, Captain Joseph K.F. Mansfield, to construct a defensive field works. Mansfield designed a six-sided earthen bastion and set to work on its construction using the manpower of each regiment to accomplish the job. When completed, the fortress would be approximately 800 yards in circumference with a wall height of 8.5 to 9 feet. Adding to the effectiveness of the height was the depth of the adjoining ditch, the source of soil for the walls. The ditch was 20 feet in width and varied from 9 to 10 feet in depth, the average being 9.5 feet (Figures 2 and 3).

Prior to completion, five of the six walls had been finished when Captain Walker of the Texas Rangers rode into camp to notify

Taylor that General Mariano Arista, the new commander of the Mexican forces, had crossed the Rio Grande downstream from Taylor's position. Arista's direction of march was towards Taylor's supply base at Point Isabel. Taylor responded by marching his own army overnight to Point Isabel, thereby securing his position there. To defend the field work from any attack by the Mexican forces, Taylor left behind the 7th U.S. Infantry Regiment under the command of Major Jacob Brown. To augment the infantry, two companies of artillery, three medical doctors, and Captain Mansfield were added. Taylor's orders were to defend the fortress at all costs (Sides 1942).

At daybreak on May 3rd, the quiet was shattered by Mexican cannon fire. As the first shells found their mark within the walls of the fort, Major Brown responded with his own artillery fire--fire that proved most effective. One Mexican gun position was totally destroyed, others quickly repositioned themselves. The Mexican War was in full bloom.

Mexican infantry poured across the river, surrounding the fort. Men of the 7th U.S. Infantry quickly went to work to complete the unfinished wall under artillery and rifle fire. Although the wall was completed and the defenders prevailed, Major Brown sustained a mortal wound on May 6th. While inspecting the position of his men, an artillery shell struck him in the leg. Although he received immediate medical attention, he died three days later (Sides 1942).

Taylor, having secured his supply base, moved to relieve his weary defenders. En route, he encountered Arista, defeating him at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. The final encounter resulted in a disorganized retreat by the Mexican forces into Matamoros. Taylor's victorious arrival at the fort was marred by the news of Brown's death. Taylor ordered the fort to be named in Brown's honor (formerly it had been recognized both as Fort Texas and Fort Taylor).

As the Mexican War developed, Fort Brown's role took on a new complexion. Taylor moved his main force into Mexico, first occupying Matamoros to await reinforcements and supplies before moving upstream to Camargo on the Rio Alamo. Because the Rio Grande would be used by river streamers to supply Taylor, Fort Brown became a strongpoint on this vital supply line. Captain Lowd, a veteran of the cannonade, was assigned as post commander in charge of this task (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

After two years of fighting, the Mexican War ended. The Treaty of Guadalupe was drawn up and signed by both nations. This document contained two provisions that would have significant bearing later during the Civil War. The first provision referred to the United States' responsibility in containing the movement of marauding Indians from Texas into Mexico, a provision that would result in the establishment of permanent forts in Texas, including Fort Brown. The second provision was the designation of the Rio Grande as an international waterway and the recognition of Mexico's right to use the river for transportation (Pierce 1917).

In 1848, the new Fort Brown was laid out approximately one-half mile upstream from the original bastion. Material used to construct the new buildings came from lumber formerly used for storehouses at the Point Isabel supply base (this base had been given the name Fort Polk by General Taylor). Although these quarters were rather roughly constructed, visitors to the post wrote of the lovely flower-lined picket fences and vine-draped porches of the officer's quarters (Chatfield 1893).

The configuration of the new post followed the river bank to the fence that bordered the reservation and the newly founded town of Brownsville. Adjacent to the wall near the river was the post headquarters building, the hospital, the quartermaster office, the guard house, and the post sutler store. A small parade ground was surrounded on the east by officer quarters, barracks on the south, and supply buildings and a cannon park on the west. In the center of the parade ground was the flag pole, surrounded by the graves of several "heroes of the Mexican War," including that of Major Brown. Laundresses, stables, and kitchens were placed behind the barracks. Several hundred yards off-post to the northeast was the magazine (Figure 4).

In 1854 and again in 1856, the Army Inspector General visited Fort Brown. The 1854 report criticized the use of wood for the construction of buildings when brick could be acquired locally for \$2.00 per thousand. The 1856 inspector was Mansfield, the builder of the original fort in 1846 and inspector general of all of the western forts.

Activity at the post during the 1850s made life difficult. Long periods of routine garrison life were broken by occasional mounted patrols into the surrounding brushland in search of cattle thieves or bandits creating havoc in the newly settled area. Boredom resulted in a high incidence of alcoholism--a condition that included one of the post commanders and resulted in his being relieved from duty (Robert E. Lee and George Thomas both sat on his court martial). Outbreaks of fever and the plague took a heavy toll in lives. In the late summer and early fall of 1853, almost every officer of the command died from disease. Hygiene practices were lax. Drinking water was drawn from the muddy Rio Grande (a river also used upstream to dispose of both human and animal waste). The water was allowed to settle long enough for the mud to sink to the bottom before being consumed. Other inappropriate practices included use of spoiled bacon and vermin-infested flour stored in the commissary warehouses (Post Return, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

In the late 1850s, consideration was given to closing the post. There being no Indian activity in the area, little need was seen for continued use of the facility. Troops were withdrawn, leaving the area without military protection. Juan Cortina, known locally as either a Robin Hood hero or a cold-blooded cut-throat, took advantage of the situation and attacked the town. He had never reconciled himself to the territory becoming a part of the United States and resented the action of several of the new residents against Mexicans. After killing several people and pillaging the town, he left. Terror struck the area, and

requests were initiated to reactivate the fort. Troops were sent back and remained until the Civil War (Chatfield 1983).

THE CIVIL WAR

In 1861, Texas voted to become part of the Confederate States of America. Following the vote, United States troops were ordered to leave the state. The commander of the Department of Texas complied, and a withdrawal ensued. Benjamin Hill, commander of Fort Brown, was joined by troops from Fort Ringgold 100 miles upriver and together they boarded a steamer at Brazos Island. They then moved to new stations in the Union. When they departed, Confederate troops promptly occupied Fort Brown (Figure 5). Many of the local citizens who remained sympathetic to the United States fled to Matamoros with their belongings. Little importance was given to the area other than guarding against activity from Mexico or from the few U.S. sympathizers. Neither option posed a threat (Hunter 1960).

In order for the confederacy to finance the war, it was necessary to export cotton to European markets. In turn, arms and other vital war materials were imported into the southern states. When the United States Navy blockaded the southern ports, the lifeline was cut. The few blockade runners could neither move any appreciable quantity of cotton out or supplies in. Another option needed to be found. It was here that the Treaty of Guadalupe came to the aid of the Confederacy. The Confederates moved their cotton overland across Texas to Brownsville, where it was taken across the Rio Grande into Matamoros. It was again moved by oxcart to Bagdad, a small settlement at the mouth of the river, where it was loaded upon waiting European steamers (Bagdad grew to a sizeable town at the peak of this Civil War trade before being destroyed by the hurricane of 1867). Because the cotton was no longer Confederate, the blockading U.S. gunboats could do little more than watch the activity (Hunter 1960).

In order to stop this flow of cotton out of the Confederacy, as well as the corresponding importation of wargoods, it was necessary for the Union to take alternative action. The cotton trains would have to be intercepted while moving on their overland route through Texas. General Banks landed a part of his Army corps on Brazos Island with the objective of occupying Brownsville. Upon learning of the landing, and having been given inflated figures as to the size of the force, Confederate General Bee ordered Fort Brown and all Confederate cotton awaiting shipment to Matamoros, said to be 10,000 bales, to be put to the torch. Upon seeing this turmoil, civilians fled to Matamoros. The fire spread to many of the buildings in Brownsville. When the magazine at Fort Brown exploded, a large wooden beam from the roof was hurled across the river and through the Mexican custom house. Lawless civilians as well as fleeing Confederate soldiers looted homes and buildings. All order was gone, and Brownsville was fast becoming a community of ruin (Hunter 1960).

The Union troops arrived during the first week in 1863.

Finding no government buildings standing on the post, it was necessary to erect tents for living accommodations. The officer tents included wooden floors while the enlisted men had to make do with what mother earth provided (Tilley 1963).

An effort was made to reconstruct some of the destroyed buildings. A catholic order of priests had finished building the Immaculate Conception Church and had a store of several thousand bricks on hand for other projects. Upon learning of this, the Union troops promptly took possession. Although the Union troops occupied Fort Brown from November 1863 to July 1864, only a few structures were fabricated. Records are scant as to actual construction.

The role of the Union troops was to stop the movement of Confederate cotton trains. Using Fort Brown as their base, they sent out patrols to locate and intercept these trains. Aware of the Union activity, the Confederates merely altered the trade route upriver, crossing the cotton into Mexico, where it was safe. At one time, they were crossing as far north as Eagle Pass. The more distant the crossing from Fort Brown, the harder it became for the Union troops to accomplish their mission. With this extended supply line, coupled with the hit-and-run tactics of Confederate troops under Colonel John S. "Rip" Ford, the Union troops soon realized the difficulty of continuing this program. Ford attacked a Union patrol at Las Rucias Ranch, capturing men and arms and causing others to flee into Mexico for safe haven. Anticipating a major battle for the possession of Brownsville, the Union troops elected to withdraw their forces and move to Brazos Island. A notation in the diary of Lieutenant McIntyre at the time of the Union troops' withdrawal stated that several thousand bricks on loan from the Oblate fathers were returned this date (Tilley 1963).

Fort Brown was again in the hands of the Confederates. With each change of occupancy, civilians fled to Matamoros. By this time, Brownsville was virtually a ghost town. Having no financial or material resources to build or make repairs, the Confederates were compelled to make do with the situation as they found it.

THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Civil War ended in 1865. There is some question as to whether this was known in May 1865 when Colonel Ford attacked a Union troop movement en route from Brazos to Brownsville. The end result was that the Union troops retreated to Brazos Island and the Confederates were able to move several thousand bales of cotton into Mexico, thus keeping it out of the hands of the Union troops. This engagement at Palmito Ranch is recognized as the last battle of the Civil War.

Ford met with Union representatives and Brownsville was subsequently occupied by a large number of troops under the command of General Brown. Civilian buildings and homes were used by the occupation troops for billets and storage. Most of the Brownsville residents elected to stay in Matamoros until they determined their status with the United States government.

Concurrently, the United States was enforcing the Monroe Doctrine and was making this known to Maximilian's government in Mexico. General Phillip Sheridan was placed in command of the Rio Grande District and was reinforced by thousands of troops as a show of force. Although many of these soldiers were stationed on Brazos Island, many were placed in Brownsville with Fort Brown being used in a minor role (Hunter 1960).

Upon resolution of the Mexican question, many of the soldiers were withdrawn from Brownsville. Recognizing the border as an area in need of a military presence, a larger than usual force was left in place. As civilians returned to Brownsville, most receiving pardons from the occupation government, it became necessary for the military to move their activities into the military reservation at Fort Brown. By 1867, the quartermaster department initiated a building program to restore the fort. The program was barely underway when the most destructive hurricane in recorded history struck the area (Figure 6). The October storm not only levelled all of the military work underway at the post, but caused major damage to Brownsville and Matamoros. In addition, standing water following the storm resulted in health problems. Not until the arrival of winter and a receding of the stagnant water did problems with illness and death subside (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906; Medical Records, Fort Brown 1868-1906).

By 1868, another effort was made to rebuild Fort Brown. This time, an appropriation of \$150,000 was granted, and Captain Alonzo Wainwright of the Quartermaster Corps was assigned the task of supervising the program. He arrived at Fort Brown on March 8, 1868 and began his work, designing an enlarged configuration covering 358 acres. Anticipating that a fairly large force would garrison the post, Wainwright laid it out in three posts: infantry, cavalry, and artillery (Figure 7). Each post would utilize the support services of the quartermaster and medical branches of the overall reservation (Sides 1942).

The first buildings to be built were the seven two-story wooden officers quarters for the infantry post, the post nearest the townsite. This was followed by four two-story wooden infantry barracks across the parade field from officers' row. At the west end of the parade field on the riverbank was constructed a large brick headquarters building. A beautiful brick hospital was erected just east of the parade field in line with officers' row. Wainwright modified a standard hospital drawing plan, designing an overhang with Moorish arches and allowing a breeze-way between the two hospital wards. This upgraded the utility of the building to fit the climate of the area. The building was said to be the most beautiful hospital in the entire army (Post Medical Records, Fort Brown 1868-1906).

Immediately east of the infantry post was constructed a cavalry post--the smallest of the three. Two brick officer homes were built on the bank of the lagoon. On the eastern end of the cavalry post drill field was located a one-story brick barracks with the stables located across the drill field.

Artillery post occupied the easternmost section of the reservation. Similar in layout to the cavalry post, it consisted

of three two-story brick officer homes and a barracks capable of billeting two companies. The stable area was also double that of the cavalry post.

On a small island surrounded by the lagoon was situated the Fort Brown National Cemetery. Interred here were bodies from the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the many fever epidemics that plagued the fort. Many of the bodies were moved in from small outlying cemeteries. Almost half the graves were unmarked, a result of poor maintenance in earlier years (Post Medical Records, Fort Brown 1868-1906).

As Wainwright's project neared completion, funds were exhausted. In order to finish the work, military personnel were used. Wainwright was transferred to another station and work terminated. For all practical purposes, the post was ready for occupancy. (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

During the remainder of the nineteenth century, life at the post was somewhat like the pre-Civil War era, long periods of garrison life broken by active patrols in search of cattle thieves. Epidemics of yellow fever and other diseases were prevalent, and at one time Fort Brown was given the dubious title, "the most unhealthy army post in the entire army." The isolation of the post from what was otherwise considered civilization resulted in heavy drinking among officers and men. The post surgeon's monthly report always included entries of alcohol-related maladies. One such report blamed the post pay-day problem upon the "abominable stuff being sold as whiskey by the citizens of Brownsville." Upon recommendation of the post surgeon, an order was issued by the post commander allowing two drinks of whiskey to be sold to enlisted men each day by the post sutler. Within a month, this order was countered--many alcohol-prone men were trading money for the two-drink allowance of nondrinkers (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

Immediately following the Civil War, many of the post commanders were officers who had formerly served at Fort Brown in their early years. General Henry B. Clitz, the youngest officer in the 7th Infantry during the cannonade in 1846, became post commander. Another commander was Abner Doubleday. Doubleday served several tours of duty at the post prior to the Civil War. He was the officer who aimed the first cannon to return fire against the Confederates from Fort Sumpter, but the most fame enjoyed by Doubleday was his being the "father of baseball." His final command prior to retirements was at Fort Brown (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

Randall MacKenzie, the famed Indian fighter of the 4th U.S. Cavalry, was assigned at Fort Brown in the infantry prior to his being given the cavalry regiment. Records reflect many brief tours of duty at the post during the Indian fighting years (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

Black soldiers were among the first occupation troops. In later years, as these infantry units were transferred to other posts, companies from the 9th and 10th Cavalry were assigned to Fort Brown. These "Buffalo Soldiers" were among the most professional to serve in this outpost region. (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

As the turn of the century neared, drills and ceremonies became the principal duty at the fort. Social life became intertwined with that of the city. Almost every civic event involved the army and vice-versa. With the entry of the United States into the Spanish American War, U.S. troops were withdrawn and were replaced temporarily by Texas militiamen (Figure 8) (Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

As U.S. troops were freed from training or active duty in Cuba, militiamen were replaced by U.S. soldiers. In 1906, an all-white battalion of infantry soldiers was replaced by an all-black battalion from the 25th Infantry. The 25th had been on duty in the Indian country of Nebraska and vicinity. News of the intended transfer was met with opposition by the citizens of Brownsville. Rumors enlarged the problem; stories of rape and drunken orgies fueled the fires of resentment. By the time the soldiers arrived, the stage was set for problems between the army and the citizens.

Friction started almost immediately. Soldiers on leave from the post were cursed, jostled on sidewalks, and sometimes knocked to the street. They were denied access to saloons that had formerly done brisk business with the white soldiers. Tensions became acute and reached the boiling point. A small group made its way from the wall separating the fort from the town towards the commercial district. Shots were fired into several residences bordering the fort. The group reached a saloon where they killed the saloon keeper. They then encountered the town constable, shot him in the hand, and killed his horse. As they returned towards the post, they fired shots into the prestigious Miller Hotel. The encounter took little more than 10 minutes, but the reaction was profound (Congressional Records, Investigation of Fort Brown).

Civilians as well as law enforcement officers quickly armed themselves. The mayor made a personal call to the post commander demanding an investigation. The Governor of Texas ordered Texas Rangers into the case. Tension was at a point that the army ordered the soldiers transferred from Fort Brown--a move that was made over the objection of local authorities who saw it as a circumvention of the investigative process. Congress entered the picture with hearings, input being provided by both army and civilian personnel. The end result was a loss by both groups; the enlisted men were discharged without honor and the city lost its fort. The post was deactivated and turned over to the Department of the Interior (Congressional Records, Investigation of Fort Brown; Post Returns, Fort Brown 1846-1906).

Between 1906 and the time the fort was reactivated during the Mexican Border Campaign, livestock roamed the reservation. Conditions of the time were well described by poet and historian Daisy Glick Stevenson in her book, A Trail to Mañana, where she commented,

"We saw Fort Brown that had been built during [sic]

the Civil War. It was not occupied at the time [1909], the cavalry soldiers [sic] having been stationed elsewhere. We roamed through the empty buildings that stood untouched by vandals. The hospital building was still standing. We passed through the holstery and the kitchen where we saw piles of heavy dishes" [Stevenson 1958].

In 1910, one of the two-story wooden infantry barracks burned to the ground. The cause of the blaze was never determined. Other buildings were deteriorating rapidly. In an economy move, the Fort Brown National Cemetery was decommissioned. The bodies were exhumed and moved to the National Cemetery at Pineville, Louisiana (Pierce 1917).

In Mexico, revolution was underway. Francisco Madero, in opposition to Porfirio Diaz, openly proclaimed, "Mexico for Mexicans." The year 1910 saw the Federals and Madero's army meet in military action.

The ensuing year saw opposition spread. On May 25, 1911, Porfirio Diaz, who had led the Mexicans for 31 years, resigned as president. The fight shifted among revolutionary leaders as to who would take over the Mexican rule. On February 16, 1913, the army garrison in Matamoros renounced its allegiance to Madero, shifting to General Félix Díaz, a partisan of Porfirio Diaz. Action in the border city heated up. The American Consul in that city appealed for assistance, stating that forces in Matamoros were initiating a campaign of pillage. Texas Governor Oscar B. Colquitt responded by ordering several state militia companies of cavalry to Brownsville. At the same time, one company of the 14th U.S. Cavalry joined the militiamen. Augmenting this force were nine Texas Rangers. Together, they stood as a guard against any hostile action Mexican forces might take toward stealing or destroying American property. The militia was recalled five months later.

On October 18, 1915, a railroad passenger train en route to Brownsville was derailed six miles north of town. The 3rd U.S. Cavalry, now stationed at Fort Brown, responded with patrols throughout the area. The threat against U.S. interests became so strong, particularly following Francisco "Pancho" Villa's raid into Columbus, New Mexico, that President Woodrow Wilson federalized the National Guard, sending units from Virginia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, as well as Texas, to join the U.S. Army units under the command of General James A. Parker. Troops were deployed from south of Brownsville upriver to Arroyo del Tigre near Rio Grande City. The territory was an armed camp, and Fort Brown was an active military facility (Pierce 1917).

Again the militiamen were released from federal duty after getting the message to various forces in Mexico that the United States would not tolerate hostile actions against any of its citizens. One of the lessons learned during the mobilization period was the complexity of logistics in supporting large numbers of troops deployed over a vast territory. This lesson was quickly applied as the United States neared entry into World War

I (Pierce 1917).

Fort Brown was used both as a training facility and a fortified stronghold on the Mexican border. German activity in Mexico was a serious concern to the United States. As personnel was added to the strength of the garrison, many of the buildings were assigned new roles. The old post hospital was redesigned as a quartermaster office complex--a new hospital complex, made of temporary wooden buildings, was built one-half mile northeast of the post. Many private business buildings were requisitioned for storage of food and supplies. The three remaining post-Civil War infantry barracks were razed and replaced by temporary wooden buildings. Additional stables and corrals were built to accommodate the greatly increased number of horses and mules assigned to the post.

Requests for appropriations to upgrade Fort Brown moved slowly. Hostilities in Europe had ended by the time funds were made available for renovation of the post. Most of the permanent construction occurred during 1919. Additional officers' quarters were added. The seven officer homes built in 1868 were altered from multiple to single family dwellings. Homes for noncommissioned officers were built in the area between the lagoon and the Rio Grande. An officers' club, office buildings, stable guard buildings, and other structures were completed during the project. Many of these buildings are still in use today by Texas Southmost College (Post Engineers Record, Fort Brown).

With the end of World War I and a change in attitudes towards the need for military forces, Fort Brown fell to hard times. Not only was money redirected away from the army, but many of the professional officers and noncommissioned officers were required to accept lower ranks to remain in active service. Aggravating the situation was the Great Depression. By 1933, when the strongest hurricane since 1867 hit the area, Fort Brown was almost doomed. The tremendous destruction to the fort was such that it was first decided to deactivate the post rather than rebuild it. The newer officer homes facing the lagoon suffered total destruction. The radio towers fell, warehouses buildings were deroofed, only a few structures were spared. It is interesting that the oldest officer homes suffered the least damage. It was only through action of leading citizens of Brownsville and Congressman Milton West that the War Department changed its mind, and Fort Brown remained on the active list of military posts. Funds were made available and new construction was initiated to replace or repair damaged structures.

The peacetime years were routine garrison life. Polo games, boxing matches, and social activities became the general activities of the post. The post was the home for the 12th Cavalry (regimental headquarters and one squadron were assigned there; the remaining units were housed at Fort Ringgold in Rio Grande City). Horses were exercised daily. Marksmanship was practiced and an occasional field exercise was held. After war broke out in Europe, the army again engaged in maneuvers and the 12th Cavalry took part. Most of these maneuvers were held in Louisiana. Each time the post was evacuated, a strong economic impact was felt in the community, relieved only when the troops returned

from their training exercises.

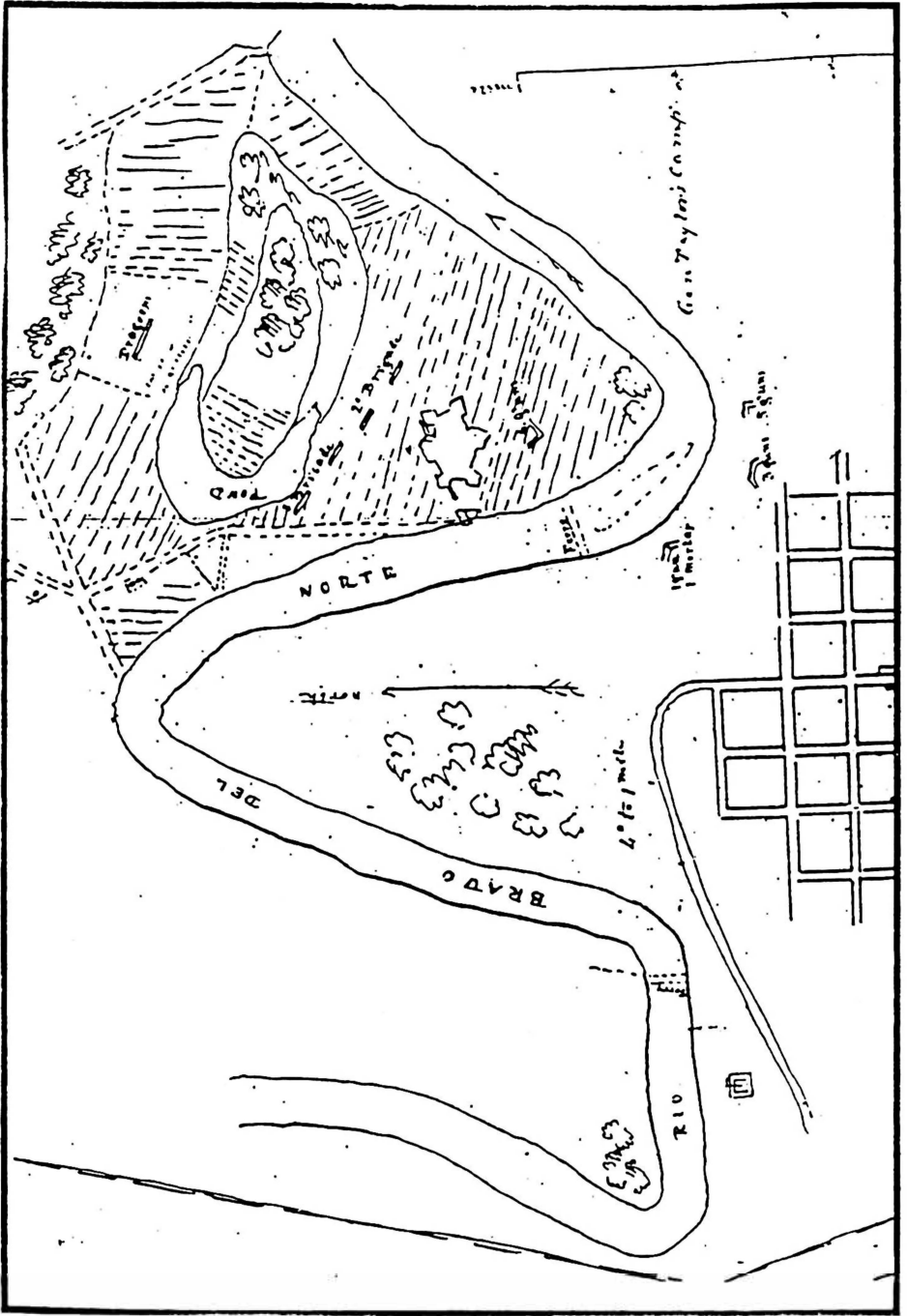
With the conscription act of 1940, requiring one year of service for all draftees, several buildings were added to Fort Brown. A chapel, a theater, several barracks, and many smaller structures were added. As National Guard units were mobilized, many changes in unit assignments were made. The 12th Cavalry was transferred to Fort Bliss, and the 124th Cavalry, Texas National Guard, was sent to Fort Brown. This National Guard was not only the last command to serve the post, but was the last cavalry regiment to dismount (give up their horses) in the entire army. Following movement of the 124th Cavalry to Burma, only a handful of quartermaster and Army Air Force soldiers remained. These soldiers supported the Army Air Force Base at the municipal airport.

Following deactivation of Fort Brown, all property was transferred to the War Assets Administration. The last soldiers to leave the fort were one captain, one sergeant, and two privates who were ground keepers. By 1948, the former military facility that had served the nation so honorably for a century had become part of the city of Brownsville, or the campus of Texas Southmost College.¹

Brownsville Historical Society

Endnote

1. Reprinted with the permission of The Archeological Research Laboratories, Texas A & M University, from Archeological Investigations at Fort Brown (41CF96) Cameron County, Texas (1990).



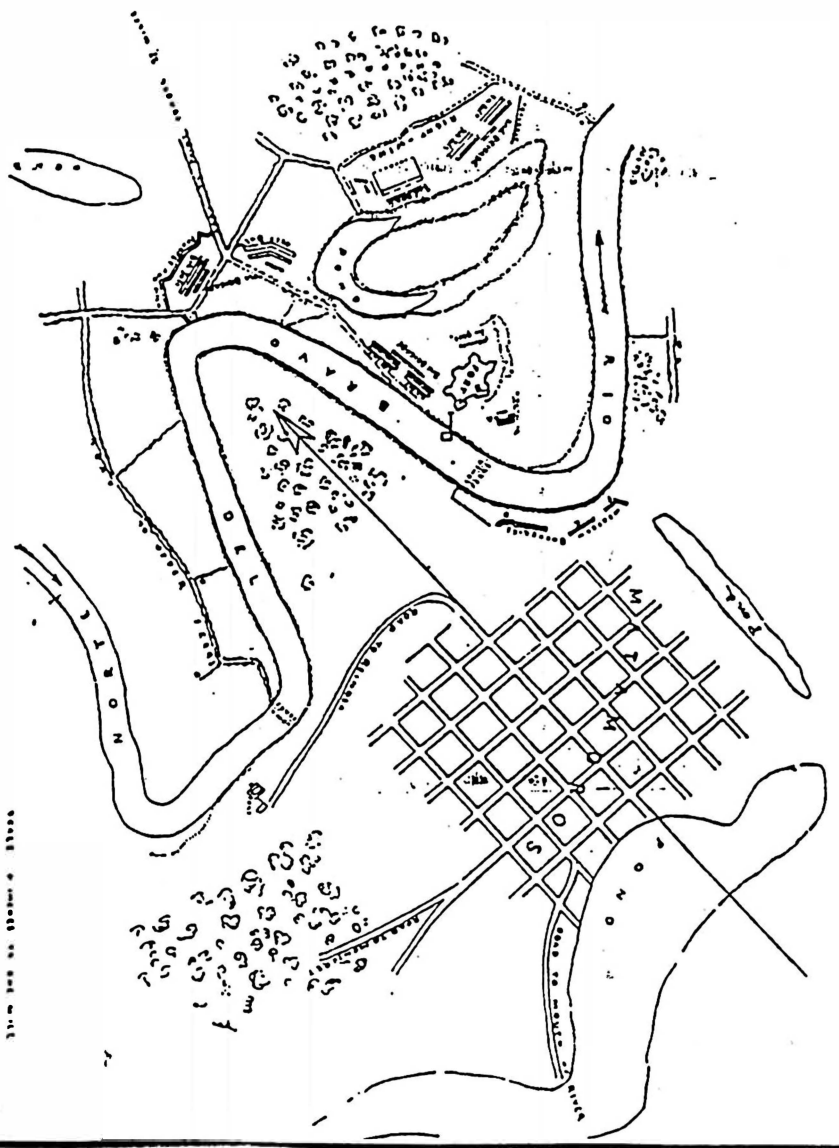
Lt. L.C. Mcig's drawing of Fort Brown ca. 1845/1846.

*Sketch showing the
position of the
Camp of Occupation
on the left bank of the Rio Grande
opposite Matamoros.*

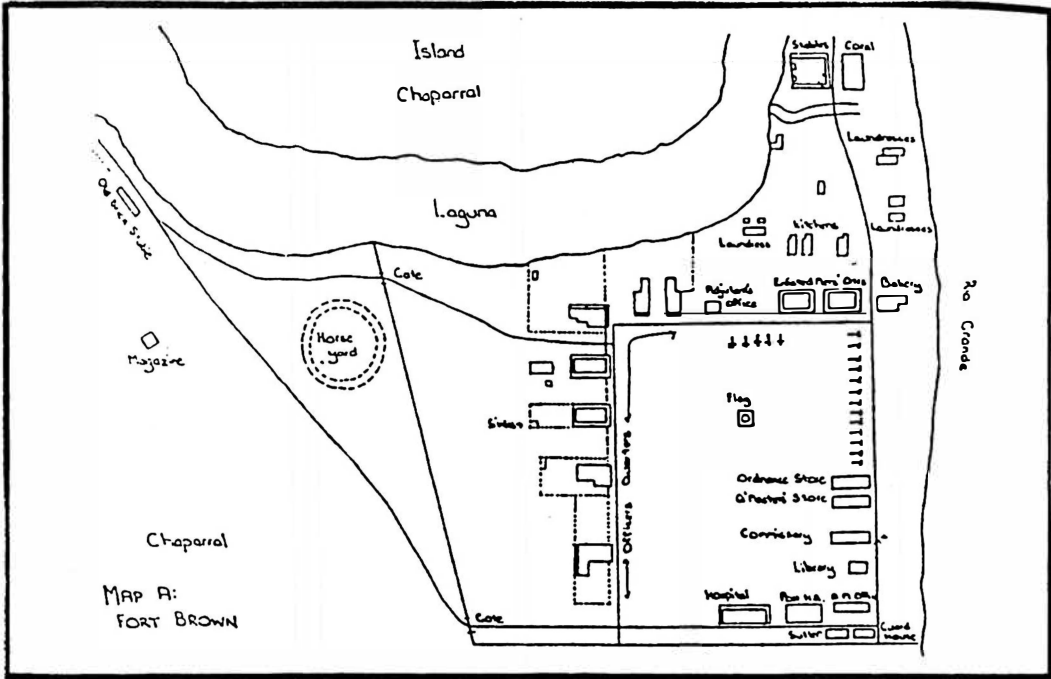
April 21st 1846.

- A. BAKER'S BATTERY
- B. BROWN'S BATTERY
- C. CROOK'S BATTERY
- D. CROOK'S BATTERY
- E. CROOK'S BATTERY
- F. CROOK'S BATTERY
- G. CROOK'S BATTERY
- H. CROOK'S BATTERY
- I. CROOK'S BATTERY
- J. CROOK'S BATTERY
- K. CROOK'S BATTERY
- L. CROOK'S BATTERY
- M. CROOK'S BATTERY
- N. CROOK'S BATTERY
- O. CROOK'S BATTERY
- P. CROOK'S BATTERY
- Q. CROOK'S BATTERY
- R. CROOK'S BATTERY
- S. CROOK'S BATTERY
- T. CROOK'S BATTERY
- U. CROOK'S BATTERY
- V. CROOK'S BATTERY
- W. CROOK'S BATTERY
- X. CROOK'S BATTERY
- Y. CROOK'S BATTERY
- Z. CROOK'S BATTERY

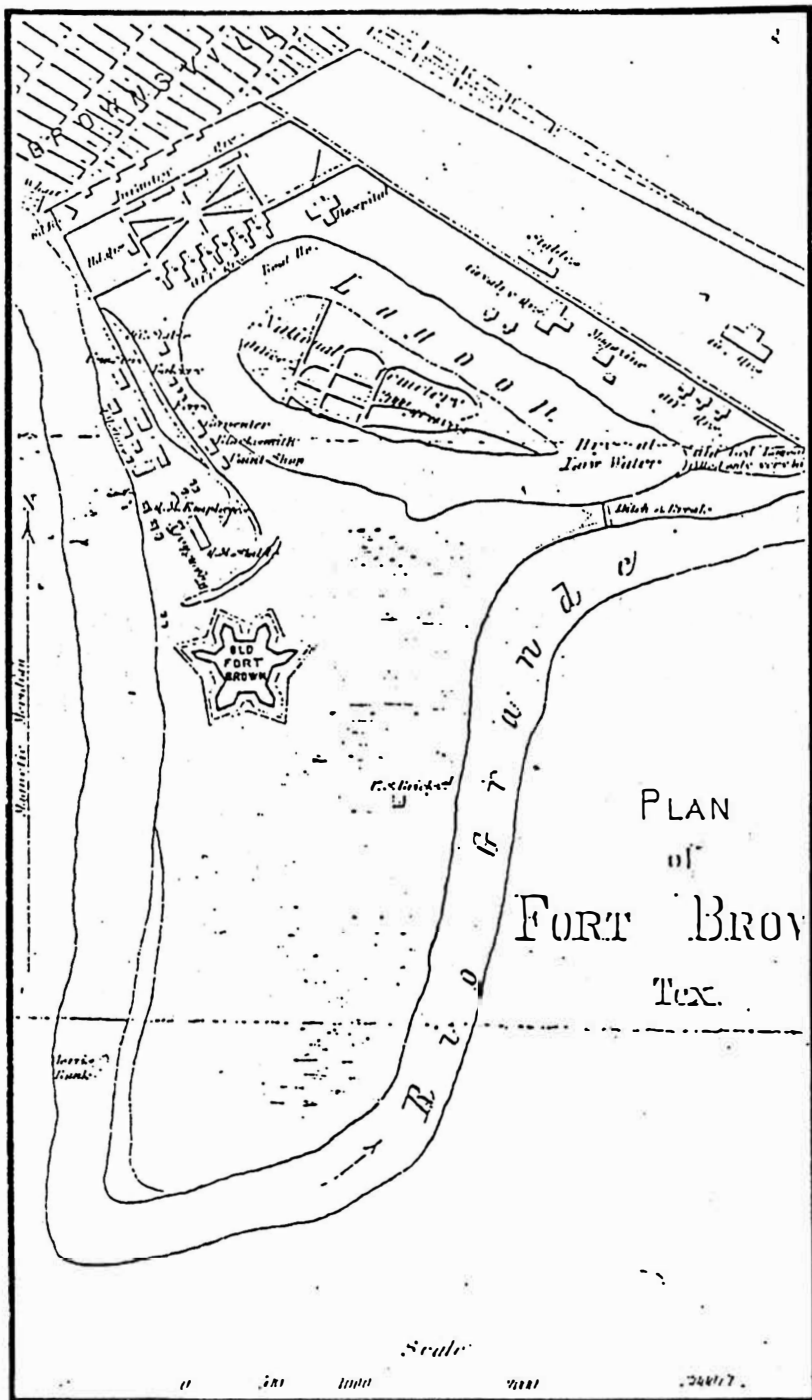
*Sketch for Major Mendenhall
of the 1st Cavalry Regt
of the Army of the Republic*



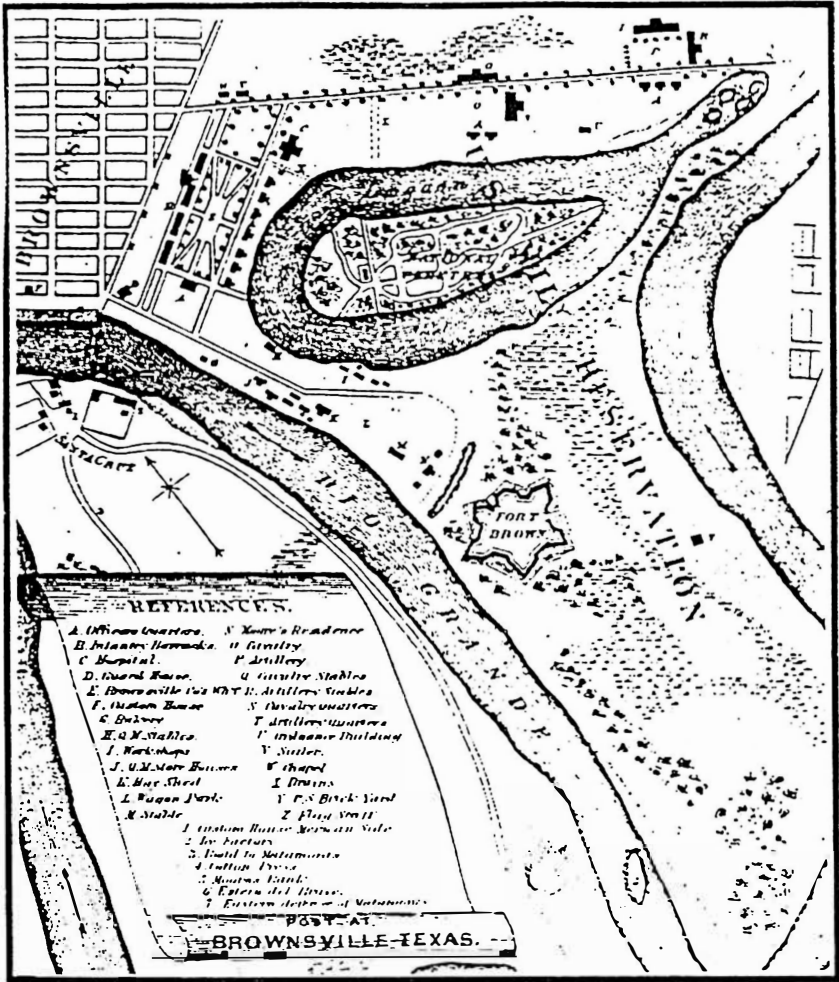
Map of Fort Brown dated April 25, 1846 (no reference).



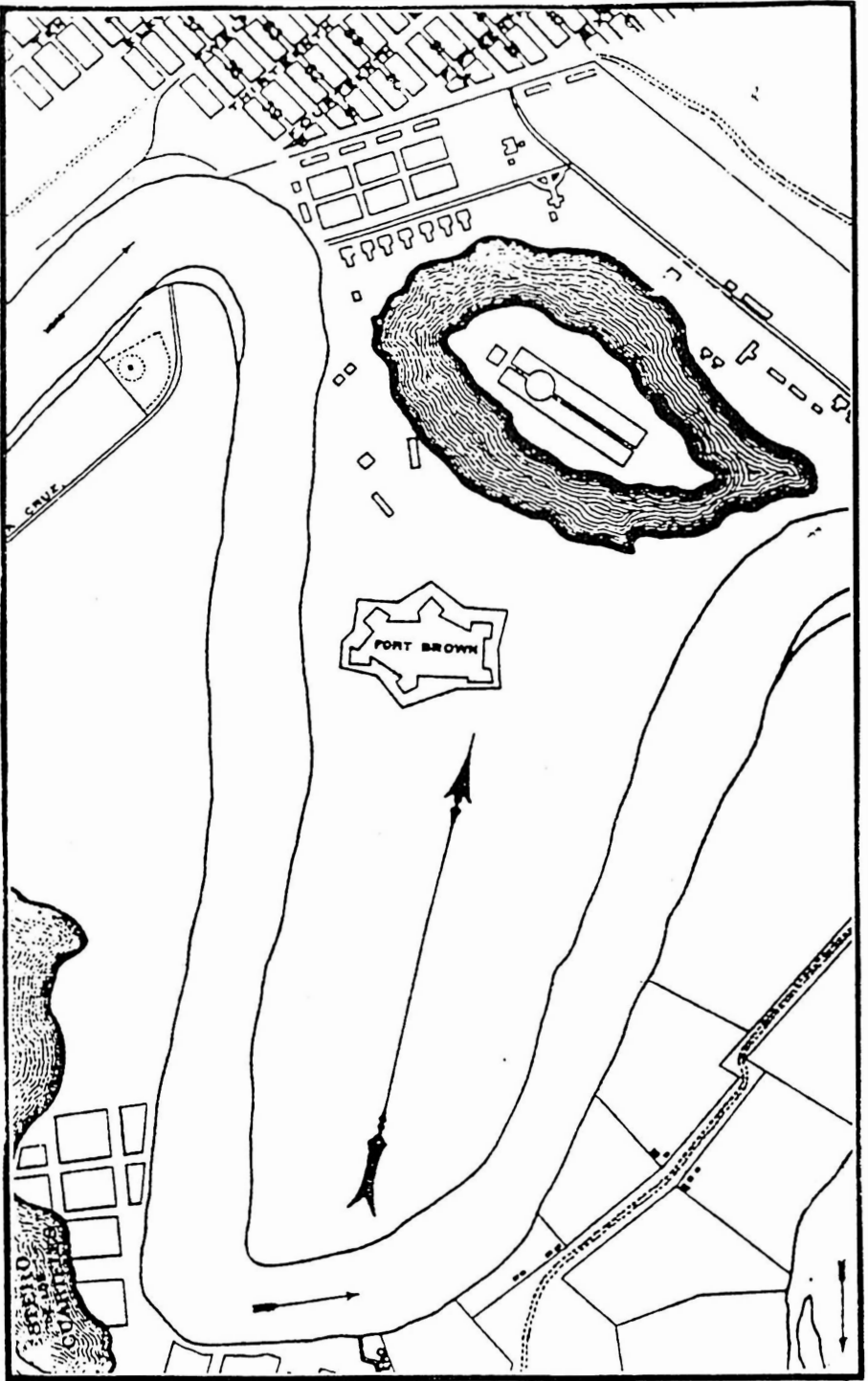
Map of Freeman's inspection of Fort Brown, dated 1854.



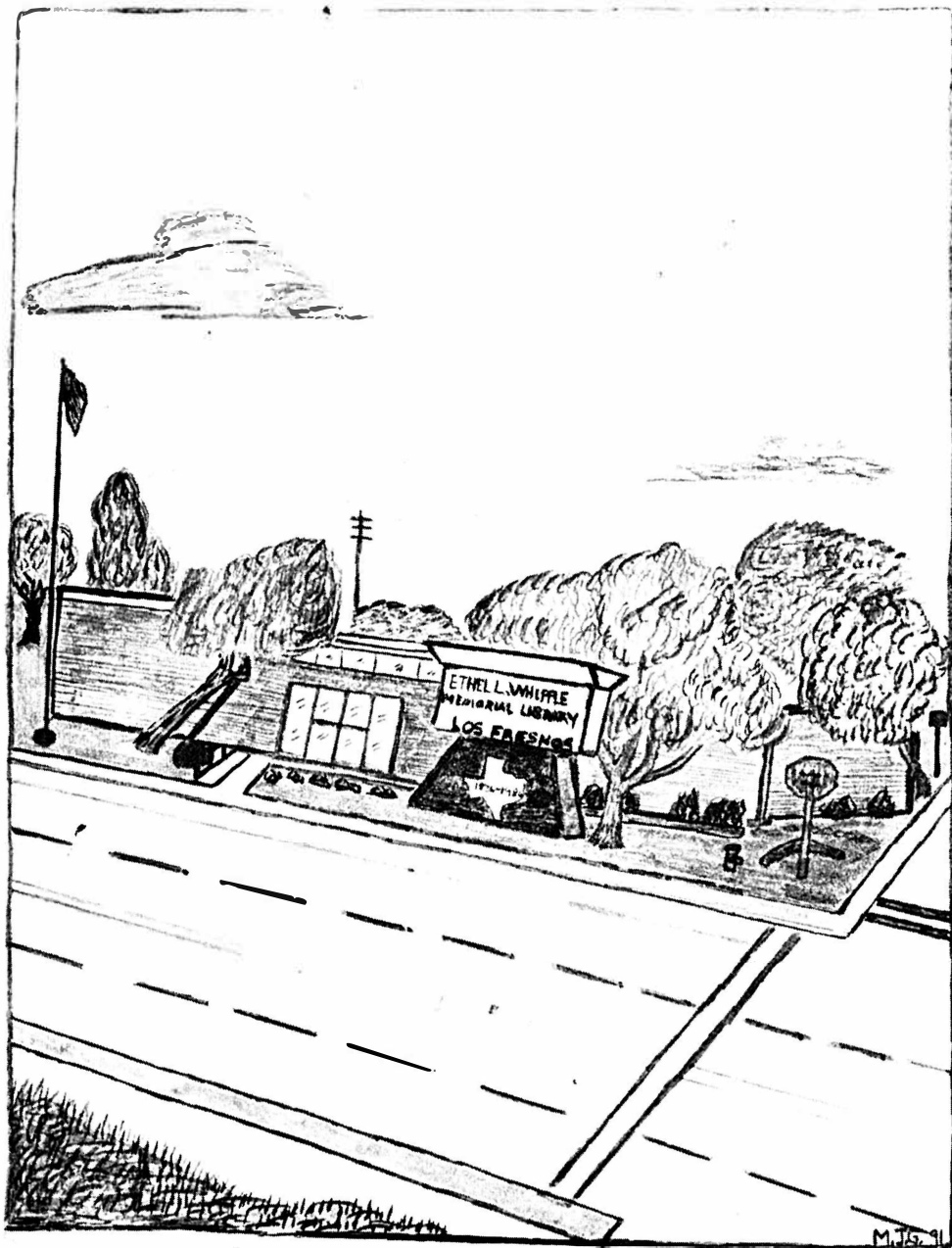
Wainwright's plan of Fort Brown ca. 1859.



Map of Fort Brown in 1861 (Toulouse and Toulouse 1936).



Plano de Matamoros y Brownsville, 1890 (Chatfield 1893).



A Brief History of Los Fresnos

by

James A. Keillor

Los Fresnos, a small community located in Cameron County approximately twelve miles north of Brownsville, was one of the last unsettled frontiers of the Rio Grande Valley. It was "almost the last tract of land to be opened under the 'land company' system. The upper Valley had been quite well cleared by northern farmers by 1915 when the first settlers came to Los Fresnos".¹ The town grew rapidly from its beginning until the Great Depression and again during the decade of the 1940's but has always maintained a small town atmosphere.

It is not clear how Los Fresnos received its name as several versions may be found. According to one account, it was named after the Rancho Los Fresnos established by Mexican ranchers as early as 1771.² Another account tells us the proposed town was initially named Moseville by Lon C. Hill, Sr., naming it after his son, Lon C. (Mose) Hill, Jr., but the name was subsequently changed to Los Fresnos.³ However, Harry H. Whipple, an early settler who moved to Los Fresnos in the summer of 1915, states that it was already called Los Fresnos when he arrived.⁴ A third account gives the credit directly to Hill, Sr. for the eventual name. "As he rode through the 'senderos' (winding lanes)" viewing and planning for the future development of this beautiful country, he saw many ash trees scattered in the woods and on the banks of the 'resacas'. Because of this he began calling the locality Los Fresnos - Spanish for "Ash trees."⁵ To help settle the issue one might have to look to the account offered by Juanity Zumwalt Steer, a member of the first family to settle in the new town, having arrived in April of 1915. She states, "One afternoon I remember my mother and Mose Hill talking about giving our place a name. They decided on the name of Los Fresnos...."⁶

Many individuals were responsible for the development of the townsite. In 1909, Hill, Sr. purchased several thousand acres within the Espiritu Santo Grant including shares or portions of shares 12, 20, and 22. He subsequently "organized the Rio Grande Canal Company in 1912. This company then sold 9778.94 acres to the Los Fresnos Land and Irrigation Company for development. The principal parties of the Los Fresnos Land and Irrigation Company were J.B. Scott, Juan Fernandez, and S.C. Morton."⁷ Whipple remembers the "Scott-Fernandez" land company owned the land where the original townsite of twenty acres was created; however, "they were only the owners of the land" and another company was responsible for the promotion of the town, building the school house, and arranging the train excursions.⁸

Important to the creation of the town were the efforts of Mose Hill. In 1913 Mose Hill cleared the land for the dirt road from Barreda.⁹ Barreda was that area where present day Highway 100 and Expressway 77 intersect, and the road surveyed by Mose Hill later became Highway 100. It was at the intersection of the

road from Barreda and Old Alice Road that the little townsite was created and later named Los Fresnos.

The townsite was initially laid out on a twenty-acre tract, being a narrow strip of land that extended from the north side of the Barreda road to the resaca approximately 2,000 feet to the north, adjacent to and on the east side of Old Alice Road.¹⁰ However, the first two original homes were built on the southeast and southwest corners of the intersection of Barreda and Old Alice roads next to the canal under construction. These two homes and some acreage were purchased by John Zumwalt and brother Dea Zumwalt on March 15, 1915. John purchased the home on the southeast corner of the intersection. This home was subsequently destroyed in the hurricane of 1933. Dea purchased the home on the southwest corner of the intersection and that home is still standing today. It is referred to as "Los Fresnos' Oldest House".¹¹

On the northeast corner of the intersection, as the first building in the new townsite proper, was constructed a two-story building that was to serve as a general store on the ground floor and a four-room home above. This building had just been completed in the late spring of 1915. The party for whom the structure had been built had either become ill or decided not to move into it. Harry Whipple, who had come down to the valley and to this new little town on a train excursion sponsored by the land company, was offered this building by the land company for the amount of \$1,900.00. He states that it was a good building with wallpaper in all the upstairs rooms. Whipple went back to Quincy, Illinois, where he decided to purchase the building. Within a few weeks, he and his wife, Ethel Leona, moved to Los Fresnos to stay, arriving in June of 1915.¹²

Other families soon followed. Later that summer and in the fall of 1915 several more came. Among them were the W.B. Palmers, who bought land on the north side of Barreda road approximately one mile east of the new townsite. Palmer built a large two-story home which stood there until it was removed by Urban Renewal in the early 1960's. The old Palmer housesite and grounds are presently the site of the city park and of the Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library. Coming from Missouri with the Palmer family in October of 1915 were Reverend E.C. Swann and his family. The land company had been building a community house near the north end of the townsite on the east side of Old Alice road, approximately opposite of the east entrance to the present high school grounds. As soon as the Community House was finished, the Swanns moved into the rear quarters. Swann was hired by the land company to manage the Community House. He was the preacher, and the facility served as a non-denominational church building. It also served as a gathering place for the little community, and prospective buyers on excursions were served meals there by the Land Company. Other families who came that first year were the Smiths, the Luptons and the Donaldsons.¹³

During that first year of the new town, two events occurred which alarmed these early settlers. The first occurred in early September with the abduction of Earl Donaldson, Mr. Smith and Standley Dodds by bandits and the subsequent executions of

Donaldson and Smith. Donaldson, who had earlier left his wagon with the Zumwalts for repairs, had come be to pick it up. He was on his way to San Benito to pick up a load of lumber for his home that he had been building. That morning, Juanita Zumwalt had cautioned him to "watch out," as she had seen soldiers earlier, and feared that "there may be bandits out." A short time after he left, smoke was seen from the place where a building was being built by Dodds and Smith to house pumps for irrigation. The bandits had captured Dodds and Smith and were burning the pumping station when Donaldson drove his wagon up to the fire. He, too, was captured. The three were held hostage and taken along the resaca a few miles to the east. Donaldson and Smith were executed by the bandits at a point about one mile north and one-quarter mile east of the little townsite, approximately near the present location of Henderson Road and the Cuates Resaca. The bandits continued east with Dodds as their only remaining hostage. Later that day, Dodds managed to escape, with help from Jesús Esparza, and worked his way back along the resaca near the new townsite. He was able to contact someone and was rescued.¹⁴

Earlier that day, Perry Clark, who had been working in the area as a foreman for Joe Ballenger, a canal builder, began warning residents of the bandits, and the Zumwalts had called Fort Brown. Later soldiers from Brownsville arrived and joined Clark, a former Texas Ranger, and others, and together they came upon the bandits in the area referred to as "Agua Negra". There a gun fight ensued, where Whipple Road and Paredes Line presently intersect. "There is no record of any of the bandits or the soldiers having been killed in that fray, but there was a young Mexican girl killed by a stray bullet." From that September 4th, 1915 until the United States entered World War I soldiers were stationed at each home as guards.¹⁵

A second event was the derailing of the train by bandits in Olmito over a month later on October 14. An account stated that three people were killed and four were wounded.¹⁶

The soldiers who were stationed in the town to protect the new settlers pitched their tents on the remaining corner of the intersection of the new town. This spot is where the school superintendent's house is presently located. However, on many nights they slept on the porches of the other three homes at the intersection, belonging to the two Zumwalts and the Whipples.¹⁷ With the soldiers' presence, in addition to Clark seeming to be always around, the settlers felt more secure, and things began to settle down.

Automobile transportation was very limited. Whipple owned one of the only two cars in the area, and he provided much of the transportation for the families that needed it. During the school year of 1915-1916, Whipple provided daily transportation to take the high-school aged girls to school in San Benito as no high school was available in Los Fresnos. The land company had built a small, one room school house which was completed before any families arrived, but there was no one available to teach the high school grades. To solve this problem, the land company offered Whipple the salary of \$100.00 per month to provide transportation to San Benito for the high school-aged students. Whip-

ple states that this income was very important to his being able to make ends meet that first year.¹⁸

In spite of the hardships that first year, people still continued to settle in the new town, and the town grew rapidly although the fear of bandits still remained. On one occasion, the Whipples took some of the teenagers to the movies in Brownsville. They were escorted by Clark, the former Texas Ranger who, as Zumwalt/Steer notes, "could keep us spellbound for hours with his tales of the wild days on the border, in which he always played a big part; he always got his man." On that occasion they heard galloping horses. Clark told the teenagers to stay low and instructed Whipple to drive as fast as possible on the dirt path. The galloping horses turned out to be a herd of wild horses, and all of Whipple's party arrived safely back in Los Fresnos. On another occasion, the three Palmer sisters, Bessie, Geneva and Grace, were hosting a dinner and slumber party. They had invited the three Swann sisters, Miss Bea Kinlock (the grade school teacher), and Juanita Zumwalt. Also invited to the dinner, although not to the slumber party, were some of the solders, but not Sergeant Webb. Deciding to get even, Webb went to the homes of the girls' parents and there announced rumors of bandits in the area. This alarming news enabled him to get the parents to dispatch him to pick up their daughters, which effectively broke up the gathering.¹⁹

In addition to the real bandit problems, the bandit "scares," transportation problems and the difficulties of dealing with dirt roads, the early settlers had to cope with other situations as well. Water was not yet available for many homes and the land had to be cleared to farm it. Clearing the land was exhausting work and discouraged many of the new settlers; furthermore, there was little equipment available as only one farmer had a steam-driven tractor. Even if one could clear his land, there was no profitable cash crop in 1915 and 1916. Corn was grown, but there was no market. The people who lived in the area used it for tortillas; however, most families grew what they needed, and none had any money to purchase it. Whipple states that he was one of the most fortunate, owning the little store on the corner, selling supplies to the other settlers, and working for the land company to provide transportation. However, even Whipple was so discouraged after the first year that he wanted to go back to Quincy. His wife Ethel, who had told her girl friends back in Illinois how wonderful it was going to be in this new frontier in Texas, provided him with strength and encouragement to stick it out; partly because of her own personal strength of character, but also because she didn't want to face her friends back home.²⁰

During the latter part of 1915 and 1916, some settlers did leave, but many more came. The land company continued to bring new prospects on the train excursions; however, it was the United States' involvement in World War I that changed things rapidly for the residents of the community. There was such a demand by the government for food for the war effort that farming flourished. In 1917, beans, potatoes and other vegetables became highly profitable cash crops, causing additional land to be

rapidly cleared. Much of the produce was taken to the cannery in Olmito, and the government was the eventual buyer.

Another event worth noting took place in 1917, when the area near or around where Los Fresnos would become a town was used as the camp site for various armies. This was not the first time the site of Los Fresnos had resounded with the shouts of military orders. In 1840 there had been a revolutionary effort by peoples from northern Mexico (which then extended north to the Nueces River), a movement joined by some Texans. The rebels had declared an independent state called the "Republic of the Rio Grande" which extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the "Californians". The Centralists had sent an army to put down the rebellion. "The Centralist General, Arista, crossed the Rio Grande on August 27, 1840 and spent that night at Los Fresnos.." In 1846, General Zachary Taylor and his troops, having crossed the Arroyo and on their way to Point Isabel, had camped a few miles to the east of Los Fresnos on March 24.²² Approximately six weeks later, on May 7, 1846, Taylor and his troops had camped at a site approximately two miles from where the townsite would be created. This site was the "Palo Alto Resaca" southeast of where Los Fresnos is presently located.²³ It was the following day, on May 8, 1846, that the Mexican forces under Arista were encountered at "Palo Alto".²⁴ However, the largest army ever to camp at Los Fresnos did so in 1917. On this occasion, soldiers stationed in the Rio Grande Valley were divided into two armies, "The Whites" and "The Browns", so designated by their respectively-colored arm bands. Both armies were on maneuvers on their way to Brownsville to engage in a mock battle. Each army took a different route, trying to keep their location secret from the other army until it could arrive at the proposed battle site. "The Whites" camped at Olmito, and "The Browns" camped at Los Fresnos. On this occasion, 30,000 soldiers camped overnight, creating not only a sea of pup tents in the little community but the largest population Los Fresnos has ever had.²⁵

Farming continued to prosper during and after the war and throughout the decade of the twenties. The town grew due to its continued promotion by the land company. A two-story frame hotel with a large dining room was built by the land company on the west side of Old Alice Road opposite the community house. It was used by the land company to accommodate prospective buyers who came down on excursions. The hotel was an impressive building, but its life ended prematurely as it was completely destroyed by a fire.²⁶

In 1922, citrus trees were brought to Los Fresnos. A nurseryman from Florida had leased land from Whipple to grow seedling. Under the arrangement, Whipple was to receive one-third of the trees for the use of his land. The following year, Whipple, who had been the town's first merchant and first postmaster, planted the first citrus grove in the area on a tract of land approximately one-half mile north-east of the townsite. Whipple moved to the farm located on what is now Whipple Road but continued to operate the store at the townsite for many additional years.²⁷

The decade of the twenties brought many changes to Los

Fresnos. Water District No.6 was organized; the canal system was purchased from the Rio Grande Canal Company; and the number of acres of irrigated farmland expanded. In the mid-twenties the road from San Benito to Los Fresnos was paved with a narrow single-lane concrete pavement, giving Los Fresnos its first all-weather road in any direction. In 1926 the community voted to approve the sale of bonds to construct a new school building. This seven-room structure was completed in September of 1927, and additions were built onto it several times in subsequent years. However, no event had more impact on Los Fresnos than the coming out of the Southern Pacific railroad line which was built approximately one mile to the east of the little townsite.²⁸

On October 27, 1927, the Southern Pacific railroad line to Brownsville was completed.²⁹ This event actually created a new town which boomed over the next two years. The old townsite on the east side of Old Alice Road was abandoned and the new townsite became located on either side of the tracts where the Southern Pacific Line intersects Highway 100. Shortly after the construction of the railroad line, a paved highway was built from Brownsville north and passed through the new relocated town.³⁰ This pavement, called Paredes Line, which was built parallel to the railroad and approximately 800 feet to the east of it, made Old Alice Road obsolete as the main road to Brownsville and caused yet another shift in the location of the town. Even today the railroad line represents the approximate geographical center of the town, yet the intersection of Highway 100 (the old Barreda Road) and Paredes Line Road has become the center of commerce for the community. This second shift has continued to cause address location problems for the town ever since. Initially, the addresses were laid out with the center (0) being the railroad line and for all east/west streets, those portions east of the tracks were east and those west were given a west address. At a later time, the city readdressed the town and centered it on the main north/south thoroughfare, Paredes Line, which became the more dominant physical feature. From that point on, all locations were either east or west depending on their relationship to Paredes Line. To say the least, it was a confusing situation for many years to come and the change is still not complete for all purposes.

Meanwhile, as the new townsite grew rapidly during the period of 1927 to 1929, the old townsite rapidly declined. The hurricane of 1933 eventually destroyed most of the buildings in the old townsite, including the Community House. It was damaged to such an extent that the building was torn down and the salvageable material was used in the construction of the Methodist Church building at its present location in the new townsite.³¹ Today the only building left from the original townsite is what is referred to as Los Fresnos' oldest house or the Laughlin home originally purchased by Dea Zumwalt. Much of the property in the original townsite is now owned by the school district; as the school remained in its original location, which is now one mile west of the townsite. Presently the school's administrative offices, the bus barn and transportation department, and other school facilities are located on the original townsite property.

The two-year period from October 1927 to late 1929 marks a period of remarkable growth in the history of Los Fresnos. It was during this period that men and women with vision built much of the community as we see it today. This period of growth may be best described with the use of an excerpt from a Chamber of Commerce pamphlet written in 1929 promoting the sale of lots in the new town.³²

Remarkable Growth

On the first day of October, 1927, W.B. Palmer started the construction of the first business building in the new town, known as the Palmer Building. At the present time, Los Fresnos has one general merchandise store, two grocery stores, two meat markets, one bank, one barber shop, one tailor shop, one hardware store, two garages, one drug store, post office, two lumber yards, one restaurant, one blacksmith shop, one plumbing shop, one cotton gin, one canning factory, two produce houses, three churches, and a splendid school which would do credit to many older and larger Northern communities. The Cameron County Water Improvement District No. 6 is just completing a beautiful two-story store and office building, to which they are moving their General Offices from Brownsville. The first floor of this building is a large and beautiful storeroom, while the upper floor will be occupied by a number of offices in addition to the Water Company.³³

Much of the acreage of the relocated original townsite was owned by J.G. Fernández of Brownsville and his brother, A. H. Fernández. Palmer owned nine-five acres of land as well in the new original townsite. The town lots were laid out in the fall of 1927 and a successful auction took place for their sale on December 15 of that year. Delta Development Co., a successful subdivision and development company, was the firm that managed the sale and promotion of the new (relocated) townsite. Their efforts produced prices as high as \$1350.00 per lot on that December auction in 1927.³⁴

The first firm to become established in the new town in late 1927 was the Palmer-Dever Supply Co., owned by Palmer and G.D. Dever. This firm carried "a large stock of general merchandise, from tractors to trunnel beds, including every necessity for the home and the farm."³⁵ The second firm was the Los Fresnos Garage, which opened for business in January of 1928 and was owned and operated by G.H. Bingley. The First State Bank of Los Fresnos was another of the early enterprises locating on a corner one block north of Ocean Boulevard (Highway 100).³⁶ The bank still remains there today; however, the name has changed several times in the subsequent years. The town prospered and grew rapidly. An understanding of the vitality of this new community can be obtained by reading the first edition of the Los Fresnos Times, published March 1, 1929.

As with many communities across the United States, the end

of 1929 marked the beginning of a period of hard times with little or no growth and frequent setbacks with business closures. However, Whipple, who received the Master Farmer award in 1930 sponsored by Progressive Farmer in cooperation with the Extension Service of Texas A&M College (so named at that time), ³⁷ states that farming was still good only in the early years (1930-1931) of the depression era.

The vitality and vision that existed in the little community in 1927-1929 has never quite reappeared since. While many new businesses have come, and others have left, business growth has always been much slower. It might well be a reasonably accurate statement to say that Los Fresnos grew more in those first two years (fall of 1927 - fall of 1929) than the sixty-two years since. One might even conclude that the town became frozen in time, but that would not be accurate either, for there have been many spurts of growth since the late twenties.

One event which contributed to the devastation of the depression was the hurricane of 1933. It hit on the first day of school on September 3rd of that year. No one had received any warning; some families were able to get their children hom from school and the school was able to bus other pupils home. However, the school served as a shelter for many of the students, their families, and others who came there to survive the storm. In town, the bank served as a shelter for about two hundred and fifty people. The storm hit in the late morning of September 3 and went on through the night. Winds rose to 125 miles per hour and "the barometer went out at 27." The eye of the hurricane passed over the community around 2:30 AM on the morning of the 4th and by 2:30 PM that afternoon, it was still raining but the wind had stopped.³⁸ Winnifred Mann, in her book A History of the Los Fresnos United Methodist Church 1915-1984, offers an account of events that took place that day; especially harrowing is the account of the two Pederson families and the Hollons, who were all staying together in a stucco house during the storm. By midnight, the roof had blown off from the house and with the house ready to collapse, the families had to make their way to the bank building in the dark between 12:00 and 1:00 AM in the morning, at the height of the storm. By the late afternoon of the 4th, many ventured out only to find the community had been devastated. Many hopes were completely gone. It was a very tough experience during very hard times; however, the community survived and the years after were devoted to rebuilding.

World War II and the post-war era produced a period of growth and prosperity. Farm produce brought good prices during the war and they continued after the war. The town once again entered a growth period, especially during the latter part of the 1940"s.³⁹ During the decade of the forties, the population of Los Fresnos doubled from 550 residents in 1940 to 1,113 residents in the 1950 census.⁴⁰ To offer a comparison, it took the next four decades, from 1950 to 1990, for the community to double in population once again. The unofficial 1990 census produced a residence population of around 2,450 people. It was during this period that the city was incorporated (November 21, 1945) with the first mayor being Oren Pederson. Jack Wiech was appointed

city attorney on April 3, 1947. Judge (J.P.) Johnson was hired as the first City Judge on May 1, 1947. On September 4, 1947, the city authorized the formation of the Volunteer Fire Department, and on January 8, 1948, E.A. Radar was appointed the first Fire Marshal.⁴¹

During this post-war period of the late forties, the town seemed to grow together as a community. In 1947 the Chamber of Commerce was reorganized. In 1948 a Lions Club was organized as well as a Junior Service League. There were also softball teams organized in the summer months and often composed of "ex-Service boys from Los Fresnos". The community also sported an "All-Girl Team".⁴² The churches grew during this period, and the fiber that holds a community together seemed to have developed. It was this period of time that the foundation was developed for the peaceful small town atmosphere that occurred during the decade of the fifties. With the exception of the drought years of the early fifties, this period was generally prosperous. In this decade and throughout the sixties, one of the most important events was the three-day annual Lions Club Charity Horse Show every summer. During this period and ever since, the Lions Club has played an important role in community affairs in Los Fresnos. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored the "Old Fashioned Country Fair" during the sixties and the early seventies. The annual fair was in February and was well-attended by winter Texans. They were called "Snowdiggers" or "Northerners" then and seemed to be especially fond of the Old Fashioned Fair. The fair was a three-day ordeal (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) in which crafts were displayed; there was a small carnival; the Cameron County Livestock Show as held in conjunction with the fair; and there seemed to be a contest every hour for most of the three days. The contests included such things as the most authentically dressed person, pie eating, catching a greased pig, barrel racing, horseshow pitching, and craft work. Most of the town as well as many of the Northerners seemed to participate in the fair activities. One attention-getter was the women's traditional long floral dresses with big bows and a bonnet. School-age children participated as well; probably because school was let out on Friday for the fair, opening with a parade. The band marched, and there were usually several floats. The Chamber of Commerce knew what it was doing when it sponsored a contest with a monetary prize for the best float among the school grades. Each class from 7th to 12th grade built a float which was usually constructed on a flat-bed cotton trailer in someone's barn the week before the fair. Far more energy was spent protecting these masterpieces than was used in building them. There were always rumors that a particular class on a given night was going to mess up another class's float. No float was ever destroyed, but many teenagers still convinced their parents they had to be part of an all-night vigil to protect the class float at least for the last night or two before the parade. The teachers must have given up on exams that week, and most students were exhausted by the time the fair started, but everyone survived and managed even to work his time slot in a particular booth.

The close-knit community that came together in the forties

and lasted throughout the fifties and sixties seemed to change in the seventies. It may have been because of changing times and values; nonetheless, it occurred. By the early seventies, the horse show and the fair had ended and the desire for such events no longer existed. Some felt that the change was due to growth and believed that if the town grew, the small town atmosphere would completely disappear. Consequently, there seemed to be a concerted effort to keep things as they were. This position may not have been, not a deterrent to change, but a contributing factor. With growth comes a degree of vitality and without growth an air of stagnation. This lack of vitality and energy being replaced with an acceptance of the status quo may well have been the greatest contributing factor to the perceived or real decline of the friendly small-town atmosphere. Nonetheless, Los Fresnos still grew during the seventies and early eighties but at a slower rate than the rest of the Lower Valley. In the mid- to late 1980s, once again a revival of growth was initiated. However, the opportunity for growth was drastically reduced from what it had been in the seventies, and the community had to work hard just to maintain a stable population. In 1984, the Chamber of Commerce, which had been generally inactive for a decade or more, was reactivated. The city undertook capital improvements to replace outdated systems and once again to prepare for the future. During the years from 1985 to 1991, the city replaced its water tower; built a new water plant with a capacity for three times its present use; built a new sewer plant with a capacity to handle a population more than twice its present size; built a new city hall and police station; built a senior citizens' center; and has just completed a new emergency services building in a cooperative effort with the Los Fresnos Volunteer Fire Department. The new emergency services building houses both the Fire Department and the Emergency Medical Services Department. Some of the funds for the construction of these facilities were obtained through grants but the majority came from the sale of bonds.

Los Fresnos achieved only modest growth during the decade of the eighties but, more importantly, it replaced an infrastructure that had not been improved or updated since the late forties and early fifties. It now has the capacity for growth up to three times its present size and a utility system that should serve the community for decades into the future. Additionally, the school district is building a new high school just north of the city and east of Paredes Line Road. However, the facility in Los Fresnos that generates the most pride among many of its residents is the Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library. This building was constructed in 1965 with funds donated entirely by Harry H. Whipple, one of the early settlers, as previously mentioned. Whipple donated the facility in memory of his wife Ethel Leona. The city has staffed and operated the Library ever since. The number of volumes have grown from funds supplied by the city, from donations from its citizens, and donations from other individuals living in the area or neighboring communities.

In 1985, Whipple, at the age of 95, donated (solely) an addition to the Library which is now referred to as the east

wing. He continued financial support of the library with several annual donations for equipment and books. And again, in the late fall of 1990, Whipple, at the age of 100, donated (solely) the west wing to the Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library which included additional cabinetry and shelving to serve the Library for many years into the future. The addition was completed in April of 1991 with a dedication ceremony held on May 16, 1991. Whipple, at the age of 101, was the honored guest, and toured, inspected and approved the new addition.

Los Fresnos has been quite fortunate to have Whipple as the benefactor of the Library facilities. However, Whipple and many others have given much to the creation and building of the community of Los Fresnos in so many other ways as well. Possibly this very element of individuals contributing to and sacrificing for their community has been the key that has given so many of the residents of Los Fresnos a special love for their town.

Mayor, Los Fresnos

Endnotes

1. Judith Laughlin Whyllie, "Los Fresnos' Oldest House, The Laughlin Property" (Unpublished paper written 1981, original copy - Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library, Los Fresnos, Texas) 9.

2. Walter Prescott Webb, E., The Handbook of Texas, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers Incorporated, 1952) 82.

3. J. Lee Stambaugh, Lillian J. Stambaugh, The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1954) 180.

4. Harry H. Whipple, personal interview, 1 June 1991.

5. Miriam Chatelle, For We Love Our Valley Home (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1948) 50.

6. Juanita Zumwalt Steer, Reimniscence (sic) (Unpublished manuscript, original copy - Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library, Los Fresnos, Texas) 2.

7. Wylie 9-10.

8. Whipple.

9. Wylie 10.

10. Whipple

11. Wylie 10.

12. Whipple.

13. Chatelle 55-60; Whipple; Whyllie 11.

14. Chatelle 64-68; Steer 4; Whipple; Steer 4 (first and second quotation).

15. Chatelle 53, 67; Steer 4; Chatelle 53 (first quotation); Chatelle 67 (second quotation)

16. Chatelle 62-63.

17. Whipple.

18. Whipple.

19. Steer 5; Steer 5 (quotation)

20. Whipple.

21. Whipple.

22. Stambaugh and Stambaugh 50, 66; Stambaugh and Stambaugh

50 (first, second and third quotation).

23. Frank C. Pierce, A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Menasha; Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1917) 28.
24. Stambaugh and Stambaugh 68.
25. Chatelle 75-76; Steer 6.
26. Whipple.
27. Whipple.
28. Chatelle 105, 87-88; Whipple.
29. J.L. Allhands, Railroads to the Rio (Salado, Texas: The Anson Jones Press, 1960) 200.
30. Whipple
31. Chatelle 95.
32. Chatelle 105.
33. Chatelle 106-107.
34. William Thomas Woodfin, "Story of Los Fresnos," Los Fresnos Times 1 March 1929, 1.
35. Woodfin 1.
36. Woodfin 4.
37. Author unknown, "Texas Master Farmers of 1929", The Progressive Farmer and Farm Woman Texas Edition, vol.45, no.5, 1 February, 1930.
38. Winnifred Mann, A History of the Los Fresnos United Methodist Church 1915-1984 (Brownsville: Pan American Business Services, 1984) 25-31; Chatelle 110-111.
39. Chatelle 111.
40. Harlan Woods, Ed., The Yearbook of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Northern Mexico, 25th ed. (Mission, Texas: Yearbook Publishing Company, 1964) 86.
41. City of Los Fresnos, "Council Minutes", vol. 1, 1-55.
42. Chatelle 112.

Olmito, Texas: A Town of Unfulfilled Dreams

by

Tim Snyder

Olmito, Texas is similar to many small towns found all over America. Many people know each other on a first name basis; there is a post office, gas station and school, and the usual quietness is broken only by the beautiful singing of a bird, the roar of a passing car or the whistle of the freight train making its daily run through town. Greenery is abundant in many of these towns and, in the case of Olmito, this is especially true near the large resacas on the town's west side. To many of the 700 people of Olmito, there is nowhere else that they would rather live. However, in other ways, Olmito is very different from other small American towns. The majority of the people are Mexican-American. Spanish is used just as much or perhaps more than English and, most significantly, poverty abounds. While a passerby might see a couple of nice homes with beautifully manicured yards, adjacent to these homes one can see homes in bad need of repair with garbage in the back yards and the certain look of poverty present. It is a town that most outsiders drive through without giving much of a second thought because it seems so small and insignificant. The nearest city, Brownsville, has a population of about 100,000 people and dwarfs little Olmito. This overshadowing is compounded by the fact that the Brownsville city limits border the unofficial limits of unincorporated Olmito, and this causes Olmito to seem smaller than it actually is. However, this is not the way it was supposed to be. Olmito is a town that was started on dreams; a town that was supposed to have been the showcase town of the Rio Grande Valley. It is a town that was meant to be a place that no visitor would ever forget. Unfortunately, as people's lives passed and events unfolded, Olmito was negatively affected and did not develop as many had hoped it would. Thus it became a town of unfulfilled dreams for many people.

The town of Olmito started as a railroad town around the turn of the century--1904 to be exact. The railroad that wanted Olmito to be started was the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad. This railroad line was coming from the North and wanted to link the Rio Grande Valley and Mexico with the rest of the United States. Uriah Lott, the developer of the railroad, wanted to establish towns along the railroad line in order to help increase the passenger and freight business for the railroad. It is also believed that the state of Texas as well encouraged this town development in order to aid the state's growth in many areas. The railroad company's plan was that the Southern leg of the railroad line would include 21 townsites from near Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande. However, these 21 towns would not include Brownsville, the last train stop in the U.S., because by this time it was already a well developed town. The first of the towns on this southern leg was Robstown. Other

towns followed the railroad line's movement south and included Kingsville, Raymondville, Lyford and Harlingen. The last three townsites, those just preceding Brownsville, were to be Bessie (later named San Benito), Fordyce (later named Russeltown) and the final townsite the railroad wanted developed, Olmito (although at this time Olmito was not named - it was just called a future townsite).¹

This future townsite, as yet unnamed, was first advertised in the March 7, 1904 Brownsville Herald and was to begin near Brownsville Street and Alice Stage Road. This would be the southern area of the townsite, the area closest to the city of Brownsville, located roughly where today's Brownsville Road and the first Old Alice Road are located. The company that wanted to develop the townsite was the Brownsville Land and Town Company, whose president was James B. Wells, the political boss of Brownsville at that time. The advertisement emphasized the area's versatile soil which enabled both citrus and vegetables to grow, and its mild winters giving farmers 30-60 more growing days than anywhere else in the United States. It was also stressed that the land would be subdivided.² Two days later, this advertisement covered the lower half of the front page of The Brownsville Herald and emphasized that the townsite development would bring more settlers to the Brownsville area and help Brownsville grow.³ Perhaps this was stressed to secure Brownsville's support of the project or to calm fears that a new town near Brownsville might produce unwanted competition for Brownsville merchants and service oriented companies.

The fertility of the land was continually emphasized by the Brownsville Land and Town Company, which advertised the early townsite as an "outpost of the Garden of Eden". This fertility was underscored by Brownsville Land and Town Company Vice President and General Manager, A.D. Childress, who exhibited what he grew at the future townsite: bamboo, cotton, bananas, plants, flowers and a 31 pound sugar beet.⁴ The interest generated by this future townsite was not only limited to Brownsville or the Rio Grande Valley. The excitement reached at least as far as Houston; The Houston Post encouraged the development of the townsite to aid Brownsville so that Brownsville and the surrounding territory could take the places to which they were entitled in the industrial world of Texas. The Brownsville Land and Town Company did not limit its glowing advertisements to the Brownsville area. These advertisements occurred in other newspapers as well.⁵

These glowing advertisements, perhaps in an effort to encourage farmers to live near the townsite, called it a "sub-tropical paradise", claiming that ten acres of land in the Valley area would produce more cash than 200 acres in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.⁶ However, whatever dreams James B. Wells and A.D. Childress had for the place came to an abrupt end when the Brownsville Land and Town Company sold out and the Lindsey Town and Improvement Company of Brownsville took over its development. The president of the new company was Charles Lindsey, a man with new dreams for the townsite.

The Lindsey Town and Improvement Company took over the

future townsite in April of 1904⁸ This was one of many South Texas land companies that together sent 350 agents all over the North and East U.S. trying to attract people to come live in this "sub-tropical paradise".⁹ While the agents were away recruiting prospective settlers, locally people were in great anticipation about the naming of the new townsite. The name first appeared as part of the headline of the April 4, 1904 issue of The Brownsville Herald. After the name Olmito, the rest of the headline of the newspaper continued with the ever-present words "Land for Sale"¹⁰ Two possible explanations for the choice of the name Olmito have been given, although both reasons go back to the same source. The first theory is that Olmito was named for a neighboring ranch. Olmito translates into English as "little elm tree." The ranch was apparently near the resacas of the area containing many elm trees. The presence of the elms was unusual; elms are scarce elsewhere in the Valley. Hence this is how the townsite became known as Olmito.¹¹ The second idea is that the townsite is named for a large Olmito tree where people gathered when in the area or when taking a trip out to the country.¹² Whichever idea is correct, the name of the townsite is based on the olmito tree.

The Lindsey Town and Improvement Company advertised the Olmito townsite as being nine miles (at that time) northwest of the city of Brownsville and the first important station on the line of the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway. The Company continued to comment that Olmito was beautifully situated on a high and healthful location on the banks of the Resaca del Rancho Viejo in the very heart of the rice- and truck-farming district, which made it an exceedingly desirable location for all kinds of businesses. It was emphasized that property was being sold to actual settlers for cash or easy terms.¹⁴ This advertisement/announcement appeared as the headline of The Brownsville Herald for a full month, from April 4 through May 5, 1904.¹⁵ Time was not something the developers wanted to waste. By April 9, 1904, only five days after the townsite was named, Olmito had its first industry: a kiln for brickmaking. The kiln was to start with an output of 250,000 bricks a month with the desire that most of the bricks be used right in Olmito. The industry was started by a firm named Messrs. Lindsey and Wallis, a firm that was at least partly owned by Charles Lindsey, who owned the Lindsey Town and Improvement Company. Therefore the kiln would be owned in part by the same company that owned the Olmito townsite. The company wanted the bricks to make Olmito a most substantially built town.¹⁶ By late Spring, 1904, the railroad, the factor that was to trigger development and catapult Olmito to importance, arrived and seemed to insure Olmito's promise. By October 1, 1904, the Lindsey Town and Improvement Company printed a map of the future city, showing Olmito divided into blocks and lots.¹⁷ It seemed as though everything was in place and that Olmito was ready to take off and become an important Valley city.

However, something happened to Olmito on its way to prosperity and importance, and its early growth was badly stunted. Why Olmito did not grow as planned in its early days is hard to understand. There are several possible explanations that may be

valid, or perhaps the truth lies in a combination of these reasons. Is it possible that Olmito was hurt by its proximity to the Valley's biggest city, Brownsville? Perhaps, once people arrived in Olmito, they decided to go the one extra train stop and live in Brownsville, a town already well established with many stores, schools, churches and so on. Was Olmito's growth stunted by the fact that it was the southernmost of the 21 railroad townsites and that the towns to the North siphoned many prospective settlers away from Olmito? Perhaps many of the prospective residents of Olmito were enticed to set down their roots in towns such as Kingsville, Harlingen or San Benito (Bessie) and never made it to Olmito. Is it possible that Charles Lindsey was a bad businessman or lacked the money and/or charisma of Lon C. Hill of Harlingen or Sam Robertson of San Benito? Is it possible that events were beyond anyone's control and Olmito's slow early growth was just one of those things? By 1915, Olmito consisted of nothing more than a school, a church, one store, a cotton gin and a population of about 50 residents.¹⁸ The dreams Charles Lindsey and the Lindsey Town and Improvement Company had entertained for Olmito were largely unfulfilled, and by late 1918 this company sold the large unsold portion of the Olmito townsite to Mr. and Mrs. D.P. Gay¹⁹

Before discussing the further development of the Olmito townsite, it should be noted that perhaps the most colorful event in Olmito's history occurred during these early days of slow growth. According to the October 19, 1915 Brownsville Herald, on the previous day, October 18, at 10:45 at night, a forced train wreck occurred a little way outside of Olmito. The train wreck was forced by a group of 20-30 Mexico bandits who wanted to rob the train. It should be remembered that this was the period of almost constant border troubles between the United States and bandits from Mexico. The bandits were led by Luis de la Rosa. They removed the spikes and bolts from the railroad track to cause the train to wreck. A wire was then put around the rail and pulled by the bandits as the train neared, moving the rail out of place and causing the train to derail. At the time of the wreck, the train was going 35 miles per hour.

From outside, fifteen or twenty bandits kept up a constant shooting barrage on the train while on the inside five or six Mexicans, already on the train since Brownsville, drew guns and started firing. When the shooting was over three passengers were dead and the majority of the rest were robbed by the bandits. One of those killed was a man who tried to hide in the train's restroom. He and his friend hiding with him were asked to come out of the restroom, and they refused. The bandits responded by shooting into the restroom and one of the men was killed.²⁰ After the robbery, the bandits burned a small railroad bridge behind the previously north-bound train so that no special troop trains carrying soldiers from Brownsville would arrive too quickly.²¹ After being called from a telephone in Olmito by one of the passengers who had escaped, U.S. soldiers took a train from Brownsville to the burnt bridge and then walked the final mile to the train wreck.²² By the time the soldiers arrived, the bandits had made an easy escape across the Rio Grande, which was only

approximately three miles away.²³ This train robbery near Olmito was only one event in a period of constant border troubles. Things were so tense that one Olmito resident, Mr. J. Alton Bennett, remembers that on several occasions his family slept in a banana tree grove near their home because they felt safer in the grove than they did behind the walls of their home.²⁴ Given the nervousness of the time, the Bennett family was probably not alone in abandoning their beds to sleep in unusual places whenever the situation warranted it.

As mentioned earlier, Mr. and Mrs. D.P. Gay bought the unsold portion of the Olmito townsite in 1918 from the Lindsey Town and Improvement Company. What the Gays' plans were for Olmito seem unclear. Around the time that D.P. and Mary Gay sold the Olmito townsite, there were still only about a dozen homes.²⁵ The Gays sold the Olmito townsite in the early Spring of 1926 to the Al Parker Securities Company.²⁶ Not only did the Al Parker Securities Company buy the original Olmito townsite, but the company also bought adjoining land in June of 1926 to make the townsite larger than it had been originally.²⁷ Hopes were high, and dreams were once again in the air. It seemed as though after initial failures Olmito would finally get off the ground and become the town that many had first thought it would be.

The Parker Company seemed to be an ideal company to get Olmito going. This suitability seemed especially true when one considered that the Parker Company also started La Feria, a successful town west of Harlingen. After it had enlarged the Olmito townsite, one of the first things the Parker Company did was to survey it and draw up a new town map. Early attention was given to the town's most beautiful spots, the two resacas on the west side. The Parker Company named the resacas Lake Olmito and Lake Tepeguaje ("Hard Wood").²⁸ This was done perhaps because prospective buyers from up north did not know what a resaca was but could easily identify with a lake. Al Parker built himself a beautiful Spanish-style home on the resaca named Lake Olmito and encouraged a couple of his employees to do the same.²⁹ Besides giving the Parkers and their employees a place to live, these homes would also be helpful in showing how beautiful Olmito would be once it was developed.³⁰ It is a simple conclusion that people of the 1920s, just as those of today, would find resaca property most desirable. Al, along with his brother and new partner Lloyd, built an office that is still standing near the center of town, to deal with the land transactions and town development.³¹ The Parker brothers even thought of building a hotel and casino on Lake Olmito in order to give the town a resort atmosphere.²²

The Parkers nicknamed Olmito the "Unusual City," apparently because they believed Olmito was a unique place and they were going to build such a unique town that anyone who visited would never forget it.²³ It appeared that the Parkers' dreams for Olmito would be fulfilled because even their timing seemed perfect. The period of the mid and late 1920s was a period of land boom in the Rio Grande Valley. The Parkers seemed to be selling the Olmito townsite at just the right time, as local real estate prices were skyrocketing, and land hunger was everywhere. The

desire for Valley land in general and for the Olmito townsite in particular was similar to the land hunger of the "Sooners" of Oklahoma.²⁴ To insure that they would receive maximum money for their land, the Parker Company, along with several other land companies, sent out salesmen all over the country to bring prospective homeseekers to the Valley.³⁵ In 1927 people camped on the lots which they had selected as the ones they wanted to buy. This was done because the Parker Company was selling the land by auction, and the people wanted to be on the lot of their choice so that they could be present when it was sold and outbid anyone else.³⁶ For three nights before the sale, campfires could be seen burning all over and prospective purchasers engaged in actual fighting as some tried to get the right to purchase lots that others claimed as theirs.³⁷ The fiercest competition for land was for the choice lots on beautiful Lake Olmito.³⁸ When the sale was all over, the land that made up the Olmito townsite had sold for over one million dollars.³⁹ One million dollars is still a lot of money today, but one million dollars in the 1920s must have seemed to many a mind-boggling astronomical figure.

One thing that should be noted at this time is the type of people who, on payments, purchased the land. A small sampling of the last names of purchasers include: Mason, Greer, Crawford, White, Province, Robinson, Crockett, Tandy, Carpenter, Hooker, Turner, Archer, Carper, Porter and Miller.⁴⁰ In an area with a significant Hispanic population, no Hispanic names are found. This is because Olmito was to be developed as a divided town. The town was supposed to be for Anglos only, and Mexicans, whether born here or in Mexico, were only allowed to live on the fringes of town--a practice that was not exclusive to Olmito. The Mexican fringe areas were called Mexicita. There was one on the west side of town and a bigger one (although still not too big) on the east side of town, on the other side of the canal.⁴¹

Many of these 1920s free spenders bought their land in Olmito at high prices with a little money down and the rest on payments. Little did the Parker brothers or the buyers of Olmito know that the Stock Market Crash was looming in the near future, and that many people would lose everything. When the crash occurred, nearly everyone who was making payments on land in Olmito was unable to carry on the payments and thus lost his part of the Unusual City.⁴² Furthermore, the Parker Company stopped all development.⁴³ The Olmito townsite died on the vine in those early days of the depression. Just as with Wells, Childress, Gay and Lindsey, the dreams of the Parkers and those of the buyers of their land were unfulfilled. Olmito's promise and hope had met with disaster, a disaster known as the Great Depression.

Despite the gloominess of the Great Depression, the Parker Company managed to weather out the storm of the initial Stock Market Crash and stay in business. It seems that staying in business for the Parkers meant keeping their heads above water and holding on to their undeveloped townsite. It was during the gloomy days of the early 1930's that Olmito developed a site that many older residents of Olmito remember with great joy. Where it was planned that the hotel-casino would be, a popular picnic site was developed.⁴⁴ It was built on the edge of Lake Olmito and had

a picnic pavilion, open-air dance hall, hot dog and concession stand, water sports on the lake, motor boat races and wooden bathhouse for the swimmers.⁴⁵ It was also around this time that the hurting Parker Company tried to sell large country lots instead of smaller city-sized lots.⁴⁶ This also failed, and the Parker Company could not outlast the bad financial times; like so many Rio Grande Valley land companies, it went bankrupt. Bankruptcy hit the Parker Company in 1937, and whatever plans they still had for Olmito were gone forever. The Parkers would never build the unforgettable unusual towns that they had wanted.

The next owner of the Olmito townsite was the Parker Company's vice president and leading salesman, William W. Huitt.⁴⁷ Huitt was one of the many land salesmen from the Valley who apparently received big wages during the land boom.⁴⁸ However, like many other people in the land business, Huitt lost nearly everything when the land market went bad and the Stock Market crashed. Though Huitt was the vice president of the Parker Company, it should not be assumed that he did anything shady or unethical when he purchased the Olmito townsite in bankruptcy court from his former employers. The reason that William Huitt, the vice president, had money, while Al Parker, the president, did not was due to an unfortunate event in Huitt's life. Huitt had received \$10,000 in 1933 for damages from a car accident during December of 1932. Sure, that was a lot of money during the dark days of the Great Depression, but the figure was high because the accident was so severe. It was no fender-bender where the victim claimed a bad case of whiplash. William Huitt was hit in his late model convertible Ford by a man named Earl Rambo, and sustained major injuries, while his car was totalled. Huitt may have broken many other bones, but there was still nothing wrong with his "backbone."⁴⁹

Although he almost died, Huitt managed to survive this terrible accident. For a while he stayed in the hospital in Brownsville in a body cast, unable to move. He then progressed to be sent home although he could not leave it. He later started getting around in a wheelchair and afterwards was able to move around on crutches. This slow, painful progression continued and Huitt began walking with two canes, then with one, and finally walked on his own power. His son, William Jr., remembers that when he walked, he did so with a limp.⁵⁰ It was such a terrible accident that it took Huitt years to recover.

With the money he received from the accident settlement, Huitt did two things. First, he bought a car business in Harlingen, naming it Huitt Motors and selling Buicks and Oldsmobiles. Then he purchased the Olmito townsite, where he had a home.⁵¹ It was on August 31, 1937, that William W. Huitt bought from the bankruptcy court the unsold portions of the Olmito townsite.⁵² The unsold portions of Olmito that the Parker Company previously owned amounted to 1290 lots, the lakeways and the alleys, most of which were still only on paper.⁵³ Huitt bought all this land which, only ten years earlier, during the land boom days, had sold for over one million dollars, for 3,580 dollars or about three dollars a lot.⁵⁴ However, Huitt's dreams for Olmito ended unfulfilled just as had those of the men who came before him.

Less than a year after he purchased the Olmito townsite at a bargain price, William Huitt, Sr. died of a heart attack at 46 years of age.⁵⁵ It seems that the car accident and recovery had taken its toll. Once again, Olmito's development was in question.

When William Huitt, Sr. died, the ownership of the townsite was passed to his family members. His wife had health problems and was not really a business woman. William Huitt, Jr. was a teenager at the time and was too young and inexperienced to take over the townsite.⁵⁶ Responsibility for the townsite thus fell on the shoulders of William Huitt, Sr.'s son-in-law, A.B. Rabel.⁵⁷ A.B. Rabel was husband of the Huitts' oldest child, and he himself was only a young man at the time. It has been under Rabel's ownership that the Olmito townsite has developed into the community it is today.

Rabel sold land to whomever had money, allowing easy terms. Fortunately, when he sold land he did not take into account a person's last name and thus broke down the ethnic barrier that formerly had marked Olmito.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, there were apparently no zoning laws, and many of the people who moved into Olmito starting in the 1940s built inferior quality homes, especially in the area of town closest to the expressway. This is still true today, as many of the homes in the front (east) part of town are of poor quality and run down. (It should be noted that there are some nice homes in this part of town too). On the back (west) side of town, the resaca properties, retaining their prime value through the years, have attracted people who have often build substantial homes. Thus, the previous ethnic division of Olmito has been replaced by a partly economic one. Basically, and with several exceptions, the poor-quality homes are found closest to the expressway and the higher-quality homes are found away from the expressway and near the beautiful resacas. This is basically how residential Olmito has developed to the present day.

While residential Olmito developed from a town of around 100 in the 1940's to a town today of 700 people, there were also some non-residential developments.⁵⁹ The two main businesses in town during this period of development are now closed. There was the old canning plant and the cotton gin.⁶⁰ The canning plant had an attached grocery store and was run by J. Alton Bennett, who when three months old, in 1904, moved to Olmito with his family. The canning plant canned green beans, garbanzos (a type of dried peas), tomatoes, spinach, sauerkraut, tomato juice and tomato sauce.⁶¹ The cotton gin was run by Jesse Abel, Sr. and Jesse Abel, Jr.; it closed around 1970.⁶² Although Olmito was developing and growing, it did not offer an abundance of employment opportunities and most residents worked outside the town in the area's agricultural business or in the neighboring cities such as Harlingen or Brownsville. This is still true today.

The services that Olmito offers are very limited as Olmito has remained an unincorporated town due mainly to a lack of money. It has a post office which dates to before 1930 and is not housed in a brand new building.⁶³ It has two grocery stores, a tortilleria and a gas station. It has three churches: a Bap-

tist Church, a Catholic Church and a Spanish Assembly of God Church. It also has a regular bus service to area cities which have replaced the passenger train which long ago left Olmito and other surrounding towns. An elementary school is located there and is part of the Los Fresnos School District. This is the fourth school district to which Olmito has belonged. Previously, Olmito children were part of the Olmito, Brownsville and San Benito school districts. It may be a surprise to many that at one time Olmito had its own school district which included a ten-room school with grades 1-12 and a social hall. The school and social hall, described as beautiful structures, were destroyed around 1979-1980.

Olmito also offers its residents, as well as other people in the Valley, a park. The park in Olmito has become a very controversial issue and has once again caused Olmito to become a town of unfulfilled dreams. It is the dream of the owner of the park, Lee McNamara of Brownsville, to have a park named after former Beatle and British rock musician, John Lennon, who was shot to death in 1980.⁶⁵ McNamara began leasing the 7.5 acre park to the county in 1981 and it is the county's responsibility to maintain it.⁶⁶ McNamara believes that John Lennon "did a great deal to promote peace and world harmony."⁶⁷ While many people do not see these ideas as John Lennon's legacy, they do identify Lennon as a world-famous musician. The park's main function is to host an annual music bash every October to honor Lennon.⁶⁹ McNamara's dream for John Lennon Memorial Park seems largely unfulfilled as the park has not promoted local peace, let alone world peace. McNamara himself says the park, "looks real bad."⁶⁹ It seems that the park has not developed the way Lee McNamara hoped it would.

On the other side of this controversial issue are many of the residents of Olmito, especially those who live in close proximity to the park. Many of these people seem in favor of a park of some type for Olmito, but not this particular park. One opponent of the park feels a park for something such as baseball would be fine, but not Lennon Park.⁷⁰ Like most people everywhere, many people in Olmito dream of a well-maintained park with swings, nice picnic tables, shady trees and beauty the whole family can enjoy. However, Lennon Park fails to meet their concept of a family-oriented park, and many of the people of Olmito have requested that it be shut down. Many feel that the park is a public nuisance. They say they can hardly sleep whenever a concert is held and that couples frequently use its ground for making love.⁷¹ One heavily-used area of the park has earned the nickname, "Lover's Corner."⁷² The concern has also been expressed that the park attracts undesirables. This may be due in part to the name of the park. John Lennon was a man who meant different things to different people. While some, like McNamara, see him as a promoter of world peace, many others see him as a drug-using negative role model for children of the "Just Say No" generation. The clash over John Lennon Park continues with the dreams of Lee McNamara and Lennon supporters colliding with the dreams of many of the people of Olmito.

The John Lennon Park controversy is just the latest case of

unfulfilled dreams in Olmito. From James B. Wells to Charles Lindsey to Al Parker to William Huitt to present, Olmito has been a town of projects that have not been realized. Many people love Olmito just the way it is, but when one looks at its history, one marvels at the way the "unusual city" has lived up to its nickname in a way no one could have foretold. One wonders how the town would have developed if just one of these men would have seen their dream come true.

Endnotes

1. The Brownsville Herald, 4 March 1904, 1.
2. Ibid., 7 March 1904, 1.
3. Ibid., 9 March 1904, 1.
4. Ibid., 11 March 1904, 1.
5. Ibid., 17 March 1904, 1.
6. Ibid., 25 March 1904, 1.
7. Ibid., 4 April, 1.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 1 April 1904, 1.
10. Minnie Gilbert, "Valley Place Names: Signposts Rooted in History," in Gift of the Rio: Story of Texas' Tropical Border land, ed. Valley By-Liners (Mission, Texas: Border Kingdom Press, 1975), 19.
11. Al Parker, Jr., personal interview, 12 June 1991.
12. The Brownsville Herald, 4 April 1904, 1.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 4 April - 5 May 1904.
16. Ibid., 9 April 1904, 1.
17. Cameron County Records, County Clerk's Office, Roll N, 509.
18. Walter P. Webb, ed., Handbook of Texas - Volume II (L-Z), (Austin, Texas: The Texas State Historical Association, 1956), 312.
19. Billy Faulk, personal interview, 19 June 1991.
20. The Brownsville Herald, 19 October 1915, 1.
21. Ibid., 2.
22. Ibid., 1 and 2.
23. Ibid., 1.
24. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 11 June 1991.
25. A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 10 June 1991.
26. Cameron County Records, County Clerk's Office, Grantee Book P/Q and Billy Faulk, personal interview, 19 June 1991.
27. A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 10 June 1991; and Billy Faulk, personal interview, 19 June 1991.
28. City Map of Olmito, published by Al Parker Securities Company of La Feria, Texas.
29. Mr. and Mrs. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 11 June, 1991 and A.B. Rabel, personal interview 18 June 1991.
30. A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 18 June 1991.
31. Mr. and Mrs. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 19 June 1991.
32. William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991;

A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 18 June 1991; and City Map of Olmito.

33. Cameron County Records County Clerk's Office, Grantee Book P/Q and City Map of Olmito.
34. The Brownsville Herald, 6 December 1942, 1F.
35. The Brownsville Herald, 1 January 1929, 1 and 6 December 1942, 1F and William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991.
36. The Brownsville Herald, 6 December 1942, 1F and A.B. Rabel, personal interviews, 10 June and 18 June 1991.
37. The Brownsville Herald, 6 December 1942, 1F.
38. Ibid., and A.B. Rabel, personal interview 10 June 1991.
39. A.B. Rabel, personal interview 10 June 1991.
40. Cameron County Records, County Clerk's Office, Grantor Book P/Q.
41. William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview 19 June 1991 and Mr. and Mrs. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview 11 June 1991.
42. The Brownsville Herald, 6 December 1942, 2F, William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991 and A.B. Rabel, personal interview 18 June 1991.
43. Al Parker Jr., personal interview, 12 June 1991.
44. Mr. and Mrs. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 11 June 1991 and A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 18 June 1991.
45. William W. Huitt, Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991.
46. A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 19 June 1991.
47. Ibid.
48. The Brownsville Herald, 6 December 1942, 1F.
49. William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Billy Faulk, personal interview, 19 June 1991; and Al Parker Jr., personal interview, 12 June 1991.
53. Cameron County Records, County Clerk's Office, Grantee Book H and Grantor Book P/Q and A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 10 June 1991.
54. Cameron County Records, County Clerk's Office, Grantor Book P.
55. William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991.
56. Ibid.
57. A.B. Rabel, personal interview, 10 June 1991.
58. William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June 1991 and A.B. Rabel, personal interview 10 June 1991.
59. Webb, Handbook of Texas, 312.
60. Mr. and Mrs. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 11 June 1991 and Al Parker Jr., personal interview, 12 June 1991.
61. Mr. and Mrs. J. Alton Bennett, personal interview, 11 June 1991.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid and William W. Huitt Jr., personal interview, 19 June, 1991.
65. The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 4C.
66. Ibid, 29 May 1991 and 10 June 1991.

67. Ibid., 9 June 1991 4C
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 29 May 1991.
70. Ibid., 10 June 1991.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 20 June 1991, 11.

by

Brian Robertson

South Texas has always depended upon water in one form or another to survive, grow and prosper. The earliest colonies were set up along the various rivers that flowed into the Rio Grande, the sites being chosen following the astonishing expedition of José Escandón in the mid-1700s. The development of irrigation in the latter part of the 1800s by people like George Brulay brought South Texas into the 20th century and insured its success.

In the same way, the Gulf of Mexico has always been a major factor in the life of our region. The port of Bagdad near the mouth of the Rio Grande in Mexico, for example, has an almost mystical allure to historians. The long-vanished town of Clarksville on this side of the river from Bagdad was another echo from a distant past.

With the importance of water, it certainly makes sense that the very first residents of Brownsville would be concerned about making their city the site of a major port. As early as 1854, the U.S. Army Engineers discussed the future and endorsed the idea. It was at that point not much more than a dream, however, because it is apparent that the money and the will were both lacking.

Technically speaking, however, such a plan seemed more than possible to those who were proposing it. The idea was to follow the same type of dredging program that the Mississippi River was getting. A twelve-foot depth was deemed appropriate, although that depth would eventually double, and then triple.

In 1865, the New York Tribune wrote about the Brownsville area and predicted the possibility that river traffic on the Rio Grande might extend upriver as far as El Paso - some 1,400 miles away. That never happened, although the same article goes on to make some rather unusual claims which, if true, represent a far different picture than the various books written about river traffic.

The newspaper article maintains that the Rio Grande River was navigable to 103 miles above Fort Ringgold in Rio Grande City. I was aware that the boats could go as far as Roma, and, according to some sources, perhaps to Laredo. The article goes one step further, however, and says that there was a certain period of time in the year--the five months from June to November--when a ship could actually travel as far as Kingsbury Falls, said to be 169 miles above Fort McIntosh-Laredo.

There seems to have been a sense of extreme pessimism that this part of the Wild Horse Desert could actually blossom. In 1878 Frank Leslie's Popular Magazine noted, "The whole region may be regarded as a rainless desert, unwatered by streams or rivers, and it ranks with other rainless districts in the world. The stunted vegetation will support a few cattle and sheep, but

can never be cultivated, never populated."

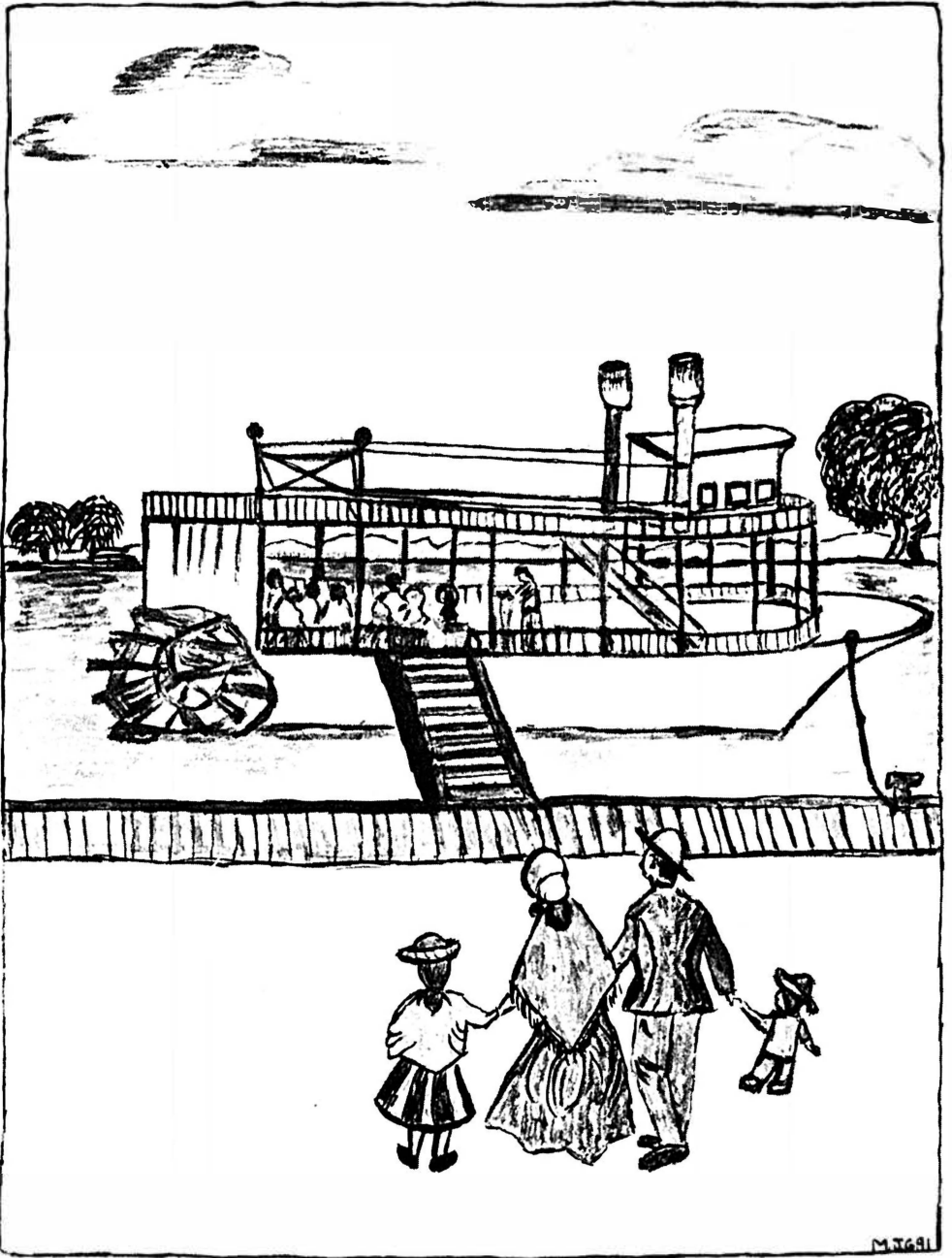
This was at a time, according to the writer, when the population of South Texas was a little shy on people and more than adequate when it came to horned toads, wild javelina hogs, scorpions and rattlesnakes.

The years that followed saw the remarkable story of the development of the Port of Brownsville. Needless to say, a number of enterprising individuals overcame whatever uncertainty Frank Leslie's magazine might have disseminated. The development of the port, like the irrigation projects that brought the river waters to farms miles from the Rio Grande was an ambitious undertaking that combined a vision with the technology of the time to produce amazing results.¹

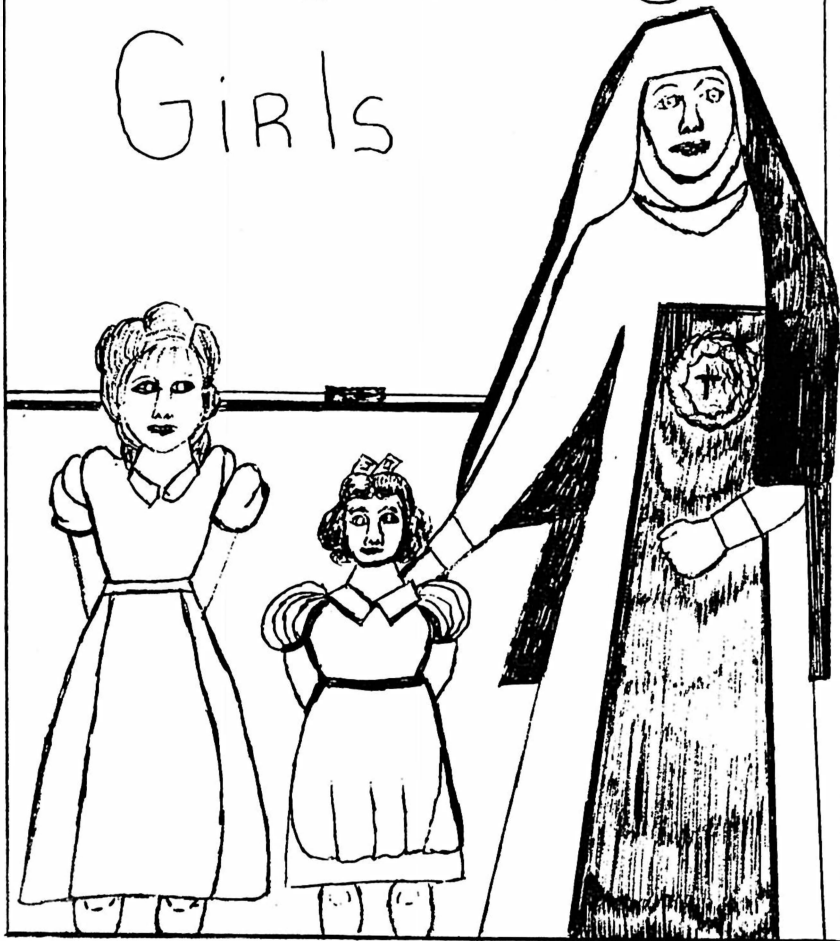
Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted with permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald.



Welcome
Girls



by

Rosalinda Olivares-Sosa

In March of 1853, four Sisters of the religious order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament arrived in Brownsville, Texas. They had been recruited from Lyons, France, for the purpose of establishing a Catholic school for the uneducated children of extreme South Texas. Unaware of the many challenges they were to confront, the Sisters set out to accomplish their religious goal of further implementing Catholicism to the people of this area. Thus, the history of the Sisters begins not only in Texas, but in the United States as well.

The order of the Incarnate Word traces its beginnings to Lyons, France, in 1925. The foundress of the order was a "saintly woman" by the name of Jeanne-Baptiste Chezard de Matel who was born near Roanne, France in 1596 to a noble family originally from Tuscany. Her father, Jean Chezard, had served as gentleman-in-waiting at the court of French kings Henri IV and Louis XIII. He had added the surname of Matel when he had purchased a chateau at the manorial domain of Matel near Roanne. It was there that he met his future wife, Jeanne Chaurier, who was not of the nobility, but possessed beauty and wealth.

From a young age Jeanne was to feel a spiritual calling to dedicate her life to Christ. It was then that she realized that to do this would found a new religious order, distinct from others, to which she would devote the rest of her life. Jeanne was to give her Order a name which the Lord had revealed to her in prayer: "The name I wish thee to ask is the Incarnate Word," adding that this Name eminently and excellently comprises all that He is.¹ The Emblem of the Order is represented by a crown of thorns, encircling the monogram of the Holy name of Jesus, I. H. S. Below is a heart surmounted by three nails and bearing the motto: Amor Meus. In 1625, she and two companions founded the Order in Lyons, but it would not be canonically approved until 1639 in Avignon. From these two sites of Lyons and Avignon the Order was to attract future members throughout France and later Ireland.

Jeanne de Matel did not receive her vows until the day of her death, September 11, 1670. The reason behind this was that the Order was a cloistered one; if she would have previously received her vows she would have been unable to carry out her mission without breaking the cloister. Shortly after her death, we learn that the following occurred:

At the request of her Sisters, a surgeon was called in to remove her heart, which was placed in a small lead casket and forwarded to Lyons. Her body was buried in front of the lowest step of the altar, this spot having been chosen as the place of honor for her who was ever so devoted to our Lord.²

A local member of the Bownsville congregation, Sister Judith Marie Saenz, explained this ritual, "It was customary in France that when a Holy person deceased, the heart was extracted from the body and stored as a symbol of purity and Christian devotion."³

The order of the Incarnate Word soon grew in popularity, membership increased, new convents were founded, and the boarding schools of the Sisters became an attraction for young ladies of the most respectable families in France. This was to hold true of the schools in Brownsville, where influential families of both Brownsville and Matamoros were to send their daughters to be educated to these nuns. It also became a tradition of the Order to provide free education to poor children. This was to be observed in the American houses until free education was made possible for the masses.

During the period of the French Revolution of 1789, religious institutions were no longer recognized by the Constitution and were to be suppressed. The sisters experienced a crucial and difficult period, and the following year they were expelled from their convents. The Sisters, not knowing what to do or where to go, were caught in a serious situation. Mother Patricia Gunning gives us information from the Annals of the Lyons monastery of the Sisters' situation:

Many of the Sisters knew not where to go. They feared to compromise those persons who would receive them, because that act of charity was punishable by death. They wandered here and there, asking of their friends and relatives a shelter for a few hours, after which they would continue their wanderings in search of some obscure retreat.

The nuns, along with members of other religious organizations, were not allowed to return to their native country until the end of the Revolution in 1801.

In 1850, the Sisters' faith and dedication were challenged when the Bishop of Texas, Jean-Marie Odin confronted them with a proposition. After making an extensive tour of his diocese, Bishop Odin realized that the area of South Texas was in dire need of priests and religious Orders. He decided to travel to his native France where he would seek religious volunteers willing to return with him to Texas to fulfill the need for further Catholic ministry.

The Bishop struck out, for he was rejected and turned down everywhere he went. He arrived in Lyons where he approached the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament. At the convent he explained his predicament to the Mother Superior, Angeliqve Hiver and to the Sisters:

If I were to throw a stone from this hill of Fourvier, it would probably fall on the head of some religious; yet if I ask for some generous souls who would be willing to come to Texas to make our Lord known and loved,

After listening to the plea of Bishop Odin, the Sisters at the Lyons Convent felt that this was a call to their order to further their ministry in Texas. The Sisters made no commitment. Knowing that the Bishop was to meet with Pope Pius IX in Rome, they asked a favor of Father Odin. The Sisters wanted to request from the Holy Father the Indulgence for the chapel of the monastery. The Bishop was to carry out this request, and Pope Pius IX granted the Indulgence with the condition that the Sisters send volunteers to establish an Order in Texas. This is how the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament arrived and founded the first convent of their Order in Texas.

Four Sisters left Lyons on March 18, 1852. The four Sisters were: Sister St. Ange Barre, Sister St. Ephrem Satin, Sister Dominic Ravier, and Sister St. Claire Valentine who was appointed Superior. Sister Dominic, a lay Sister was to serve as liaison for the group in honor of the cloister. The Sisters journeyed on "La Belle Assize" to New Orleans, accompanied by priests and other Sisters all making their way to Texas. Arriving in New Orleans, the Sisters were housed at the convent of the Carmelites where they spent a month. From New Orleans they travelled to Galveston on the "Lone Star", and stayed with the Ursulines. It was in Galveston where the Sisters were to receive a crash course in English and Spanish. Bishop Odin had decided that the Sisters would serve best in the Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville, Texas.

The Sisters were again accompanied by several priests belonging to the Order of the Oblates. They arrived in Point Isabel where they travelled by buckboard, escorted by U.S. soldiers en route to Fort Brown. Upon their arrival in Brownsville, they were the house guests of a Creole woman by the name of Madame Boucherie. The following days they were given the loan of a four-room farmhouse by a Mrs. Maxon. The furniture consisted of old trunks and boxes. When the Sisters were visited by a Father Musquiz of Matamoros to welcome them to the community, the only furniture that remotely resembled a chair was an old trunk. When Father Musquiz returned to his rectory, he generously sent a table and chairs to the Sisters.

The Sisters worked diligently at preparing their first school in Texas even before erecting a convent. The Sisters saw the importance of establishing a school before building a place of residence. Sister Judith Marie commented on the priorities of the Sisters, "The founding Sisters felt it necessary to open a school before constructing a convent, for their purpose in Texas was to educate the children before doing anything else."⁶ On May 7, 1853 the Sisters of the Incarnate Word opened their first school on Elizabeth Street, receiving boarders especially from Matamoros.

As the school got underway, the Sisters were faced with the problem of having no textbooks. But the resourceful Sisters temporarily solved this problem by printing their own texts with the use of a hand-operated press. Later they received their textbooks from New Orleans.

The next eight months were spent in organizing the construc-

tion of their convent. The land on which the convent was to be built had been donated by a Mr. Castaing. The Oblates were to give their help, even Father Verdet putting on his working clothes to help with the construction. It took every penny the Sisters had to erect this convent. They lived on bread and coffee so as not to spend their money on food. Finally, the convent was built, and the Sisters moved into their first convent in Texas.

The Sisters had succeeded in many accomplishments and soon were to be tested on their strength and dedication to their cause. They experienced many days with little provisions, and soon were to come face to face with the yellow fever epidemic that was to sweep through Brownsville and Matamoros. Due to the epidemic, the Sisters were forced to close the school, which denied them with their only source of income. Their only means of support came from a gentleman whose daughter had been a boarder:

"Mr. Solezzi, a gentleman from Matamoros, whose daughter was a boarding student at the convent, came to pay her board and tuition several months in advance. He explained to Mother St. Claire that he was about to make a long trip, and he felt that the Sisters were in need of the money. It provided a God-send, for it enabled them to meet the expenses incurred during the long siege of illness that followed.⁷

Shortly afterwards, the Sisters fell victims of the fever, but with the help of Madame Boucherie who was always there in their hour of need, they were nursed back to health. As the illness passed, the school once again re-opened its doors and the Sisters left the epidemic behind them.

The Mother Convent in Lyons sent reinforcements to the Texas house in 1854, again at the request of Bishop Odin. Sisters Mary Josephine and Mary Xavier arrived to join the congregation in Brownsville.

Once again, the area was to be struck with yellow fever, which caused the death of several of the Sisters. What followed was a series of raids by the famous border bandit, Juan Nepomoceno Cortina beginning in September 1859:

The Sisters at first shared the fears experienced by people of Brownsville, until they heard that Cortina with a dash of chivalry in his make-up, had ordered his men to throw a cordon around the convent, with strict orders that the nuns be permitted to remain undisturbed.⁸

As the raids of Cortina subsided, the Civil War was to make its presence known to Brownsville. Federal troops were on their way to Brownsville, and the Confederate soldiers stationed at Fort Brown decided to blow up the arsenal, along with a large supply of cotton, and to follow this with their evacuation of Brownsville. Many women and children sought refuge at the convent. Even the wives of both Union and Confederate officers

ended up taking sanctuary at the convent. The Sisters were to give equal treatment to the families of both armies. The school once again closed its doors to its students.

In 1867, the Sisters were unexpectedly faced with a tragedy. On October 7, a severe hurricane struck the Brownsville-Matamoros area. All that the Sisters had worked so hard to build was destroyed in a matter of hours. The convent was reduced to ruins, leaving the Sisters homeless. Almost immediately, the Oblates were there to render aid by offering them the use of a building which had been recently constructed as a school for boys. The School had been named St. Joseph's College.

With the help of Bishop Dobois, the Sisters erected a new convent which was located on St. Charles Street, and continued to serve not only as a residence for the Sisters, but as a school as well until it was razed in 1969.

It must be remembered that the purpose of the Order had been that of education. In 1889, the Sisters were asked by FATHER Parisot, O.M.I. to open a school for boys. The St. Joseph College had temporarily closed due to the relocation of the Brothers who were to teach at the school. This resulted in a problem for the Sisters because it meant breaking the cloister. Nevertheless, the Sisters would not allow obstacles to stand in the way.

The Sisters decided to solve their problem by purchasing land right across from the convent to accomodate the boys. An enclosed bridge was built which allowed the nuns to cross back and forth without endangering their cloister. Nothing seemed impossible to these women.

The Brownsville schools of the Order continued to grow and experienced a trend of progress. As the Brownsville-Matamoros communities increased, so did the need for education. The Sisters investigated different angles to improve their methods of education:

In 1885, they secured their Charter of Incorporation from the Texas Legislature, empowering the school to confer academic honors, following upon a twelve-year course of study. The Brownsville Convent maintained two academic departments: one in English and one in Spanish. The Spanish Academy was closed in 1908.⁹

Fifteen years later, the Oblate Fathers asked the Sisters to open a parochial school for the children of their parish, Immaculate Conception Church. The problem of the cloister arose once more. In order to reach a solution to this crisis, Bishop Peter Verdagner asked the Sisters to dissolve the cloister, in 1908. Several years later a school for the poor children of Brownsville was established in 1916, and took the name St. Francis Parochial School for poor Mexican children. Another school opened under the direction of the Sisters was that of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This school served the children belonging to the parish of the same name. It was founded in the early 1960's and survived a few short years. Both St. Francis and Immaculate Conception schools supplied the education needed by the Latin-American children of the community, and the need for the boys' school across from the

Convent was no longer felt. The boy's school was converted into a primary school for the Academy in 1925, and remained so until 1962 when the school was relocated next to the high school.

The high school had moved to a new location when the need for a modern building was required to meet accreditation standards. The land had been purchased by the Sisters in 1920, in a residential area of Brownsville consisting of forty acres. On June 7, 1926, Villa Maria High School was accredited by the Texas State Department of Education as a first class four-year high school.

It is with much sadness and regret that after sixty-five years of existence, Villa Maria High School will close its doors after the 1991-92 school year. The Sisters have chosen to close the school to comply with the needs of St. Joseph's Academy. The news has caused much sadness among past and present students who feel that Villa Maria was more than just a school, and that the Sisters were more than just teachers. The feeling is one of belonging to a family, surrounded by people who have a sincere concern for other individuals. The Sisters will continue their mission with the primary school only.

Almost 140 years have gone by since the Sisters of the Incarnate Word first set foot in Texas. Today the Congregation in Brownsville is amalgamated with the Sister group in Corpus Christi which serves as the Mother House for the Order. They have been successful in achieving their goals in Texas by the establishment of their schools and convents. They have been able to integrate both American and Mexican cultures and have turned out successful individuals who have served, and are serving, as respectable leaders of both the Brownsville and Matamoros communities. Mother Jeanne De Matel would certainly be proud of her daughters.

Endnotes

1. John M. Lozano, C.M.F. Jeanne Chezard De Matel and the Sisters of The Incarnate Word (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1983)
2. Sister Patricia Gunning, To Texas With Love (Austin: Best Printing Co. Inc., 1971), p.45.
3. Interview with Sister Judith-Marie Saenz. Incarnate Word Convent, Brownsville, Texas, 8 June 1991.
4. Gunning, p.49, as quoted in Annals of the Lyuons Monastery, p.95.
5. Gunning, p.64, as quoted from Sister Ephrem, Diary, Incarnate Word Convent ARchives, Corpus Christ, Texas, p.2.
6. Sister Judith-Marie Saenz
7. Gunning, p.77.
8. Ibid, p.85.
9. Gunning, p.32, as quoted in Annals of the Brownsville Convent.

ETHNIC STUDIES



by

Randy Davidson

Intermarriage between ethnic groups has long been studied for its usefulness as a measure of a minority group's assimilation into the general population. With regard to assimilation, outmarriage or exogamy has occupied a dual role: both as an indicator of assimilation and as a major force in assimilation. This duality has placed the study of exogamy at the heart of examinations into assimilation.

As they pertain to the United States, exogamy studies have examined the blending of various ethnic groups--particularly European ones--into the American "melting pot". Those Europeans now tend to be highly assimilated, their families having emigrated generations ago. Hispanics--Mexicans in particular--represent an assimilation in process. The influx of emigrés from south of the border has fluctuated sharply over the past century or more, subject to the whims of public policy and the cyclical nature of both the Mexican and American economies. But the flow has not died; in fact it is notable for its constancy.

What is seen by some as the apparent inability--even steadfast refusal--of the Mexican population to assimilate into American society has led to a body of work on Hispanics' role in America, and to academic speculation that Hispanics do not fit traditional assimilative patterns found in virtually every European population that has arrived in the United States. Unfortunately, this has not produced much study regarding the marital patterns of Hispanics. Rare is the in-depth examination into the nature of outmarriage by Hispanics and its consequences. The studies that do exist in some quantity are statistical analyses of the incidence of exogamy among Hispanics. These tend to be limited to single metropolitan areas and to three states with large Mexican-American populations: New Mexico, California and Texas. The lack of a generalized statistical study has led to broad gaps in time periods and localities from which marital data has been examined. One area that has fallen through the cracks is Cameron County, Texas, about which no such study exists. It is the purpose of this paper to fill a portion of that gap in research.

Three alternate statistical methods have been used in studying the rate of intermarriage by Hispanics: finding the percentage of Hispanic individuals who outmarry, finding the percentage of intermarriages among marriages involving a Hispanic, and finding the percentage of intermarriages among all marriages. The first two methods are most common and most useful, in that one can be converted to the other. For the sake of consistency, all studies which use the first method will be converted to the second method in this paper.

One study which used the third method was an examination of 19th-century Los Angeles that found intermarriages to be about

12% of all marriages in the city in 1850, 1860 and 1870, before declining to 8.7% in 1880.¹ An early look at Hispanic outmarriage is a 1942 study which also focused on Los Angeles. That study found exogamy in about 17% of marriages involving a Mexican-American for the year 1930.² A third Los Angeles study involved an in-depth exogamy research project by a trio from the UCLA Graduate School of Business Administration. They found that nearly 42% of all 1963 marriages involving a Mexican-American were exogamous.³

Not all California studies have concentrated on Los Angeles. A study which recorded data for the entire state for the years 1962, 1966, 1970 and 1974 found exogamy rates ranging from 51% to 55% of marriages involving Mexican-Americans, with exogamy declining slightly at each four-year interval.⁴ A second non-Los Angeles study examined San Bernadino County from 1970 to 1977 and found an exogamy rate of 51%.⁵

The data for California reveals that intermarriage was not uncommon even in the 1800's although it may have declined somewhat toward the end of the century. In the 20th century, there occurred a rapid rise in exogamy to the extent that, by the 1960's and 1970, fully half of all marriages involving a Hispanic also involved a non-Hispanic. The figures also illustrate that a high incidence of outmarriage was not restricted to the urban setting of Los Angeles, as the rate for the entire state in 1962 was 13% higher than the 1963 rate for Los Angeles.

Studies of Hispanics' marital patterns in New Mexico generally have focused on Albuquerque, but one report of 19th-century data concerned eight separate areas of the state. That study found Anglos outmarried at rates greater than 50% in all but one area for the years 1870 and 1880. Rates of outmarriage by Anglos ran as high as 100% in the heavily Hispanic areas.⁶ Another researcher found that there were about 100 Anglos in New Mexico at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, most of whom were married into prominent Hispanic families. The author stated intermarriage plummeted by the early 20th century due to the subjugation of Mexican-Americans. In a quantitative seven-county study, he found 16.3% of marriages involving a Hispanic to be exogamous in 1953, rising to 24.4% by 1977.⁷

Two of the more significant New Mexican studies looked at 20th-century Bernalillo County, where Albuquerque is located. Individually, they show fluctuating exogamy rates for the area, but together they reveal a general increase in intermarriage. The first study examined the years 1924, 1930, 1936 and 1940. It found exogamy rates of 13.2%, 8.1% 15.3% and 14.3% respectively.⁸ The later research on Albuquerque was done by Edward Murguia and W. Parker Frisbie and was cited in Murguia's in-depth book on outmarriage by Mexican-Americans. They found exogamy rates of 48% for 1967 and 39% for 1971. Murguia attributes this decline in the four-year span to the growing nativism of the Chicano movement that flourished at that time.⁹

The New Mexican research reflects a more volatile pattern of outmarriage than that found in California, but confirms the broad trend found in its neighboring state of a considerable rise in exogamy over the course of more than a century. This underlying

rise is masked by individual findings which reflect strong changes in the relationships between Hispanics and Anglos.

Texas has proven to be an even more popular site for studies of Hispanic outmarriage than California or New Mexico. San Antonio was the focus of one paper that found an exogamy rate of 9.3% for the years 1837 to 1860.¹⁰ A second examination of mid-19th century San Antonio by University of Texas professors Frank D. Bean and Benjamin S. Bradshaw found rates of 10.0% and 10.3% respectively, for 1850 and 1860. Bean and Bradshaw then compared those rates to ones for 1950 and 1960: 16.6% and 20.2%.¹¹ The Murguia and Frisbie study picked up where that one left off, compiling exogamy rates of 24% for 1964, 23% for 1967, 24% for 1971 and 27% for 1973.¹² Another study of this modern period uses longer time intervals and, thus, reflects the gradual increase in outmarriage by Hispanics rather than the apparent lull of the 1960's found by Murguia and Frisbie. It found exogamy rates of 16% for 1950, 20% for 1960 and 26% for 1973.¹³

Two recent studies have tapped the vast Mexican-American population in the rest of Texas. One looked at a 100-year period in sparsely populated Pecos County in West Texas. It found intermarriages to be negligible until 1940, when they comprised 2.2% of all marriages. That rose to 3.2% in 1970, 6.2% in 1975 and 8.0% in 1980.¹⁴ Those figures reflect a rapid increase in outmarriages, but comparisons are handicapped by the researcher's finding the ratio of intermarriages to all marriages rather than just to all marriages involving a Hispanic. Murquía and David Alvarez tabulated rates for Nueces County--essentially Corpus Christi--in 1960-61 and 1970-71--and for Hidalgo County in 1961 and 1971. For Nueces County, rates of 15% and 16% were found. Lacking any other figures for the area, these cannot be put into historical perspective, other than to be compared to the considerably higher rates found for the same period in San Antonio, Albuquerque and Los Angeles. Hidalgo County yielded rates of 5% and 9%, the lowest of any modern rates with the exception of Pecos County.¹⁵

These findings for Hidalgo County confirm what a Harvard graduate student found in preparing his doctoral dissertation on ethnic relations in McAllen. He writes, "As for cross-sex social intercourse between the groups, the rare sight of an Anglo and a Mexican appearing together in public is always an occasion for stares, nudges and whispered comments on the part of both Anglos and Mexicans."¹⁶ The student also took three-month samplings from selected years to produce what he admits is a "rough index of the rate of legalized intermarriage." His findings reveal exogamy rates of 0% for 1910, 9.1% for 1930, 5.6% for 1940 and 2.9% for 1947.¹⁷ Although his data's margin of error may be considerable, it does seem to indicate that the county's exogamy rates for Hispanics was in the single-digit range throughout this century.

One textbook on Hispanic Americans, reflecting on those 1961 and 1971 percentages in comparison to the much higher figures found elsewhere, described Hidalgo County as "an area around the city of Edinburg with substantial traditional prejudice and extreme poverty, probably very close to the traditional Southern

caste system."¹⁸ The startlingly low figures and the impression they have on authors like those just cited and their readers cause one to wonder whether the same situation holds true for Cameron County, particularly Brownsville, which has a reputation for ethnic integration. Also to be addressed in this paper is whether intermarriage figures alone project an accurate image of the "social distance" between ethnic groups.

As Brownsville's development stretches back much farther than that of Hidalgo County, into the era when Mexicans were a dominant political and economic force, we might expect to find more acceptance of intermarriage there. Likewise, its nearness to the Gulf lends Brownsville an air of cosmopolitanism common to port cities and would tend to break down provincial prejudices.

Indeed, we find that marriages between Anglos and Mexicans began as soon as the two ethnic groups confronted each other in the Rio Grande Valley. As a local history states, "...There were enough Anglo-Americans and Mexican-Americans interested in acculturation and intermarriage to create a degree of ethnic relaxation in Brownsville from the first."¹⁹ Mixed marriages were entered into by numerous prominent families in the mid 1800's, a feature which still characterizes Brownsville. One such union which predated the founding of Brownsville was that of Adolphus Glaevecke, one of the more colorful characters of the city's first 50 years. Glaevecke, a German immigrant, arrived in the Valley in 1836 and married Concepción Ramirez, a relative of the influential and wealthy de la Garza family.²⁰ He held various political offices until the 1890's, but perhaps is most noteworthy for having been an arch-nemesis of his cousin, the notorious Juan Cortina. Glaevecke had pinned a cattle-rustling charge on Cortina but, despite the best efforts of Cortina and his men, escaped injury during the 1859 raid on Brownsville.²¹ Another early immigrant who outmarried upon arriving in Brownsville was the Irishman, Edward Dougherty. Dougherty, who married Marcela Garcia of Camargo, set up a law practice and became district judge. Two other examples of early Lower Rio Grande Valley intermarriages involve men who made their fame in the Coastal Bend area. James Power came to the area in 1827 and married Dolores de la Portilla, daughter of a former mayor of Matamoros. Power went on to become a co-founder of Refugio, Texas. Mifflin Kenedy's lasting fame is for his massive ranch holdings north of the Valley and for the county which bears his name, but he held considerable sway in Brownsville as a part-owner of a riverboat line and as a leader in a top political faction. He, too, was part of an intermarriage, having wed Petra Reséndez Vda. de Vidal of Mier.²²

In examining marital data for Cameron County, three years were chosen for their ability to reveal any broad trend that might exist, and for their compatibility with studies of other regions. The first year examined was 1870, one of the first years for which marriage licenses at the Cameron County Courthouse seemed both reasonably complete and legible. The second year selected was 1920, a period of heavy Mexican immigration due to the tumult of that nation's revolution. Unlike 1870, 1920 is a relatively neglected era in the field of outmarriage by Hispan-

ics, and there are only a couple of studies to which this data can be compared. Lastly, 1970 was used for the modern sample because this period, 1960-1975, is the most intensely studied. For the first two years studied, every marriage license on file at the courthouse was examined. Because of the county's growth only every fifth license could be examined for 1970. Individuals were categorized as Hispanic or non-Hispanic strictly on the basis of their surnames. Although numerous individuals found in the county records were apparently of mixed ancestry, the surname method was employed because it is the method most commonly used by those studies to which this data will be compared. Additionally, determining the ethnic status of long-dead individuals would prove to be a tedious and ultimately futile task since the researcher then would need to determine what fraction of Hispanic ancestry constitutes a Hispanic.

For the year 1870, a total of 150 marriages were recorded in Cameron County. Of those, 117 were endogamous Hispanic unions, 15 were exogamous marriages, and 18 were endogamous Anglo unions. The exogamy rate for Hispanic marriages is found by dividing the number of all marriages involving a Hispanic into the number of those which were exogamous, or $15/(117+15)$. This produces an exogamy rate of 11.4% for 1870.

A total of 544 marriages were recorded in 1920. Of those, 350 were endogamous Hispanic, 53 were exogamous and 41 were endogamous Anglo. The exogamy rate for Hispanic marriages was $53/(350+53)$, or 13.2%.

As previously stated, only one-fifth of the approximately 2,000 marriage licenses filed in 1970 were examined. Of the 399 sampled, 288 were endogamous Hispanic, 51 were exogamous and 60 were endogamous Anglo. The exogamy rate for Hispanic marriages was $51/(399+51)$, or 15.0%.

In comparing these figures to the rates found in other regions for the 19th century, it is striking how close the figures are. Bean and Bradshaw found a 10.3 exogamy rate for San Antonio in 1860. A study of Los Angeles found intermarriages to be at about 12% of all marriages in 1870. Given the area's predominance of Hispanics at the time, intermarriages as a proportion of all marriages involving a Hispanic could not be too much higher. Brownsville's 11.4% rate seems to indicate that its ethnic relations were quite similar to those of the two other cities along what was then the Southwestern frontier.

Cameron County's exogamy rate of 13.2% for 1920 reveals a slightly more moderate rise in the rate than that found in Los Angeles, which had a 17% rate for the nearest year compiled, 1930. But the Cameron County figure matches exactly that found in Albuquerque in 1924.

While Cameron County's rates for the first two sample years are comparable to those found elsewhere, the 1970 rate, 15% is far outdistanced by the approximately 50% found for the state of California and San Bernadino County, the 39% found in Albuquerque for 1971, and even the 24% found in San Antonio in 1971. The local rate is comparable to that found for Corpus Christi, and is considerably higher than Hidalgo County's 9% and Pecos County's 3.2%.

On the surface, these findings indicate that Brownsville's attitude toward intermarriages--its social distance between the ethnic groups--was comparable to that of other Southwestern cities in 1870 and 1920. Brownsville then seemingly lagged behind the other more "progressive" metropolitan areas. There may be compelling sociological, economic and political factors at work in determining the figures found in Cameron County and the rest of South Texas, but one key factor which generally has been ignored by researchers is demographics. Specifically, the ratio of Hispanics to Anglos can have a tremendous effect on an area's intermarriage rates. In cities where Hispanics are few, the option to outmarrying is less available than in areas like Cameron County, where there is little difficulty for Hispanics to marry within their ethnic group.

There have been two studies which examined expected exogamy rates (EERs), that is, the rate at which Hispanics would outmarry if choosing a spouse, was made completely at random. This removes any ethnic imbalance when comparing the tendency to outmarry in two separate cities. The first study to look at expected exogamy rates was the UCLA report. It found that the EER for Los Angeles in 1963 was nearly 95% due to the area's low concentration of Hispanics then.²³ Actual exogamy rate (AER) for the city was 42% for an AER/EER ratio of 42/94.7 or 44.4%. This means that the tendency of Hispanics to marry Anglos was 44.4% of what it would have been had their choices of who to marry been done randomly, without any factors such as prejudice, societal norms, economic imbalance or segregation involved. Stripping these factors from the calculations helps determine just how large a role they play in spouse selection. The researchers compared that finding to San Antonio from 1940 to 1955. While the actual exogamy rate for the city was 16%, far below that found in Los Angeles, the expected exogamy rate also was significantly lower: 79.5%²⁴ This yields an AER/EER ratio of 20.1%, still less than half that found for Los Angeles.

Four years later, Bean and Bradshaw examined expected exogamy rates when researching intermarriage in San Antonio in 1850, 1860, 1950 and 1960. They sought to find whether observed increases in outmarriage by Hispanics were attributable solely to demographic changes, or that certain social barriers to mixed marriages had eased. While actual expected rates of exogamy rose from 67.4% to 74.7% The AER/EER ratio rose from 14.8% in 1850 to 27% in 1960, supporting the authors' conclusion that "normative factors inhibiting intermarriage between persons of Spanish and non-Spanish surname have weakened from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century."²⁵

Turning to Cameron County, we find the area's considerable Hispanic majority produces expected exogamy rates much lower than those found in either Los Angeles or San Antonio. The date for 1870 calculates to an expected exogamy rate of 29.2% as only 51 of the 300 individuals wed in the county that year had non-Hispanic surnames. The actual exogamy rate was 11.4% yielding an AER/EER ratio of 39.0%, nearly as high as that found for Los Angeles in 1963.

In 1920, despite the influx of Mexicans during the

convulsions which gripped their homeland for the previous decade, Anglos made up a considerably larger share of the marrying population than they had 50 years earlier. Of 1088 persons wed in Cameron County that year, 335 had non-Hispanic surnames. Thus, the expected exogamy rate jumped to 47.1% for an AER/EER ratio of 28.0%. Thus, other "normative factors" appear to have increased from 1870 to 1920, not decreased as simply examining the actual exogamy rates would indicate. This lessened tendency to intermarry is compatible with the widely held perception that relations between Mexicans and Anglos worsened over the period. Much of the Mexican population lost its land and stature from 1870 to 1920, having come under Anglo domination.

By 1970, steady immigration had increased the Hispanic population's majority status. Of 798 spouses in the sample from 1970, 171 have non-Hispanic surnames. The expected exogamy rate fell to 35.4% which, when matched with the actual exogamy rate of 15.0% produces an AER/EER ratio of 42.4%. This is much higher than the 1920 figure, slightly higher than the 1870 percentage, and nearly as high as Los Angeles' result for 1963. This alters drastically the original perception of the more recent data on intermarriage. The notion that Los Angeles is vastly more accepting of Hispanic/Anglo unions is not supported upon closer scrutiny. The highly imbalanced ethnic makeup of border towns like Brownsville has distorted comparisons of exogamy rates to the extent that inaccurate judgements can be produced by the figures.

The findings contradict the assertion made by scholars that South Texas is uniformly a highly segregated and racially tense area. While expected exogamy rates have not been provided for Hidalgo County, it is apparent that Cameron County does have a considerably more liberal attitude toward intermarriages. The bicultural reputation clearly is not mere public relations. However, there is much room for further study. Unresolved are questions on whether increases in intermarriage have continued since 1970, what factors have influenced trends in intermarriage in Cameron County, and, most importantly, what have been the consequences of this phenomena here and elsewhere.

Endnotes

1. Richard Griswold del Castillo La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p.69.

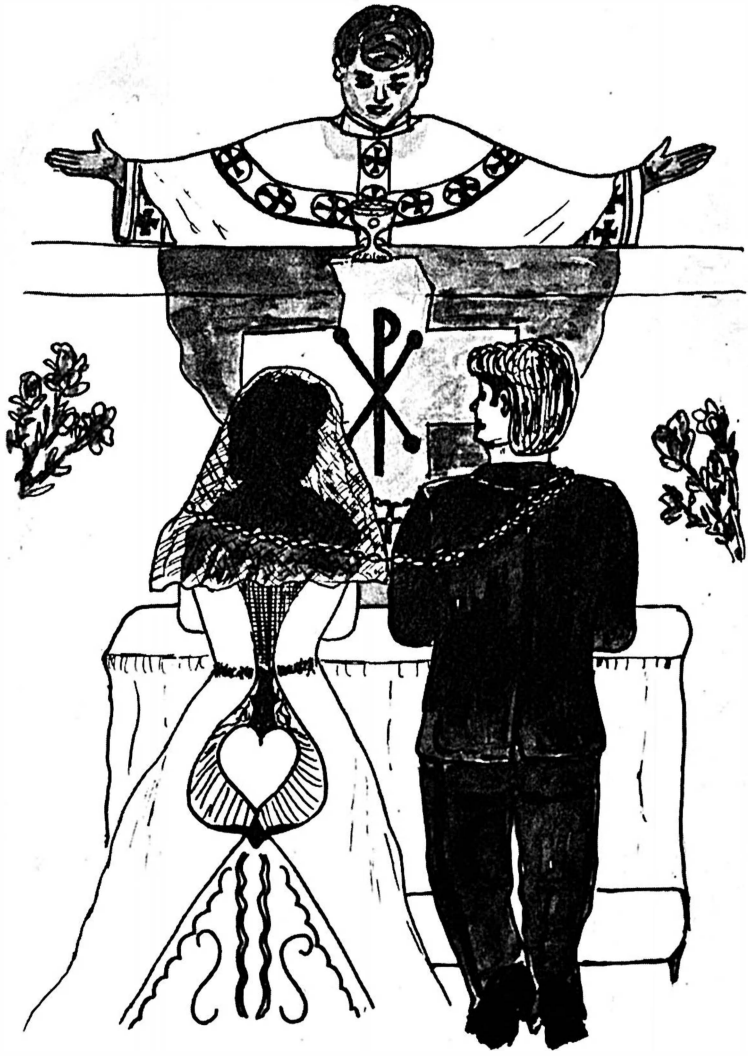
2. Constantine Panunzio, Intermarriage in Los Angeles, 1924-33, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 47 (March 1942), pp. 691-692.

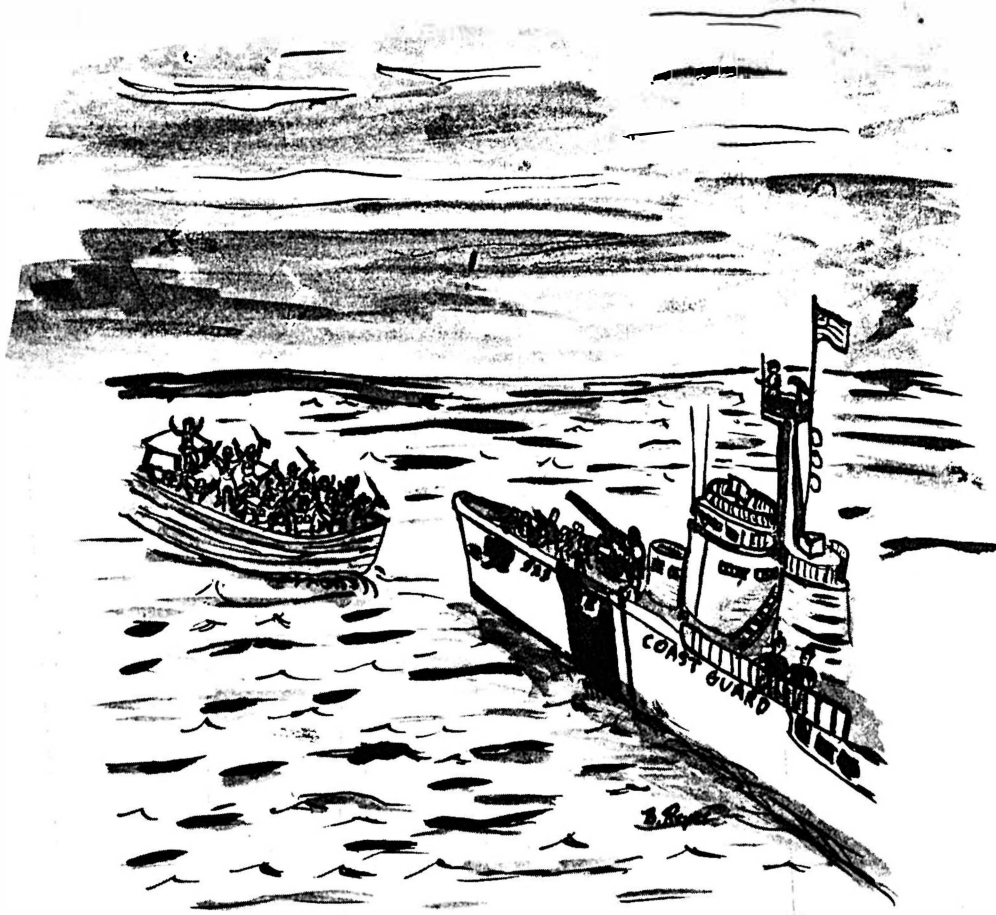
3. Frank G. Mittelbach and others, Intermarriage of Mexican-Americans, Mexican-American Study Project, UCLA Graduate School of Business Administration (1966), p.7.

4. Cited in Edward Murguia, Chicano Intermarriage: A Theoretical and Empirical Study, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1982), p.49.

5. Cited in Murguia, p.49.

6. Darlis Miller, "Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Southwest: The New Mexico Experience, 1848-1900," New Mexico Historical Review, Vol. 57 (Oct.1982), p.341.
7. Louis M. Holscher, "Hispanic Inter-marriage: Changing Trends in New Mexico," Agenda, Vol. 10 (Nov./Dec. 1980), p.4.
8. Carolyn Zeleny, Relations Between the Spanish Americans and Anglo Americans in New Mexico, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1944 (NY: Arno Press, 1974), p. 322.
9. Murguia, p.49.
10. Jane Dysard, "Mexican Women in San Antonio, 1830-1860: The Assimilation Process," The Western Historical Quarterly, Vol.7 (Oct. 1967), pp. 369-370.
11. Frank D. Bean and Benjamin S. Bradshaw, "Inter-marriage between Persons of Spanish and Non-Spanish Surname: Changes from the MidNineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Century," Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 51 (1970), p.394.
12. Murguia, p.48.
13. Avelardo Valdez, "Recent Increases in Inter-marriage by Mexican-American Males: Bexar Co., Texas, from 1971 to 1980," Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 64 (March 1983), p.137.
14. Ralph B. Cazares and others, "Mexican-American Inter-marriage in a Non-Metropolitan Context," Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 65 (June 1984), p. 629.
15. Murguia, p.49.
16. Ozzie G. Simmons, Anglo-Americans and Mexican-Americans in South Texas, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1952 (NY: Arno Press, 1974), p. 162.
17. Simmons, p. 163.
18. Joan Moore and Harry Pachon, Hispanics in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1985), p.108.
19. Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1991), p.78.
20. Kearney and Knopp, p.32.
21. Kearney and Knopp, pp. 109,111.
22. Kearney and Knopp, pp.73,151.
23. Mittelbach and others, p. 63.
24. Ibid., p.63.
25. Bean and Bradshaw, pp. 394-395.





A Historical Sketch
of Brownsville's Cuban Community

by

Michael López

There has been at least a tenuous connection between Brownsville and Cuba from the first generation of the city's history. Local rancher, bandit, and politico Juan Cortina had a contract in the 1870s with the Cuban government to ship them all the cattle he could smuggle across the Rio Grande.¹ Once the farmers had developed a method to irrigate their farms from the Rio Grande River and the Valley started to boom in the early 20th century, one of the most important local crops was sugar cane. In this period, the Brownsville Herald constantly wrote articles comparing the sugar cane in the Valley to that of Cuba.

Furthermore, there has always been a small Cuban community in Brownsville. The 1850 census shows five people reporting a Cuban background. However, there never was more than a handful of Cuban businessmen in Brownsville until after Castro took over in Cuba. The 1980 census indicates that 137 Cubans lived in Brownsville at that time.

This article will concentrate on the time span from 1950 to 1990. It is during this period that the Cubans have played a major part in the history of Brownsville.

On March 7, 1958 four men looked suspicious to the Customs officials as they attempted to cross the International Bridge between Brownsville and Matamoros. They were found to be carrying \$200,000 in smuggled gold and pearls.² After talking to the men, the Customs officials discovered that the confiscated items were to be used as payment for an upcoming attempt by a group of Cubans to launch a boat from the Brownsville area in an effort to join up with Fidel Castro and help fight in his revolution. The Brownsville police were notified and together with the Coast Guard began to investigate the possibility of a Cuban army launching a boat from Brownsville.

On March 27 at 5:00 a.m. two Coast Guard boats swooped down on the 70-foot trawler "Orion" of Nicaraguan registry.³ Coast Guard patrol boat 83342 rammed into the "Orion" midship on the port side and boarded her without any resistance. On board, they found 35 Cuban revolutionaries and a large amount of army supplies. Among the supplies was a 50 caliber tripod machine gun, dozens of Thompson's and Johnson submachine guns, a mortar and a stock of ammunition. They also found first-aid kits, surgical supplies, canteens, olive drab coveralls, rain slickers and gun cleaning equipment.⁴ The rebels also had four ten-men rubber life rafts which the Cubans were going to use for landing in Cuba.

The rebels considered themselves a fighting unit with a "command staff" consisting of a commander, Arnaldo G. Barrón, and a vice-commander, Mario Ibarra Lecour. They also had a surgeon and a Protestant chaplain named Mosqueda Avilán. The group then

had seven captains.⁵ All the rebels wore olive drab battle dress with red arm bands lettered "Julio 26" or July 26 which was the symbol of the Cuban rebels led by Fidel Castro, who was trying to overthrow the government of Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista. The rebel leader, Barrón, told the police that the plan was to join Castro in his Sierra Maestra mountain hideout in Cuba.⁶ Before the rebels were driven away to the country jail, they lined up on the dock and sang their national anthem.

The U.S. Marshall's office in Houston put a ban on newspapers, refusing to allow journalists to interview the rebels. However, Barrón managed to get a note to the newspapers stating that he "felt that the Cuban rights had been violated by their arrest and that they were fighting for democracy in Cuba and that the United States should help us".⁷

Barrón asserted that he and his men would go on a hunger strike until conditions were met. One condition was that the United States ban arm shipments to the Cuban dictator Bautista or allow shipments of arms to the rebels. Secondly, the rebels should be allowed to speak to the press to focus national attention on their cause. The Cubans vowed they would "not eat for a week or a month, however long we are in jail, even if we starve to death."⁸ The Cubans were charged with violation of the United States Neutrality Law. Under this law, preparations on United States soil for acts of violence against a foreign government is prohibited.

Bond was set by U.S. Commissioner Otto Reichert at \$7,500 for each of the crewmen. Unless they posted their bond, the rebels would have to remain in jail until the federal grand jury met on May 11.

On March 28 the Brownsville Herald filed an official protest on the secrecy ban covering the 35 Cuban rebels, but could get nowhere. Eight of the Cubans had been transferred to Mercy Hospital as a consequence of their self-imposed hunger strike, which was in its fifth day.

Commander Barrón managed to send a protest communiqué addressed to the United Nations, even though there was still a media ban on them. It was signed by himself and 34 others and stated that "the Orion had been seized 16 miles off the coast which was 4 miles beyond the territorial waters of the United States."¹⁰

On April 1 the rebels refused to meet the \$7,500 bond placed on them. A wire was sent to them by a New York physician belonging to the "July 26" movement in New York stating that the rebels had met their objective by having attracted public attention to their cause, and so they should end their hunger strike.¹¹ Fourteen of the Cubans were by then at Mercy Hospital and were being fed intravenously with glucose, mineral, vitamin and saline solutions. A group of Cuban followers of Fidel Castro living in Mexico City scheduled a meeting in front of the American Embassy to protest the seizure of the rebel ship near Brownsville, Texas. In an editorial, the Brownsville Herald deplored the use of secrecy by the United States government, reporting that Congressman Joe Kilgore and Senator Lyndon Johnson had been notified to see if they could help.¹²

On April 2, the prisoners were broken up, in an attempt to end the hunger strike, then in its seventh day. The two group leaders, Commander Barrón and his vice-commander were taken out of the Brownsville jail and sent to Corpus Christi. There they were placed without warning in the Nueces County jail. Others were taken to the Hidalgo County jail in Edinburg. There was a protest from the local papers, which managed to get a tip and were on hand to snap pictures of the leaders as they were being placed in cars and driven away. The ploy did not work, and there were by then 18 Cubans at Mercy Hospital. County Health officer Dr. Evean B. Hume was asked how long the Cubans could last without eating. He replied that they could be kept alive indefinitely by being fed through tubes.

Federal District Judge James V. Allred ordered all the leaders that had been jailed elsewhere to be returned to Brownsville as they had been taken away in violation of their rights.

On Thursday, April 3 the United States Department of State placed an embargo on all arms shipments to Cuba and the United States Marshall returned the four rebel leaders to Brownsville. The Cubans then lifted their eight day self-imposed hunger strike and began to eat again.¹³ The press was finally allowed to talk to the prisoners. The Cubans wanted to thank the people of Brownsville for the kindness they had been shown and told how the local police department had maintained a professional attitude about the whole incident.

On April 4 Federal District Judge James Allred lowered the bond on the prisoners. The leaders' bonds were lowered from \$7,500 to \$1,500 while the other 33 members had their bonds reduced to \$500 each.¹⁴ The group's chaplain, Mosqueda Avilán, was set free on his own recognizance. When the group boarded the U.S. Border Patrol van to go back to jail, they were cheered by a crowd which had gathered outside the Post Office building.

Only two of the rebels could post bond: Vice Commander Mario Lacour and private Carmelo Ramos, the Puerto Rican member of the group. Lacour said he was going to New York and would work hard to get the bond money for the rest of the rebels. The total bond for the rest would be \$17,000. The remaining rebels requested permission to attend Easter services at the Catholic Church, but the request was denied. Priests from local parishes were allowed to enter the jail instead.

During this period, many church groups visited the Cubans in jail to bring them food and supplies or just to talk. The Cubans were very moved by this outpouring of charity and good will shown by the citizens of Brownsville.

The remaining 32 rebels posted bond on April 10. The bonds were made through a midwest bonding company called the United States Bonding and Insurance Co., in Indianapolis, Indiana. They refused to release the name of the person or persons who had arranged the bonds.

Fifteen of the rebels were to remain in Brownsville while they awaited their trial, which was set to begin on March 11. The rest of the men would depart for New York with their promise they would return in time for their trial.

The remaining group would maintain military discipline while

they stayed in Brownsville. Commander Barrón had kept strict military discipline throughout the whole period. It was reported that every time he approached any of his men on the third floor of the jail, they would snap to attention and click their heels. Barrón reminded his men that even though he was one of the men going to New York, he expected the rebels who were staying in Brownsville to maintain order among themselves. He set up a five-man "junta" to watch over the group.¹⁵

Local citizens had already come forward with job opportunities and economic help for the rebels who were going to remain. The Reverend Pablo Cotto of the Mexican Christian Church arranged for the Cubans to stay in the Bella Vista Church while the city made arrangements with the nearby fire department to allow the Cubans to use their toilet and shower facilities.¹⁶

On April 14, the rebels wanted to show their appreciation to the city for all they had done for them. They presented Brownsville with a national flag of Cuba that had once flown over Chaplain Avilán's church back in Cuba. Mayor M.M. Vicars accepted the flag on behalf of the city.

The trial began on May 19, with the Cubans pleading not guilty to the charges against them. During the trial it was learned that on March 25 they had purchased ammunition and supplies from Whitman's Army Surplus Store in Brownsville. Bernard Whitman, owner of the store, testified that they had purchased \$216.00 worth of 30.06 rifle ammunition from his store on March 25.¹⁷ Apparently they had bought most of their army supplies from Mexico. They had driven the equipment to Boca Chica Beach in the back of two pick-up trucks and then transferred the arms and ammunition from the beach to a Texas registered shrimp boat with the help of an outboard motor boat. It was reported that on one of the trips, the boat capsized near the beach and the rebels had to dive in to retrieve the boat and some of the supplies.

The shrimp boat then sailed out a few miles to the "Orion," which was anchored and waiting for them. The defense attorney wanted to know how the authorities found out about the "Orion" and the whole operation. They were informed that the authorities knew all along and had even planted one of their own men, named Treviño, on the shrimp boat to help transfer the weapons and supplies. He was to call when everything had been loaded and the ship had set sail. District Judge Allred was concerned about the possibility of entrapment and about the credibility of Treviño since he had been fired from the police department in the past. All the testimony was translated into Spanish for the Cubans by Jessie Sloss, who was very active in Brownsville.

The trial ended on May 23 with all the Cubans found guilty of conspiring to violate neutrality and fire-arms laws. District Judge Allred sentenced the men on May 24. He gave the two leaders of the group, Commander Barrón and Vice-Commander Lecour three year sentences which he suspended for five years. The remaining rebels were put on probation for three years. In an act of kindness, Judge Allred then set the chaplain's probation aside because he said that he "did not want to condemn a minister".

Most of the Cubans presently residing in Brownsville came

after Castro announced that Cuba would establish a communist government. This was the period from 1960 to 1962. The Cubans immigrating to Brownsville, like those that went to other parts of the United States, enjoyed a higher social class background than many Mexican immigrants.¹⁸ They were educated professionals, managerial and middle class workers. Such groups were the ones most affected by the changes in social and agrarian reforms as part of the nationalization of businesses in Cuba.¹⁹

The Cubans came to Brownsville because some, like Rafael Rigo, owner of an international pipe company, had relatives here to help them get permission to leave Cuba. Rigo's aunt, Mrs. Reynaldo Santiso of Brownsville, helped him leave Cuba.²⁰ Mrs. Santiso said that many of the Cubans residing in Brownsville tried very hard to help their relatives leave Cuba. One interesting anecdote she told was how the Cuban government required the people who wanted to emigrate from Cuba to leave all their personal belongings behind. The cars had to be left in running condition and if the car did not work, then it had to be fixed before they could leave. Mrs. Santiso said that many automobile parts left Brownsville during that period.²¹

Many of the Cubans arrived in Brownsville without any personal belongings and some with only the clothes on their back. Miss Yolanda Gonzalez, a local historian, tells an extraordinary story about Dr. Rio De León who had a practice on Palm Boulevard. Since Dr. De León could not take his medical diploma with him when he left Cuba, he cut it up into small pieces and mailed the pieces to different relatives. When he arrived in Brownsville, the relatives mailed the pieces of the diploma to him and he put it together again.²²

The valley was very fortunate that many of the Cubans who came here were doctors. They filled a real need since the Valley has always had trouble attracting good doctors. Some great doctors like Dr. Armador, Dr. Pele and Dr. Rio De León set up practices in the Valley and greatly improved the medical care of Brownsville and the surrounding towns. The lawyers who came soon found that they were running into roadblocks since there was no comparable shortage of lawyers. Required to take bar exams in English, most of the Cuban lawyers headed to South America and set up law practices there instead of in the Valley.²³

The Cubans who were not professionals had a middle class background and soon found themselves opening up various businesses in town. National statistics show that Cubans were more likely than other Hispanics to obtain financing through conventional financing rather than through commercial sources. They also had relatives or friends who were well established in the professions and capable of lending them start-up capital.²⁴

By the seventies, the Cuban community began to gain political influence in the Valley. In the economic crisis which Brownsville was experiencing, the Cubans seemed to be a godsend. Many of the politicians saw them as the great saviors of the city. Under the leadership of men like Marcelo Hernández, the Cubans began to have influence in the city political system. In the early 1970's the Cuban leaders got together and decided to start an organization that would promote Cuban business as well

as maintain their Cuban heritage for their children. They named their organization the Circulo Cubano-Americano (Cuban American Circle), with members drawn from Brownsville to McAllen.²⁵ The organization grew and by the 1980's they had about 100 dues-paying members.²⁶ The Cuban group hoped to be able to link up with other Cuban communities along the Gulf of Mexico. They felt that the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to Yucatan was like a giant letter C and at the beginning of the letter C was Cuba itself. There were concentrations of Cubans in cities like Tampa, New Orleans, Houston, Brownsville, Veracruz, and Mérida.²⁷ They wanted to link up with the other communities to control most of the major ports along the Coast. They were hoping to form a partnership with the other cities to help each other so that they could control international trade. They hoped that if a Capitalist Cuba should be restored, they would also be able to link up with their mother country.

By far the biggest endeavor the Cuban Circle attempted was the building of the Brownsville Country Club under the leadership of Marcelo Hernández. The streets were named after famous Cubans, with the main street, San Marcelo, being named after Marcelo himself.

In January 1983, the Cuban Circle decided to put up a bust of Jose Martí (the hero of Cuban Independence) in Washington Park. The City Commissioners approved the project, but the citizens of Brownsville could not understand why anyone would want to put a bust of a foreign hero in an American park.²⁸ Dagoberto Barrera wrote a letter to the editor of the Brownsville Herald questioning the action of the Commissioners. He asked why, with so many American heroes to commemorate, the city would want to place the bust of a foreigner in the park?²⁸ No one wondered why, if American heroes are the only ones who should be honored in the park, there should be a bust of Father Miguel Hidalgo (a hero of Mexican Independence) there. The dedication was set for January 30, 1983. The bust was made in Miami by a famous Cuban sculptor, Tony López, who had sculptures all over the world. On January 28, they placed the bust on its column in the park, and it was to be dedicated two days later. However, someone took a baseball bat and destroyed it in less than two days.³⁰ Some of the Cubans felt that Dagoberto Barrera had done it.³¹ One even called Dagoberto at home to question him about it.³¹ The police blamed it on a group of youngsters known as the La Parra gang which had caused problems for the neighborhood over the years by overturning headstones in the cemetery. The Cuban Circle still went ahead with their celebration on January 30. Jesse Sloss, who had translated during the trial of the Cuban rebels in 1958, wrote a letter of apology to the Cuban community which was published in the Brownsville Herald.

By 1983, the Cuban Circle began to fall apart. There are three different theories for the break-up of the Circle. The first was that many of the older Cubans wanted the Circle to be a Catholic organization, and many of the Cubans were not Catholic. When the older Cubans insisted that that requirement be written into the group's constitution, many of the non-Catholics backed out of the Circle. The second theory was that the Cuban families

quarrelled among themselves and could not get along with each other. Eventually everyone went his own way, and the Circle broke up.³³ The third theory--which seems to be the most plausible--was that in August 1983 Marcelo Hernandez found himself in trouble with the citizens of the Brownsville Country Club. An associate of his persuaded the City Commissioners to approve a change in the division of lots in Section XI of the Country Club. The Commission approved making the lots smaller for patio homes and divided the then 53 lots into 118 lots. The people who had already bought lots and built homes protested that it would cause their property to lose value.³⁴ About 70 lot owners showed up at the August 23 City Commission meeting carrying protest signs. The Commissioners changed their vote and quickly reversed their previous decision to divide the lots into smaller sizes. The Brownsville Herald wrote that Marcelo had donated \$1,000 to the campaign of one of the Commissioners who had voted to approve the change in the lot sizes.³⁵ It was almost from this point that the Circle began to fall apart. Today there are still members in the Cuban Circle, and they get together about two times a year, but the organization no longer wields the clout it had in the 1970s.

In 1980, Cuban-born Lina Márquez, who changed her name to Lina Mar, started a construction company in Brownsville. Mar's construction business advertised itself as having the lowest interest-free new homes in town.³⁶ The prices were almost unbelievable, and poor people who could not get financing from conventional financing institutions flocked by the hundreds to her office on Central Boulevard. She advertised that she would take almost anything as a down payment, including automobiles, lots, or whatever else the people had that was worth anything. According to reports, the construction company had entered into over 200 contracts between November 1980 and December 1990, but only four homes had been completed to the satisfaction of the customers.³⁷

Lina Mar and her husband, Paraguayan-born Nino Palacios, who served as vice-president of the construction firm, took down payments and wrote checks to withdraw thousands of dollars from the construction account at the Texas Commerce Bank.³⁸ It was believed that, in all, the company took in about one million dollars in down payments.

In April 1990 the thirty-two-year-old Cuban woman and her home building firm, Lina Mar Construction Inc., faced five second-degree felony counts for allegedly taking thousands of dollars in down payments for homes which were never built as promised. The case was held in the 138th State District Court with Judge Robert Garza presiding.

During testimony, it was brought out that Lina Mar and her husband spent money lavishly on expensive clothes, furnishings for their home and many trips. They also liked to carry large amounts of money around. In 1989, she and her husband took a trip to Hawaii and Las Vegas where she saw a castle she liked. Upon returning to Brownsville, she bought the old James Pace grocery store on Central Boulevard for \$140,000 and began changing its facade to look like the castle she had seen in Nevada.

Many of the people she had taken money from sat in the courtroom looking for justice.

The prosecution attempted to prove that she had deliberately taken the money from the people without any intention of building the homes. However, the defense attorney proved that the authorities had put a freeze on her business, and once word got out that she was under investigation, all banks in the area refused to let her set up accounts. Her attorney proved that it was actually the authorities who kept her from fulfilling her contracts. Thus, Lina Mar was found innocent of trying to cheat the people out of their money.

Immediately many of the people who had lost their money began to protest at the County Courthouse demanding something be done to Lina Mar. They wanted revenge, and they felt that she had gotten away with stealing their money and property. Lina Mar still had four second-degree felony theft charges pending, but the District Attorney's office did not know if they would go ahead with the second trial in light of the outcome of the first trial.

On June 7, Lina Mar worked out an agreement with the Texas State Attorney General's Office to settle the difference between Mar and the State. Under the agreement, Mar was to turn all money and properties tied to the home building operations over to a receivership appointed by Judge Roy Valdez of the 357th State District Court. In return, the State would drop all criminal charges pending against Mar and would also drop a contempt of court charge which had been filed against her.³⁹

Assistant Attorney General Clyde Terrel said that the settlement was not the end of the Mar case. It allowed for a forty-five day period to see if Mar could begin to fulfill the commitments she had made. He said that the State had backed off because of the main charge that Lina Mar's defense attorney had made: that Mar could have completed the contracts if the State had not put an injunction on her company. Cameron County District Attorney Luis Saenz said, "We hope this will provide the opportunity to run its course without allowing her to say that she couldn't do it because of the indictments." Saenz said his office would be watching closely to see how things develop. "She is not off the hook as far as we are concerned," he said. "We will be going after her at a later date but this time with a stronger posture."⁴⁰

Mar commented to reporters that she was glad about the dropped charges, but at the same time she was saddened to have had to go through everything. Mar said "My main concern is now to return everything back to my former customers."⁴¹

Governor Ann Richards appointed a committee to assist the alleged victims of Lina Mar, but there was almost nothing that could be done for them. The committee attempted to find proper financing for the people who had lost money. The idea was to help them qualify for low-interest government financing of their homes, but only three of the 200 families could qualify even for that.

Some of the people who lost money to Mar's construction company decided to take drastic measures. They began a hunger

strike in front of the County Courthouse saying they would not eat until somebody did something to help them get their money back and Lina Mar was punished. City Mayor Nacho Garza tried to talk to the protestors to convince them to eat. He told them, however, that the city did not have the money to help them. After several days on a hunger strike, they were finally convinced to start eating, but they refused to leave the front of the Courthouse. The protestors are still there as of the writing of this paper.

On June 1, in a bizarre twist of events, Lina Mar voluntarily admitted herself to the Ro Grande State Center for Mental Health and Mental Retardation. She said she "went to the hospital to seek help because of the stress she had been under for some time." She said the publicity surrounding her court trial on charges that she stole from hundreds of would-be homeowners of their downpayments had caused her all sorts of problems. "I couldn't take it any longer. I heard people calling me thief and that I was this, that and the other."⁴²

Once there, the officials at the Harlingen-based hospital told Mar they were going to commit her to one of their wards for a minimum of 15 days. She demanded her release, but, when that failed, they sought court protection to fight her involuntary commitment. County Court-At-Law Judge Everardo Garcia ordered her released from the Mental Health Center.⁴³

The Cuban Circle may be currently on the downslide but things are looking up. With the possibility of a free trade zone between Canada, America and Mexico, Brownsville could turn out to play a major role with its location almost right in the middle of the trade zone. Cuban businessman, Rafael Rigo, said that he thinks the Valley will get a big shot in the arm. He currently runs his International Pipe Company, but has an empty office that he hopes his son, who is currently working in Austin, will be able to move into as soon as the business picks up.⁴⁴ Since most of the Cubans living in the Valley are businessmen, their future looks bright. If they can solve their differences and get the Cuban Circle going strong again and link up with the other Communities along the Gulf Coast, the 21st century should see them regain the influence they had in the 1970s.

Endnotes

1. Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust (Austin: Eaking Press, 1991), 153.
2. The Brownsville Herald, 7 March 1958, 1.
3. The Brownsville Herald, 27 March 1958, 1.
4. Ibid., 1.
5. The Brownsville Herald, 28 March 1958, 8.
6. The Brownsville Herald, 27 March 1958, 10A
7. Ibid., 10A
8. The Brownsville Herald, 28 March 1958, 1.
9. Ibid., 8
10. The Brownsville Herald, 30 March 1958, 1.
11. The Brownsville Herald, 1 April 1958, 1.

12. Ibid., 4.
13. The Brownsville Herald, 3 April 1958, 1.
14. The Brownsville Herald, 4 April 1958, 1.
15. The Brownsville Herald, 11 April 1958, 1.
16. Ibid., 1.
17. The Brownsville Herald, 20 May 1958, 1.
18. Sylvia Pedraza-Bailey, "Cubans and Mexicans in the United States," Cuban Studies, (July 1981/January 1982), 81.
19. Ibid., 81
20. Interview of Rafael Rigo with Michael López on 13 June 1991.
21. Interview of Mrs. Renaldo Santiso with Michael López on 12 June 1991.
22. Interview of Yolanda González with Michael López on 5 June 1991.
23. Santiso Interview, 12 June 1991.
24. Sergio Diaz Briquets, "Cuban Owned Business in the United States," Cuban Studies, (Summer, 1984), 59.
25. Cuban Circle Pamphlet, 30 January 1983.
26. Rigo Interview, 13 June 1991.
27. Pamphlet, 30 January 1983.
28. Interview of Professor Roberto Cortina with Michael López on 6 June 1991.
29. Interview of Dagoberto Barrera with Michael López on 10 June 1991.
30. The Brownsville Herald, 30 January 1983, 1.
31. Barrera Interview 10 June 1991; and Cortina Interview, 6 June 1991.
32. Cortina Interview, 6 June 1991.
33. Rigo Interview, 13 June 1991.
34. The Brownsville Herald, 24 August 1983, 1.
35. Ibid., 1.
36. The Brownsville Herald, 26 December 1990, 1.
37. Ibid., 1.
38. The Brownsville Herald, 29 April 1991, 1.
39. The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 1C.
40. Ibid., 1C.
41. Ibid., 1C.
42. The Brownsville Herald, 19 June 1991, 13A.
43. Ibid., 13A.
44. Rigo Interview, 13 June 1991.

A Few Comments About
the History of Blacks in Brownsville

by

Cornelio Nouel

The earliest people of African ancestry known to have lived in the area of the Lower Rio Grande Valley near Brownsville were probably slaves of early Spanish explorers who found their way to what is today known as South Padre Island and Boca Chica Beach. In 1528 a storm stranded several explorers including a Black moor by the name of Estéban. This man is considered the "first Negro to land in what would be Texas or the United States."¹

Spanish explorers that came through the area of the mouth of the river (Rio Grande) reported seeing people of mixed Indian and Negro blood. It is not very clear where these people came from, but it is most probable that these were descendants of Blacks stranded by shipwrecks of Spanish expeditions.

During the period when Texas was part of Mexico, Blacks, Mulattos and other people of "color" found Texas to be particularly attractive for settlement for a variety of reasons. First, Mexicans tended to accept Black people more readily than Whites. This was particularly true in the Southern half of the state where social and legal conditions were much more favorable for Blacks. Thus, a relatively large number of freed slaves, as well as freeborn Blacks, migrated southward.

Another important factor that served to draw Blacks to South Texas was the Catholic church stand against cruel treatment. Also, the Church supported the freeing of the slaves. Perhaps it was the wide-open and flat ranges of South Texas, almost devoid of population, that provided these people with the opportunity for personal and financial growth.

During the 1830s, there was a movement to create an enclave for free Blacks in Texas. This attempt was led by a White abolitionist by the name of Ben Lundy, and by Nicholas Druett, a Mulatto who had served as an officer in the Mexican army. The project, however, failed due to strong opposition from Whites in the United States and Texas and also because of the long distances needed for Blacks to travel from their home states to South Texas. The idea received its "coup de grace" when the Texas Revolution exploded and the Mexican government no longer showed an interest in the project. The victory of the Americans over the Mexicans in the Texas Revolution brought with it limitations on the immigration of free Blacks into the region; laws became more restrictive. For example: if a person was deemed to have one-eighth Negro blood, then that individual was denied the right to vote, own any property, marry a White person, or testify in court against any White person or persons. Free Blacks already living in Texas had to petition the State Congress for permission to remain in the state. After the Republic of Texas was annexed into the United States, restrictions against the free Blacks became "even more restrictive and elaborate...for crimes they

facéd branding, whipping, pilloring and forced labor on public works. This punishment was generally reserved for slaves rather than for freemen..."² It is no wonder then that the population of Blacks decreased between the years 1850 and 1860, although the state would see an increase in Blacks during and after the Civil War.

Negro farmers usually settled in East Texas. Free Negro artisans and servants "settled more often in San Antonio, Brownsville and Austin, away from the plantation section..."³ A review of the 1850 Census for Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties reveals that at that time there were at least 18 Blacks or Mulattos in the area. Here is a list of these people as it appears in the Census:

Peter McKinney, laborer; born, New York
Robert Instant, musician, born, Alabama
Eliza Instand (his wife); born, Alabama
Frances Instant (daughter); born, Alabama
Emma Instant (daughter); born, Alabama
William Mitchell, blacksmith; born Alabama
Martha Stanley (occupation and place of birth
not given)
Elisabeth Stanley (occupation and place of birth
not given)
Mary Stanley (occupation and place of birth not given)
Phillip Niblett, cook; born, England
Godfrey Seasman, cook; freeborn, Virginia
Edward Webster, barber (place of birth not given)
Kitty Dennison, freed, 1840
Mahalia Allen, freed, 1840.
F. McFarland, freed, 1835; born, Virginia
Martha McFarland, freed, 1839; born, Texas
Martha Thorton (mulatto: Black-Indian); born, Florida
Wilford Smith, cook; freeborn, Kentucky.

As a result of the more restrictive conditions in Texas and due to the greater number of manumissions, Negro slaves viewed Mexico as an alternative and a way out of the degrading and inhuman conditions they had to endure in the United States. As early as 1836, during fighting in the Brownsville area between Rebels and the Mexican Army, several slaves swam across into Matamoros to gain their freedom. In 1844, about 30 slaves arrived in Matamoros after having killed the sheriff of Gonzalez in a skirmish near the town of Victoria. The flood of escapees continued in such large numbers that by the early 1850's an estimated 3,000 slaves had made good their escape into Mexico. Another 1,000 reached that haven from "the peculiar institution" between 1851 and 1855.⁵ Once in Mexico, these former slaves faced a variety of hardships attributed mainly to their inability to speak Spanish. Groups of slaves settled on or near the Rio Grande, notably in Engle Pass and in Matamoros. White slave owners from Texas attempted to reclaim these runaways. As early as 1836, they had sent a contingent to Matamoros to try to reclaim escaped Blacks, and numerous attempts were made by Texans

to negotiate with the Mexican government for the return of all runaways. All of these attempts proved fruitless as no slaves are known to have been returned.

Many Negro slaves had also run away to Florida and had intermarried into the Seminole Tribe. In 1848, the federal government moved these Negro-Seminole people to a reservation in Oklahoma, however, they were not accepted kindly by local Whites; in fact several were kidnapped and sold into slavery. In 1849, their chief, John Horse, let a group out of Oklahoma and into Texas where many settled on both sides of the Rio Grande. In the Census of 1850, is found the name of Marcia Thorton, a mulatto of Indian and Black parentage from Florida. This woman may have been of the Black Seminoles who came out of Oklahoma.

Many of the escaped slaves that settled in Mexico were able to learn Spanish and after doing so were fairly easily acculturated into Mexican society, either by marrying a Mexican citizen or by achieving economic success, thus integrating themselves into society via their economic contributions to the area.

A relatively large number of Blacks founded their own communities on the Rio Grande, but very little is known about them and their descendants. Small communities of mostly Blacks dotted the river down from Eagle Pass to near Matamoros.

By 1860 and just prior to the start of the American Civil War, there was a significant increase in the Black population of Brownsville. The county Census of that year indicates that the population of "Negros and Mulattos" had grown to at least 66 people. This number included Blacks from Cuba, Florida (probably Seminole-Blacks), Jamaica, Grand Cayman Islands and six Blacks born in Mexico, possibly descendants of runaway slaves. Occupations were mostly in the semi-skilled or non-skilled areas and they included servants (6), milkmaid (1), washwoman or laundress (7), seamstress (3), two farmers and one person described as a laborer. These folks were scattered throughout the city and outlying areas. The precinct by precinct count of citizens as it appears in the Census indicates that the Blacks were not forced into small enclaves or what we call ghettos, but that in fact they were able to live anywhere in the city or county they could afford.

In the year 1865, the first of several racial "incidents" occurred in Brownsville. This incident involved approximately 50 to 60 Black troops from a union company stationed near the mouth of the Rio Grande. On October 9th, Black soldiers, frustrated and angry over dwindling supplies of food and inadequate clothing for the season's damp and cold weather, marched the approximately 25 miles to the City of Brownsville and proceeded to "raid" the town for the badly needed blankets, food and lumber. There was resistance from the local citizens and merchants. By the time the soldiers left, several people were left dead, dying or wounded. The city's mayor was so concerned about this incident and the possibility of further raids that, "on January 11th, monies were earmarked to pay for a town police force."⁶ This request for funds came too late. An even greater incident involving Black troops and local citizens occurred on January 5, 1866, when a band of Black soldiers, under the command of Col. Craw-

ford, were given permission to cross into the Mexican Port City of Bagdad, a city whose main attractions were saloons and houses of prostitution. It seemed that local citizens were not pleased with the appearance on their streets of Black, uniformed union troops and soon fights and altercations ensued. The local justice of the peace, a gentleman by the name of Cayetano de Luna, attempted to restore order, but he was shot and killed by a Black soldier. This, of course, infuriated the Mexicans even more and in the melee that followed (which lasted the better part of a week) nearly 20 people were killed; the town was looted, the citizens terrorized and the authorities on both sides of the river clamored for justice and monetary compensation. It was alleged by some that the "raid" was actually requested by Juarista General Escobedo in order to try to dislodge imperialista Mexican troops under the command of General Mejia. No truly conclusive evidence was ever presented, and the affair rather quickly took a back seat to the major struggle then affecting Mexico--the war between the supporters of Benito Juarez and forces loyal to Emperor Maximilian. These affairs were not to be easily forgotten by the local inhabitants and would have far reaching consequences in the relations between Blacks and local residents. This observation is evidenced by the murder and mutilation of a Black soldier in 1873, which resulted in a raid by about 30 Black soldiers into the city, and, of course, by the most infamous of all the incidents, the raid of 1906, which created a national and international furor. This incident will be explored later in this paper.

The years between 1870 and 1890 saw a relatively stable Black population in Brownsville. In 1890, according to the Census, there were 76 Black citizens in the city and surrounding areas and 101 Black soldiers stationed at the Fort Brown.

One remarkable and very obvious difference to be found between the Census of 1860 and 1890 is that by 1890, Blacks are found living in groups and in only a few areas of town. In other words, they were now being segregated into ghettos. Also noteworthy in the 1890 Census is the presence of about 20 Blacks with Spanish surnames, many of whom were born in Mexico. This indicates the possibility that descendants of runaway slaves were now migrating back to Texas and the United States. There were also Blacks from Florida, Jamaica and several of the southern states, most notably, Alabama and South Carolina. The occupations of the great majority was, as in the 1860's, in the semi-skilled or non-skilled areas of employment. Most occupations listed included cooks, servants, barbers, blacksmiths, seamstresses, and laborers. However, there were at least two school teachers and possibly one preacher or minister. The two teachers were needed as by then the city had nearly a dozen places where children were being taught, "two of which were intended for the city's Black students."⁷

It is important to note here that by 1870, Texas had instituted a public school system to address the educational needs of its Black citizens. These schools, unfortunately, were for the most part, "marred by untrained teachers, substandard buildings, short terms and few funds for such things as books."⁸ There is

no reason to believe that the same conditions were not true in the two Black schools in Brownsville, especially since the city had by now burst its economic bubble and had, by 1882, reverted to, as Fehrenback describes it, "a sleepy, small town."⁹

Race relations appear to have been amicable or at least quiet in the period between 1875 and 1905, with no recorded incidents in Brownsville of race riots, lynchings or any type of race-related violence. Black and White citizens pretty much went about their own affairs with minimal interaction or friction between them. Even the often volatile and strained relations between local citizens and Black soldiers stationed at Fort Brown had taken a turn for the best in 1898, when citizens of the city had given a watch to a Black sergeant with an inscription which testified to the "townfolks' cordial feelings for all Black troops leaving Fort Brown headed for the Spanish-American War in Cuba."¹⁰ Ethnic tensions, though, were to be found just below the apparently tranquil surface of this "sleepy small town." There was tremendous enmity between the Mexicans and the Anglos. The Anglo establishment had, in reaction border lawlessness, called in the Texas Rangers. The often brutal and illegal methods used by the "Rinches," as they were known to Mexicans, created an atmosphere saturated with resentment, anger and frustration. Eight years after the cordial send-off of the Black troops to the Spanish-American War, a major conflict exploded between the local citizens and the Blacks in an episode which would have major consequences well into the future.

Late in July in the year 1906, three companies of Black soldiers arrived at Fort Brown to begin their tour of duty. No doubt, some townspeople still had memories of the incidents of 1865 and 1873 as they either had been alive when when they occurred or they had heard about the Black raids from friends and relatives. In addition, the Anglos in the city held the same anti-Black racial prejudices that were so common in the society of that day. Into this volatile mix of prejudice, suspicion and distrust were added the Blacks' own feelings of discrimination and their belief that as American soldiers and free men, they were entitled to the same fair treatment and easy access to the town saloons and shops. Black soldiers, in fact, were denied entry into White-owned bars. The one White-owned saloon that did accept Black clients served them only in a segregated rear area away from everybody else. Most Black soldiers saw this arrangement as an insult, and refused to give their patronage to this establishment.

An incident in which a Black private allegedly jostled against a White woman on a sidewalk in downtown Brownsville resulted in the soldier, a private called Newton, being knocked on the head with the butt of a pistol by a local Customs officer. On another occasion, a dispute broke out between some Black soldiers who were returning from Matamoros and A.Y. Baker, the Customs inspector on duty. As luck would have it, it was again Private Newton who was involved in the fracas. The end result was that Private Newton got kicked "in the butt" and his companion ended up in the Rio Grande. After a third incident in which a black soldier supposedly manhandled a Mrs. Evans, the commander

of the Black troop, Major Charles Penrose, finally instituted an 8 p.m. curfew for his troops. The town was buzzing with rumors, and demands were made by private citizens and by editorials in The Brownsville Herald for the removal of all Black troops from the city and their replacement by White troops. The soldiers were angry because they could no longer go into town. The explosion finally came on the night of August 13, 1906, a few minutes before midnight. About 150 to 200 shots were fired. A local bartender was shot dead and a policeman was severely wounded, eventually losing his arm to amputation. Shots were also fired at several residences and at a local Spanish-language newspaper vendor, but no one else was injured. The shooting woke up the fort commander who, thinking that he was under attack, immediately called everyone to duty. Within minutes, all soldiers were present and accounted for. Later that morning, after a thorough inspection, the commander announced that he could find no evidence of any of the rifles having been fired recently. Upon questioning, none of the troops admitted to participating in the raid, nor did any of them implicate anyone else in the shootings. Nonetheless, President Theodore Roosevelt had all of the Black soldiers then stationed at Fort Brown dismissed from the service, including six Medal of Honor winners and many soldiers who had served with distinction for over ten years.

The ensuing national uproar brought about the intervention of Ohio Senator, Joseph B. Foraker, who forced a congressional investigation into the matter. After a few years, the majority of the troops were given an opportunity to re-enlist, but only 14 did so. In 1972 President Richard Nixon pardoned all the soldiers and their discharge status was changed from dishonorable to honorable. No one may really have known what exactly happened and who was responsible for the attack, but Black soldiers were removed from Fort Brown.

Lingering fears and suspicion by some Brownsville residents can be directly traced to the "horror" stories told about the Black soldiers and the raid of 1906. It is not uncommon today to hear of older Brownsville residents who have an inordinate fear of Black people. When questioned, the people with whom I have talked always refer to stories they were told as children about Blacks who would come to shoot them or about how Black soldiers had shot at innocent children. These prejudices and near phobic fears are dying out with the older generation, but they are a painful reminder of one of Brownsville's darkest and saddest experiences.

The years between 1910 and 1930 were, by most accounts, rather pacific for Blacks in Brownsville. Most Blacks continued to live in segregated areas and their numbers decreased. Some, no doubt, left due to the hatred and fear generated by the incident of 1906; others left to look for work in larger cities, such as San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. The first three decades of the century had brought some radical demographic changes in Texas, both for Blacks and for Whites, so that by 1929 "60 percent of the Negro population congregated in Municipalities."¹¹ The rush of urbanization had affected Texas Blacks as much as it had changed the character of the population in America, especial-

ly after World War I. It is not all too clear, but evidence suggests that the two Negro schools established in 1889 were closed some time during the early twenties.

No one remembers any Black school in Brownsville, until 1947 when the school district under Superintendent John Barron hired its first Black teacher to open Brownsville's first Black school in recent memory. This teacher was Mrs. Mittie Pullam, who is now retired and enjoying her golden years here in Brownsville. Mrs. Pullam arrived in Brownsville in 1947. She had a degree in education from Sam Houston College in Austin. She later obtained a master's degree from Texas Southern University in Houston. When the first school year started, Mrs. Pullam had four students in a one-room school located at the home of O.T. Pettus. The school was then moved to a barracks building that used to stand at Fort Brown, then finally to its last location at 535 E. Fronton. The school was named "The Doublas School" and Mrs. Pullam was the only teacher the school ever had. However, she had two teacher's aides. They were Martha Rodgers and Florestine Mackey. When Brownsville schools were integrated, Mrs. Pullam went on to teach at Skinner Elementary. Mrs. Pullam recalls that the City of Brownsville and its citizens offered her a very warm welcome. She remembers how one of the White teachers, Mrs. Stell (Stell Jr. High is named after her), would bring her flowers and would pick her up and take her to school. Mrs. Pullam stated that Brownsville was a wonderful place to live. She never felt that she was discriminated against or treated poorly. To the contrary, Mrs. Pullam feels that she was treated with nothing but warmth and affection by all the people she knew.

Most of the Black families that lived in Brownsville in the 1930s and 1940s came to work either at the Port as longshoremen or with the railroad. Others worked in semi-skilled positions, such as cooks, seamstresses, and as maids and bellhops in such places as the El Jardin Hotel.

The Depression Years were particularly hard years for Blacks throughout the state; as Barr point out "...average wages for Black laborers in Austin fell from \$0.40 or \$0.50 per hour in 1928 to \$0.25 per hour in 1933..."¹² As previously stated, many Black families moved to this area to work in the Port of Brownsville, which opened in 1936 and others came to work with the railroad. This availability of jobs helped create a sort of upsurge in the Black population. By some accounts as many as 200 to 300 Blacks lived in Brownsville at that time and many of these families lived on Fronton Street or near there. A Baptist Church, St. James Church, was built in the early 1960s, but during the 1940s and 1950s, most Black folks worshipped at a small church of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination (A.M.E.), located on Fronton Street across from where Buitron's Flower Shop now stands. The church was known as "Young's Chapel" and it was the only Black church in town. The few Black Catholics usually attended the old St. Joseph's Church on St. Francis Street. St. James Church still stands on Old Port Isabel Road and many of the families who have lived in Brownsville since its founding continue to worship there. On Saturday evenings and on Sundays after church, many of the Black families would gather to

socialize at the Union Cafe on Fronton Street. The cafe was owned by the Pettus Family and for many years it was the main place to gather and to celebrate birthdays, holidays or just to mingle and socialize.

After the work played out at the Port and with the railroads, many of the families moved to larger cities in search of employment. The old Union Cafe closed its doors some time in the 1960s. No one seemed to remember for sure. Today the Black community in Brownsville continues to be a small one; many of the old families are gone. The new arrivals have come mainly to teach both in the public schools and at the college. The maquiladora industry has brought a few Black families, and some have come as entrepreneurs. Perhaps as this area grows and prospers in the years to come, it will attract more Afro-American families, who, no doubt, would enrich our own unique ethnic heritage by bringing with them their own special culture and social characteristics.

I would finally like to list some of the families that spent part of their lives in Brownsville. They were: The Campbells, Evans, Bendan, Summers, Valentines, Mrs. Amelia Jackson, Mrs. Geneva Wallace, Matt Thomas (who worked for many years at the El Jardin Hotel and who published a book of his memoirs), Maudie Bell Farrie and Emelyne Campbell (who cooked at El Jardin Hotel), J.D. Rodgers (who worked for many years at the downtown J.C. Penney Store), his wife Martha Rodgers, Jesse Turner and Mrs. Tenna Turner (whose children attended the Douglas School). Also, the Cheeks, Colliers, Barlows, Mrs. Bertha Robinson (who still lives in Brownsville), Lula Mae Flood and her husband Hugh Flood (a longshoreman at the Port of Brownsville) and, of course, Mr. Henry "Dad" Pullam and his wife Mittie Pullam, who probably taught the children of all the above-mentioned families and whose granddaughter, Desiree Angelique Hines was 1974 Valedictorian at Villa Maria High School and an honors graduate of Smith College, and many more whose names could not be recalled.

The Black experience in Brownsville has had a very long history. It has had its moments of crisis as in 1865, 1873 and 1906, but for the most part, it has been a peaceful and positive history, one which brings to mind the words of Mrs. Pullam: "Brownsville is a wonderful place to live."¹³

Endnotes

1. Alwyn Barr, Black Texans(Austin: Pemberton Press, 1973) p.8.
2. Barr, p.9.
3. Barr, p.9.
4. Cameron, Willacy and Starr County Census of 1850.
5. Barr, p.30.
6. Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991), p.14.
7. Milo Kearney, Ed. Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: PAUB Press, 1986)
8. T.R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star, A History of Texas and Texans

(New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1968) p.681.

9. Fehrenbach, p.687.

10. Kearney and Knopp, p.198.

11. Fehrenbach, p.682.

12. Bach, p. 154.

13. Interview with Mrs. Mittie Pullam by Cornelio Nouel on
June 21, 1991.



MT691

The Brownsville Jewish Community:
From Generation to Generation

by

Harriett Denise Joseph

Although only a handful of Jews were in Texas before 1836, they came here in ever increasing numbers after that date. They settled in commercial centers, in small towns, and in rural areas. Today, more than a century and a half later, Jewish Texans are spread throughout the state with Jewish community life thriving, especially in urban areas.¹

Even though urban Judaic life may be thriving, some parts of the state have experienced a shrinking Jewish population in recent decades. Corsicana, Texas, as early as 1891 claimed three hundred Jewish citizens, who dedicated a reformed temple in 1900 and also built an orthodox synagogue in 1914-1915. However, their numbers dwindled significantly and decline occurred in the late 1900s. Only one hundred Jews still resided in Corsicana by the 1970s, and the temple was disbanded in the 1980s. Another, perhaps even more dramatic example of this phenomenon, is Breckenridge, a small West Texas oil town. In the 1920's Breckenridge was the home of almost two dozen Jewish families who eventually established a small, but viable, house of worship. Today there is only one elderly couple of this faith remaining--my parents, Paul and Roselle Abramson--with the congregation long ago disbanded and the temple sold.²

In striking contrast to Corsicana and Breckenridge is Brownsville, which has experienced dramatic population growth and physical expansion of its Jewish community in recent decades. People are often surprised to learn not only that this bilingual, bi-cultural border city is home to numerous Jews today but also that they and their predecessors have enjoyed an active, institutionalized religious life for over half a century.

There was at least one Jewish family in Brownsville as early as 1858, as indicated by the graves of a father and daughter in the old city cemetery. Formal community religious observances, however, did not begin until the 1920s, when the two dozen or so Jewish families in the town began to hold services at the American Legion Post and the Masonic Temple. Concerned with providing their children a proper sense of Judaic tradition and identity, these co-religionists understandably wanted a house of worship of their own. In 1931, despite the worst depression in their nation's history, they resolved to build a synagogue. The Jewish women of Brownsville, who formed the Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, were the moving force in this endeavor. A city lot was acquired at the corner of West 8th and St. Francis streets, architectural plans were drawn, and a contractor was hired to build a one-story tile and stucco building at a cost of \$4,305. Funds for the project, borrowed from the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, were repaid over a period of years with monies acquired from membership dues, voluntary contributions, and fund-raising activities conducted by the Sisterhood and its companion organi-

zation, the Brotherhood.³

As the congregation grew during the next quarter of a century, Temple Beth-El expanded accordingly. In 1951 congregants added a community hall to the religious facility. Constructed adjacent to the sanctuary, this expensive undertaking was made possible at least in part by the financial assistance of congregant Julia Wood, on condition that the building be named for her mother, Pauline Bollack. Four years later two lots next to the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building were purchased. The small frame houses on this property were remodeled and dedicated as a religious school in September 1956--just three months before the Temple formally celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.⁴

Another major event of the 1950's was the formal incorporation in 1951 of Beth-El as a tax-exempt institution for support of public worship, and in the following year a constitution was drafted to govern the secular operations of the Temple. Under these By-Laws, anyone of the Jewish faith was eligible for membership. An administrative board, composed of nine elected directors and one appointed by the Sisterhood, was empowered to make expenditures of \$300 or less (without membership approval), appoint the governing body of the Sunday School, name a committee to oversee the Hebrew Cemetery, and set the dues for qualified membership.⁵

Despite its physical growth and formal incorporation, Beth-El for many decades did not have the services of an ordained rabbi. Qualified rabbis reportedly were not interested in a small southern community that could not pay a living wage and was located almost three hundred miles from the nearest source of Kosher meat. This did not mean, however, that the congregation lacked ministerial services. To the contrary, local merchant Sam Perl had already begun to function as lay rabbi even before Temple Beth-El was built in 1931-32, and he continued in that capacity upon completion of the new facility. For five decades he conducted Sabbath and High Holy Days services, as well as presiding over brises, Bar and Bat Mitzvah, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. In essence, this remarkable man met the needs of his co-religionists from birth to grave by performing virtually every function of a professional rabbi.⁶

One of Sam Perl's greatest challenges as a lay rabbi was ministering to a notably diverse congregation. Members came from areas as dissimilar as Mexico, Russia, and the northeastern United States. They had different backgrounds, spoke different languages, and followed different philosophies of Judaism. In fact, Perl 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."⁷ This pragmatic approach worked reasonably well most of the time and enabled the varied segments of the Brownsville Jewish population to worship together under one roof.

The diverse congregation grew even more rapidly during the second twenty-five years of its history. The number of heads of household who claimed membership in the Temple during the 1950's varied from thirty-five to fifty-two. The following decade saw

numbers fluctuate from forty-seven to sixty-five. Brownsville ingeneral and the Jewish community in particular experienced a notable growth spurt in the 1970's, and a significant milestone was achieved by 1975 when Beth-El claimed over one hundred families as members.⁸

The growing size and resources of the congregation finally made the goal of hiring an ordained rabbi attainable in the 1970s, but there were complications. Although in poor health, Sam Perl still ministered to his fellow Jews. Out of loyalty and respect, the congregants did not want to replace him until he was ready to retire. The Beth-El Board of Directors resolved this dilemma by advertising for a Director of Education with rabbinic credentials to supervise the Sunday School, teach Hebrew, and conduct adult education classes. Perl would continue, at least nominally, to function as before.⁹

Filling the Director's post was unexpectedly difficult because Beth-El was not affiliated with any formal branch of Judaism. This was intentional. Temple leaders feared that aligning officially with the orthodox, conservative, or reformed movement would jeopardize keeping the diverse congregation intact. However, affiliation proved a prerequisite to attracting qualified candidates for the position of Education Director. Confronted with this reality, the Board was forced to act. After studying the requirements of the national Jewish organizations and taking into consideration the composition of the local congregation, the Directors recommended that Beth-El join the reformed Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). This resolution, approved in 1973 by a membership vote of 48-1, produced the desired results. In that same year Rabbi Harry Lawrence accepted a contract as Director of Education and agreed "to assume any functions which he may be called upon to fulfill."¹⁰

During Lawrence's brief tenure, Sam Perl's health declined rapidly, and in the mid-1970s he finally stepped down as religious leader of the Temple after half a century of service. Since that time Beth-El has been served by a succession of young professional rabbis.

As Temple leaders had prophesied, the decision to join UAHC had severe repercussions. Rabbi Jonathan Gerard, who presided over Beth-El from 1976-79, felt strongly that a reformed institution should modernize its religious practices. When he began to call women to the pulpit for "aliyas" (honors) during Sabbath and High Holy Days services, he alienated the more orthodox members of the congregation. During Gerard's tenure, the "proper" role of women in the religion and other philosophical issues were hotly debated both publicly and privately. A few disaffected congregants even threatened to break from Temple Beth-El and form a separate synagogue.¹¹

Several factors prevented an irrevocable split. At the time of his hiring in 1980, Gerard's successor, Rabbi Mathew Michaels, was advised of the tensions within the Jewish community. Although dedicated to the reformed movement himself, Michaels exhibited a conciliatory attitude and endeavored to heal the breach among the membership. His diplomatic efforts were at least partially successful. Realistic considerations also discouraged precipi-

tate action. As indicated by the 1973 membership vote of 48-1 to join UAHC, most congregants were reformed, and they approved of the liberal changes that Gerard had made. Relatively few in number, the disaffected Jews were limited in resources. To maintain one temple in Brownsville was a financial strain on the Jewish populace; to support two would have been virtually impossible. Therefore, despite their disapproval of the direction that religious practices were taking at Beth-El, most of the conservative congregants remained members for lack of any other realistic alternative.

Besides conflict over religious issues, another persistent problem at Temple Beth-El was financial exigencies. Even for an expanding Jewish community, to maintain a temple and later to support an ordained rabbi were expensive undertakings. Especially in the early decades of the Temple's existence, the Sisterhood and Brotherhood played major roles as fund raising groups that not only donated money on a regular basis but also were called upon for financial assistance in times of special need. Other critical sources of revenue included membership dues, donations, and bequests.¹²

As expenses mounted through the years, mandatory dues increased accordingly and became a greater percentage of the Temple's budget. In the 1930s most families paid \$2 a month to the institution, a figure that remained the norm well into the next decade. However, the land acquisitions and building projects of the 1950s necessitated annual fees ranging from \$36 to \$250. In 1956 the Board raised the minimum assessment to \$50. Then in the 1970s the costly undertakings of acquiring a rabbi and a parsonage led to the formation of a Board Dues Committee to determine membership fees for the congregation and insure that adequate funding was available. Under this system family dues by 1978 varied from \$100 to \$1200 per year, except for hardship cases. In 1979 obligatory contributions provided 74% of the total Beth-El budget. A decade later--1989--memberships covered a scale from \$300 to \$1500 and composed 54.6% of the total operating expenses of the institution.¹³ This percentage figure is assuming that all dues assessed for 1988-89 are collected.

Dues assessment was periodically a sensitive issue. Members sometimes complained that annual fees were assigned arbitrarily and inequitably, based on considerations such as the type of car one drove, the neighborhood in which one lived, and conjecture about a family's income. Whether correct or mistaken, those feelings created resentment, and, occasionally, members refused to pay the full amount levied. In attempts to collect unpaid dues, Temple Boards through the years resorted to a number of tactics, including personally contacting delinquent congregants, dropping them from membership rolls, refusing them the use of the Pauline Bollack Memorial Building, and depriving them of the right to attend High Holy Days services without charge. Beth-El Directors in the 1970's responded to criticism of the existing method of fee allocation and went so far as to consider other means of determining dues. However, no significant change resulted.¹⁴

Despite problems over religious ideology, dues assessment,

and other matters, the congregation thrived. Brownsville Mayor Emilio Hernández declared August 31, 1981, to the "Temple Beth-El Day" as the institution celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Looking to the future as well as commemorating the past, in the same year the membership purchased a lot in the Land O' Lakes subdivision on which to build a larger, more adequate religious facility--also to be named Beth-El. Recession in the United States and peso devaluation in Mexico, which contributed to a depressed economy in the Rio Grande Valley, caused the project to be delayed but not abandoned. Like their predecessors half a century earlier, this generation of Brownsville Jews had no intention of letting adverse economic factors prevent them from building a house for worship, education, and congregation. Prospects improved in 1983 when the Morris Steins left a generous bequest to erect a religious school in memory of their son, Lewis Stein, the only Jewish serviceman from Brownsville to die in World War II. This endowment, coupled with the determination of the Temple leadership and energetic fund-raising activities by the congregation, led to remarkable results. A modern, mortgage-free religious facility, housing a sanctuary, social hall, religious school, and rabbi's office, was erected in 1989.¹⁵

On August 6, 1989, proud congregants of all ages participated in walking the Torahs across Brownsville from the old Beth-El location to the new. The following month, they observed the High Holy Days in their new synagogue. Then, during the week-end of October 13-15, elaborate dedication ceremonies were held. The underlying theme for all of the events was "FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION." In November, Board President Alan Mesh captured the mood of his co-religionists when he wrote: "But as this generation has accepted the gifts of our fathers and forefathers, let us use our new facility to keep the torch of Judaism lit. Now it is our turn to instill in our children the same values of respect and awe, pride and tradition for our religion that have been so beautifully reinforced these past few months. Through education and knowledge, through service and commitment--let us continue to dedicate ourselves to our children and our Judaism through our Temple and continue..... FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION."¹⁶

Who is this current generation of Brownsville Jews with such a strong commitment to preserving and advancing religious life in their South Texas city? To gather information on this group I conducted a random survey by telephone of adults in 17.5% of the 114 households listed as members of Temple Beth-El.¹⁷ While recognizing that statistical results of random surveys are neither completely accurate nor fully reliable, I can offer some insights into the composition of the present adult Jewish community in Brownsville.

The age distribution is as follows: 15.8% are 30-39; 31.6% are 40-49; 26.35 are 50-59; 15.8% are 60-69; and 10.6% are 70-79. The average age is 50.5. Only 5.3% were born in Brownsville and 36.8% in other parts of the United States. Almost half--47.4%--were born in Latin America and 10.5% in Eastern Europe. The average length of residence in Brownsville is 19.7 Years. 52.6% moved to the area during the period of rapid growth

in the 1970s. The major factor that attracted them to the area, cited by 63.2% of those interviewed, was business/career/economic opportunities. Other, but apparently less significant, motives, include liking the climate and geographic location, marrying someone from the area, wanting to be near family, getting away from the big city, a parent moving to the area, and being attracted to a Spanish-speaking locale.

Not surprisingly, levels of educational attainment and occupations vary considerably. 5.3% did not complete high school, but 36.8% have a high school diploma or equivalent. 42.1% earned an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, while 15.8% hold a Master's or higher. The majority, 57.9%, are in business occupations ranging from entrepreneur to shrimp sales to secretary, and an equal number are retired. 5.3% have careers in the medical field.

The above statistics reinforce the image of a diverse group who came to Brownsville from different geographical locations and backgrounds. In some cases, perhaps their only commonalities are their Jewish identity and their desire--like that of the previous generation--to provide formal, institutionalized religious life for themselves and their children.

In conclusion, Jewish life is alive and well in Brownsville, Texas. The new, mortgage-free Beth-El facility has a membership of well over one hundred families with enrollment in the Lewis Stein Memorial School fluctuating between 48-50. This is a notable advance from the original Temple with its approximately two dozen families in 1931-32 and its first confirmation class of three students in 1933. If measured against the growth and accomplishments of counterparts in Houston, Dallas, or San Antonio, the saga of Brownsville Jews in the twentieth century may not seem overly impressive. However, when viewed against the backdrop of declining or disappearing communities in Corsicana and Breckenridge, the vitality of their co-religionists in Brownsville deserves recognition. Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, the present generation of Brownsville Jews have not allowed economic adversity or internal dissension to prevent them from consecrating a house of worship in which their traditions can "evolve, grow and remain relevant throughout even the best and worst of times."¹⁸

The University of Texas at Brownsville

ENDNOTES

¹ The Jewish Texans (San Antonio: The University of Texas Institute of Texan Culture, 1984), pp. 3, 23.

² Tommy Stringer, "Corsicana, Texas, " to be presented at Texas State Historical Association annual meeting, March 1990; Interview, Paul Abramson, 8 July 1989.

³ Minutes, Meeting of Board of Directors, Hebrew Cemetery Association, 5 March 1956; Interview, Ruben Edelstein, 18 and 20 November 1985; Sam Perl to Julia Gruenwald, 6 October 1931; Julia Gruenwald to Sam perl, 7 October 1931; Assignment of Deed of Trust, Temple Beth-El Sisterhood to Board of Trustees, 1 December 1951; W. Frank Goodwin, Architectural Drawing for Jewish Community Center, 1931; Contract, S. W. McKenzie and Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, 26 September 1931; Addendum to Contract, McKenzie and TBE Sisterhood, 25 September 1931; Loan Agreement, Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company and TBE Sisterhood, n.d.; Journal J-999 [1931-1941].

⁴ David J. Pleason to Joseph Kolman, Treasurer, 11 December 1951; TBE Balance Sheet, 1 September 1951 to 31 July 1956; TBE Receipts and Disbursements, 1 August 1951 to 31 July 1952; Minutes, Meeting of TBE Board of Directors, 2 September 1951; Herbert Davenport to A. Wayne Wood, 20 December 1951; Minutes, meeting of TBE Board of Directors, 24 July 1952; Minutes, TBE Quarterly Membership Meeting, 26 October 1955; Affidavit, David 1956; Minutes, Meetings of TBE Board of Directors, 7 November and 5 December 1955, 6 August and 3 December 1956.

⁵ Charter, Temple Beth-El, Inc., 30 November 1951; David J. Pleason to Collector of Internal Revenue, Austin, 26 September 1952; "By-Laws for Temple Beth-El," 17 September 1952.

⁶ Ruben Edelstein to Rabbi Nathaniel Steinberg, 26 September 1954; Rabbi Nathaniel Steinberg to Ruben Edelstein, 29 October 1954. For detail information on Sam Perl's life and service to the Jewish community in Brownsville see Harriet Denise Joseph, "A Tribute to Sam Perl," in More Studies in Brownsville History, edited by Milo Kearney (Edinburg: Pan American University Press, 1989).

⁷ Sam Perl to Larry Strauss, n.d. [probably October or November of 1967]; Ruben Edelstein to Mr. George Wells, 15 June 1956.

⁸ TBE Membership Lists, 1951-52, 10 August 1953, 1 August 1954, 1 October 1955, 18 October 1960, 15 May 1962, 28 January 1963, 17 November 1964, 1 August 1975; "Universal" Figuring Book, No. S98-15-8 [1956-61]; TBE to "Dear Member," 1 August 1967 and 1 August 1968.

⁹ Interview, Ruben Edelstein; Ruben Edelstein to Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky, 14 October 1972; Ruben Edelstein to The Chicago Sentinel, 14 October 1972.

¹⁰ Ruben Edelstein to Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky, 14 October 1972; Minutes, Special Meeting of TBE Congregation, 4 May 1973; Board of Directors, 7 August 1973 (quotation).

¹¹ Proxy Form, November 1977; Minutes, Meetings of TBE Board of Directors, 13 August and 10 September 1979; Eva Silberman to TBE Board of Directors, 13 August 1979; Gary Stock to "Dear Friend," 7 December 1979.

¹² Temple Beth-El documents such as ledgers, receipt books, bank deposit slips, and financial statements, contain ample evidence of the role that the Sisterhood and Brotherhood played and also show the importance of dues and donations to meet the operating expenses of the institution.

¹³ Journal J-999 [1931-41]; American Official Money Line Receipt Book # 4500 {1940-41}; Protecto Duplicating Receipt Book # 557 [1941-42]; "Universal" Book #S295 {1935-44}; Membership list, 1951-52; TBE Financial Statements, 1 August 1951 to 31 July 1952, 1 September 1951 to 31 January 1952, 18 August 1954, 1 August 1956 to 1 July 1957; "Universal" Book #S98 [1956-61]; Minutes, Meeting of TBE Board of Directors, 27 August 1956; Efficiency Money Line Receipt Book #4175-W [1964-67]; Efficiency Money Line Receipt Book #4175-W [1964-67]; Minutes, Meeting of TBE Congregation, 9 May 1972; Minutes, Meeting of TBE Board of Directors, 7 August 1973; TBE Financial Statement, 1978-79; [insert 1989 source here].

¹⁴ Handwritten note entitled "Telephone Conversation, I.D.," 4 March 1954: Minutes, Meetings of TBE Board of Directors, 1 December 1952, 2 February 1953, 5 April 1954, 27 August 1956, 13 August 1979; Ruben Edelstein to Sisterhood, 15 November 1952; Ely Holtzman and Board of Trustees to "Members and Friends," 15 September 1941; Ruben Edelstein to [Delinquent Members], 2 June 1953; Interview, Ruben Edelstein.

¹⁵ For articles pertaining to the fiftieth anniversary of Temple Beth-El, see Brownsville Herald, 30 August 1981.

¹⁶ Alan Mesh to "Dear Congregant," 10 July 1989; The Shofar, September, October, and November (Quotation) 1989.

¹⁷ With the help of Dr. Robert Shaw, Instructor of Statistics at Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, I generated a random sample of twenty of the 114 households listed in the Temple Beth-El Directory, 1988-89. When calling the homes, I interviewed whichever adult answered the phone and asked a series of specific questions outlined in Attachment A. One person refused to participate in the survey, so data results are based on nineteen interviews. Except for determining the number of people living in each household, only information on adults was gathered, and statistics cited in this section of the paper refer only to the adult Jewish population in Brownsville.

¹⁸ Invitation, "Temple Beth-El Dedication Ceremonies, October 13, 14, 15, 1989."

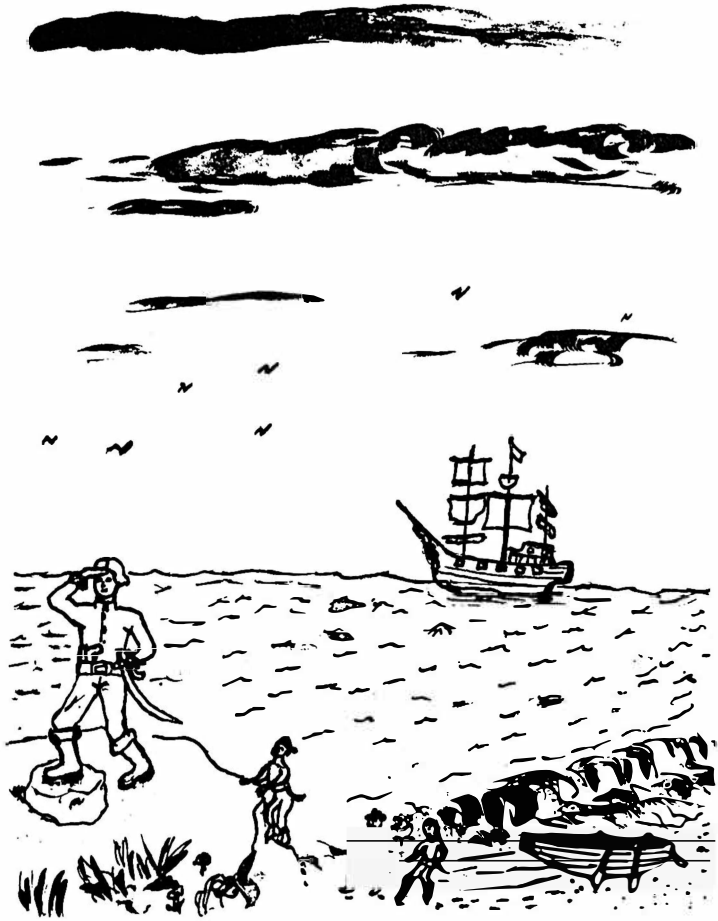
*Portions of this article have been published already in "Temple Beth-El, 1931-1981" and "A Tribute to Sam Pearl" in Studies in Brownsville History and More Studies in Brownsville History respectively. However, significant new information has been added, to provide a more comprehensive view and better understanding of the Brownsville Jewish community in the twentieth century.

דע לפני-מי אתה עומד



הוא עומד לפני-מי אתה עומד

Warren Krimmer



A Historical Sketch of Brownsville's
Franco-Americans

by

Milo and Sean Kearney

Beneath Brownsville's more dominant chord of Anglo-Spanish biculturalism the subdominant chord of Franco-German biculturalism has sounded through the years like a contrapuntal antiphony. Just as in the meeting of Anglo and Hispanic cultures, so the interplay of French and German cultures has been fraught with both tension and mutual stimulus. The fact that the number of local families of French and German descent have been few has been offset to an extent by the prominent role they have played. Furthermore, the intervening miles and passing years have vitiated without eliminating the fecundity of the interplay between French and German cultures even on the Lower Rio Grande. While it is true that passing generations have weakened an identity with background cultures based thousands of miles away, it is surprising how tenaciously cultural identity and traits have been retained by many of these families.

The local importance of Franco- and German-Brownsvillites has been an ongoing theme of local history. One of the main benefits of this survival has been to help safeguard Brownsville from falling into a dichotomized provincialism. The local French and German touch has also lent the town part of its color.

This article will concentrate on the French contribution to local history, while the following article will examine the German contribution. However, the two communities have been so intertwined, both in Europe and on the Lower Rio Grande, that a total separation of the two stories is impossible.

In neither the French nor the German case do local patterns conform to the usual historical developments for these communities in the United States in general--reinforcing an oft-made observation that Brownsville's history is somewhat distinct from the national norm. This idiosyncratism can be detected from the early strong French influx into the Lower Rio Grande Valley, for "uniquely among Europeans, the French have never emigrated to the United States in large numbers."¹ The Rio Grande Delta was, at the time of its first major population boom, part of Mexico, not of the United States.

The initial major influx of people of French culture, in the 1820s, came about due to the fact that the first major trade link of the Lower Rio Grande Delta was with New Orleans. Both Louisiana Frenchmen and (via the New Orleans trading connection on to France) some settlers from France itself found their way to this area. Already in the previous decade, Jean Lafitte of Louisiana and his pirates had established a contraband trade in the region.² In 1821, Lafitte seems to have made Port Isabel or neighboring Laguna Vista (where the well he had dug for his men is still shown) his base for a time, before moving on to Yucatán.³ As late as 1823, another New Orleans-based pirate,

Raimond La Fou, was trading locally, in partnership with Martin De León.⁴

The New Orleans-based contraband trade was soon accorded legal status, allowing the traders to adopt a new air of respectability. As the French proverb says, "Autres temps, autres mœurs" ("Changing times bring a change in manners"). The first recorded official legal ship to sail from the mouth of the Rio Grande after Gulf trade was authorized by the new Mexican government for Matamoros, the "Little Sally," arrived in New Orleans on 4 May 1822. The merchant who owned most of its cargo was a certain John Quéré.⁵ Soon an influx of Frenchmen, along with Americans, Englishmen, and Irishmen, was recorded moving into Matamoros.⁶ French merchants represented a major segment of Matamoros' mercantile community, supplying northern Mexico with French textiles and furniture.⁷

It was natural that the French would feel more at home in a Spanish-language area, given the common Latin identity of the French and Spanish languages and the general cooperation between the French and Spanish monarchs ever since the accession of a French Bourbon to the Spanish throne with Felipe V at the start of the 18th century. Not even an attempt of the United States to exploit earlier tensions between the French and Spanish Empires was able to disrupt the general good feelings between the French and Hispanics at the time. The United States government in 1804 used the brief attempt in 1685 of a group of Frenchmen led by René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle to launch a colony on Texas' Espiritu Santo Bay as an excuse to claim that the Louisiana Territory (purchased by Thomas' Jefferson's government from Napoléon's France) included Texas.⁸ However, the position of the local Frenchmen was endangered neither by this claim nor by the presence of Louisiana Frenchmen in various filibustering expeditions from the now-U.S.-dominated Louisiana into East Texas, nor by the presence of some Frenchmen in the Texan struggle for independence. After all, many Louisiana Frenchmen had moved to Texas in order to avoid living under Anglo domination after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.⁹

By 1823, the French and other foreigners were dominating the local economy. The French held apart socially from the other groups for the time being, congregating in their own favorite coffee and billiard houses. Some of these Frenchmen branched out into service jobs not directly involved with trade.¹⁰ Three of them, Louis Berlandier, Guillaume Odocharte, and Alfred Dupuy, were land surveyors who, one after the other, mapped out the town ejidos of Matamoros between 1837 and 1852.¹¹ Dr. Louis Berlandier, who had been born in eastern France and educated in Genève, had originally come to Mexico to collect and study its plants. In this botanical pursuit, he had come to Matamoros in the company of General Mier y Terán. He married and established a practice as a doctor in Matamoros in 1829, living in that town down to his death by drowning in 1851.¹² Dr. Berlandier represented the French civilizing influence with his efforts to contain smallpox by introducing a vaccine against it to the local inhabitants.¹³ Some of the French residents became involved in politics; Charles ("Carlos") F. Galgert was Matamoros' alcalde tercero in 1851.¹⁴

In the 20th century the local Germans would suffer more from difficulties stemming from the vagaries of foreign policy; in the early and mid-19th century the French bore the brunt of embarrassment from diplomatic shifts. While the before-mentioned conflicting claims stemming from La Salle's ill-fated expedition to the Texas coastal bend seems to have had little impact on the local French, subsequent developments placed more of a strain on them.

When Texas broke away from Mexico in 1836 and established an independent republic, there was a smattering of Frenchmen involved in the revolt. Michel Menard, a merchant from the area of Montréal, Québec, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, purportedly helped to calm the Indians during the Texas revolt, and had a hand in the writing of the new republic's constitution.¹⁵ The Republic and later the State of Texas perpetuated the earlier claim of the United States government by emphasizing that its territory had once been subject to France as one of its "six flags," but the attitude toward the local Frenchmen in Matamoros was seemingly unaffected by this claim.¹⁶

Soon after, France and Mexico went to war against each other in 1838 in the Pastry War. This conflict spilled over directly onto the local French when from 23 April to 31 August 1838 the French effected a naval blockade of the port of Matamoros. A scarcity of provisions resulted, creating hardships in the region. However, it must have been noted that the New Orleans French merchants were also adversely affected; one New Orleans schooner was seized by the French navy on 20 June, and the Matamoros-New Orleans trade never fully regained its former confidence.¹⁷

On the heels of the Pastry War crisis another embarrassment hit the local French in September 1839, when France stepped forward as the first country of Europe to recognize the new Texas Republic carved three years before out of northeastern Mexico. France accorded Texas "most-favored-nation" trading status the following February. President Sam Houston in 1841 even promoted a scheme, never realized, that would have set up twenty forts along the Texas border, all manned by French immigrant families. However, the tensions for the local French were perhaps somewhat alleviated by news of the souring of relations between the Texas government and the French chargé d'affaires in Austin, Alphonse de Saligny (builder in 1840 of the old French Legation Building in Austin). In what was coined the Pig War, a servant of Saligny had shot a group of swine which had broken into Saligny's living quarters, for which the porkers' owner, a local innkeeper, had beaten the domestic. When the Texas government failed to support Saligny's demand for satisfaction against the innkeeper, Saligny had worked during his remaining term of office to scotch a French loan to Texas. In 1844-1845, he also tried to prevent the United States from annexing Texas.¹⁸

The continuing loyalty of French settlers in Mexico to the Mexican cause helped to counterbalance the negative impression of the pro-Texan French. Most notably, the general sent in October 1842 by Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna to use Matamoros as a base for the continuing struggle against the

Texans was French-born Adrien (Adrián to the Mexicans) Woll. Woll received a particularly warm welcome from the residents of Matamoros.¹⁹

With the founding of Brownsville in 1848 in the wake of the Mexican-American War, a group of Frenchmen took up residence here as well in the 1850s and 1860s, along with hundreds of other Europeans.²⁰ Some 5% of the population (403 people out of a total of 8,541) were born in Europe north of Spain, while of the 519 people born in the United States, those from Louisiana represented the second-largest group after those from the east coast.²¹ So many Francophones moved in that the sound of French and German, in addition to English and Spanish, was commonly heard.²² It was still felt in 1890 that the postmaster should have a grasp of all four of these languages.²³ Most particularly, French culture was emphasized by the elite.²⁴ Down to 1869, French-born Emile Claudon was still publishing the French-language Le Ranchero-Journal Tri-Hebdomadaire as a subsection of his Ranchero newspaper.²⁵ As late as 1879, the large numbers of Frenchmen in Brownsville was still an object of comment.²⁶ The very look of Brownsville was affected, as farther north in Texas, by French styles of architecture, with verandas, floor-length casement windows, and mansard roofs.²⁷

French merchants were especially prominent, making trips to purchase merchandise all the way from New Orleans to France, England, and Germany.²⁸ Most of the first-generation merchants were French if they were not Anglos.²⁹ Pierre Vivier, from Normandie, first came as a merchant to Port Isabel during the '49 California Gold Rush moving through the delta. Vivier's business spread across to Matamoros and Mier. A one-story brick building in the latter town which once housed his merchandise still bears his name at the top of the facade.³⁰ The French impulse to culture can be seen in the fact that at the Joseph Vivier family once operated the old Brownsville Opera House.³¹

The real estate broker Félix Maxan was also considered to be French, even though he had been born at sea on a Spanish ship.³² In 1877, lawyer Nestor Maxan was shot to death by General Miguel de la Peña in a duel. As to the cause, this was a case of "cherchez la femme," for the difficulty between the two men had arisen over their rival affections for the same woman. Maxan had challenged de la Peña to a duel and, after nobody had been hit in the first round of firing, had insisted on a second and--for him--fatal round. The duel was held at Puertas Verdes east of Matamoros. Maxan's corpse was purportedly brought on the ferry back to Brownsville by sticking a cigar in his mouth and dragging him along, pretending that he was "dead drunk." The corpse was then supposedly propped up on the dead man's porch. As the amorous French shrug, "Toujours l'amour!"³³

Victor Egly, after having served for a time with the Confederate navy, came to the delta from New Orleans in December 1864 as a half-owner of a steamboat. Selling his half of the ownership in the boat, he settled as a blacksmith in Matamoros. Finding that occupation too boring, he became an engineer on a Rio Grande steamer in October 1865, carrying French marines from Bagdad to Matamoros. After the war, he stayed on as steamboat engineer, but

now in the peaceful employ of King and Kenedy. In November 1867, Egly crossed the river to settle with his large family in Brownsville, where he continued to vacillate between blacksmithing and employment as an engineer aboard steamships. One of his granddaughters, Melvina Schreiber, in 1902 married the scion of another local French family, L. A. Jagou.³⁴

The Egly family has continued to make a significant contribution to Brownsville, most recently in the field of education (so important to the French). Brownsville's Egly Elementary School, opened in 1977, was named for several members of the Egly family who held administrative and teaching positions in the Brownsville Independent School District. One especially popular member of the family was Joseph Egly, teacher and principal in the school system from 1950. In the early 1970s, Joseph was named the outstanding administrator of the year at Hanna High School, in recognition of his devotion to student needs and his great personableness.³⁵

Two notable druggists were among the first wave of French immigrants into Brownsville. One of these druggists was Jean-Pierre Putegnat. Born near Domevre, a village near Lunéville in Lorraine, about 1810, he had left his home and family in about 1835 to settle in Mobile (where a French enclave existed). Marrying Virginia-born Eliza Butt, he sired a family of four boys and two girls. By 1850, Jean-Pierre with his brood was already established in Brownsville, where he was listed in the census as a merchant with \$2,500 worth of real estate. He soon became the pharmacist of the Botica del León on Elizabeth Street. It is very difficult to maintain a trilingual family tradition, even when a family felt a call to try to do so, and in the bilingual Spanish-English setting of Brownsville, French frequently would fall away. Thus Jean-Pierre's grandson William Henry II was already speaking only Spanish and English.³⁶

The Putegnat family was destined to play a prominent role in Brownsville's civic life for generations to come. Jean-Pierre's grandson William Henry II, who ran the Model Laundry close to Fort Brown as well as owning the W. H. Putegnat Contracting Company and a downtown plumbing and electrical supply store, helped to establish the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. His son, William Henry III, after World War II built up a three-state business in rental uniforms for workers. William Henry III's son Michael Putegnat has continued the family's entrepreneurial spirit, having founded and later sold his own Time Data Company.³⁷

Michael Putegnat offers a case in point of how ethnic cultural traits can linger in a family despite generations of geographic and linguistic dislocation. The French emphasis on the intellect and creativity can be seen in his fiction writing as well as in his activity on the Texas Southmost College Board in the late 1980s and in his founding and chairmanship of the Texas Southmost College Scholarship Foundation. The Frenchman is known for his love of argument, holding his own "contre vents et marées" (against contrary winds and tides). Michael Putegnat, nourished on a tradition of family dinner table debates in which any side might be taken for the sake of argument, became a stu-

dent activist at St. Edward's University in Austin in the 1960s. He advocated a broader base of constituencies on college board--an idea he later applied to the Texas Southmost College Board. Michael also exemplifies the not infrequently-met impulse back to one's cultural roots, having studied French in college and improved it since. Through numerous trips back to France, he has established contact with members of his family remaining in the mother country.³⁸

The other French druggist from the founding two decades of Brownsville was Joseph Kleiber (reportedly from the same family as Napoléon I's General Kléber). Historical categories tend to blur at the edges, and this rule is exemplified by Kleiber's home province of Alsace. Basically German in home language, part of Gaul until the 5th century, then part of Germany until the 17th century, then conquered by France until returning to German sovereignty between 1871 and 1918, and finally restored to France, the Alsatians are so bilingual in their heritage as to be able to identify themselves as either French or Germans. Joseph Kleiber, local druggist of the Botica del Aguila in Brownsville, who settled here in 1860, maintained a French identity, despite his German name.³⁹ The family came to own many thousands of acres of land outside of Brownsville.⁴⁰ The French commitment to education is illustrated by Emile Kleiber's membership on the school board in the late 19th century.⁴¹ The French impact on local culture was also exhibited by Mrs. Mary Emma Kleiber Vivier's central role as donor in the construction of Brownsville's old opera house in 1881.⁴²

Agricultural innovation marked the careers of some of the early French settlers. Celestin Jagou, raised in the Basses Pyrénées, moved via New Orleans in 1862 to Bagdad and then Matamoros. There he engaged in the then-flourishing cotton trade. At the end of the Civil War, Celestin moved to Brownsville, where he opened a grocery and liquor store. He planted a wide variety of crops on his Esperanza Farm. Not only did he raise the traditional corn and beans, but also the delta's first long staple Sea Island cotton and its first commercial oranges, as well as Muscatel, Modoc, and Chasselas wine grapes, introduced from southern France, almonds, cork, bananas, and tobacco. He also introduced the first wire fencing to the delta, as well as an improved irrigation system using underground pipes and large brick tanks with a windmill. Jagou even tried, though in vain, to produce silk by importing silk worms and mulberry trees from southern France.⁴³ Celestin also kept active as a merchant, importing everything from canned foods to sporting equipment.⁴⁴

In 1864, George Brulay, born in 1839 in Paris, came to America to make his fortune as a merchant. He was responsible for the first successful local crop of sugar cane, from his Hacienda Brulay east of town, complete with a 150-ton sugar mill. He also planted cotton, and constructed a pumping plant to propel the irrigation of his crops. Brulay enjoyed enough success to build a large two-story family home on his farm for his Alsatian wife and their five children. He also built a (now demolished) three-story French château-style mansion at 508 East Elizabeth

Street, with a ballroom and running water. He was concerned to spend more time in town so that his French- and Spanish-speaking children would brush up their English as well. Brulay, in good French fashion, acted as a stimulus to local culture, with his love of theater, music, and art. He went so far as to install a telephone line between the Brownsville opera house and the Hacienda Brulay, so that just in case he was detained at his farm he could still hear the performances by phone!⁴⁵

Other professions listed for the Frenchmen in the 1850 and 1860 census reports (the former for the Lower Rio Grande Delta and the latter for Brownsville) include principal and teacher (reflecting the Gallic love of learning), grocer, butcher, cook, baker, and confectioner (of course, given the fame of French cuisine), barkeeper, clerk, gunsmith, stonecutter, brickmason, carpenter, seaman, teamster, house painter, gardener, servant, and laborer.⁴⁶

Notable among the influx of Frenchmen were French Christian missionaries, who were destined to leave a major impact on the Rio Grande Delta, with their churches, schools, hospitals, and spiritual leadership.⁴⁷ The difficulties they tackled can be glimpsed in the remarks of the famous French ornithologist John W. Audubon, who came through infant Brownsville in February 1849 as part of the 49ers headed for the California gold fields. Audubon spoke of a lack of education and refinement, as well as an absence of landscaping aesthetics.⁴⁸ The impression of a herculean labor to be done is reinforced by the question the natives posed to Abbé Domenech when he came to Brownsville in 1851 or 1852: "What have you done to be sent here?"⁴⁹ However, "Comme on fait son lit, on se couche" ("We make the bed we lie in"), and the French energetically set about improving the local milieu.

The above-mentioned Michel Menard (raised near Montréal) from his new base on Galveston Island helped to organize Catholic missionary work in Texas by replacing the now-distrusted Hispanic clergy with a new group of French counterparts. Father Jean (John) Odin as Bishop of Galveston from 1847 gave direction to the effort from inside the Church hierarchy.⁵⁰ A group of Oblate Fathers, recruited from French Canada, was sent in December 1849 to Brownsville. One of the Oblate Fathers, Father Telmon, with the friendly support of many local Protestants, built the first Catholic church in 1848.⁵¹ While the church building was under construction, services were held for a time in an empty store provided by its German Lutheran owner and his Catholic wife.⁵² Father P. F. Parisot, a native of France educated at Marseilles, was the driving force behind the completion of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, travelling to France to obtain nine brass chandeliers from Paris' Pousiellgues Factory.⁵³ Father Alexandre Soulerin specialized in setting up a ministry to outlying ranches, the fathers making rounds on horseback.⁵⁴ The French Oblate Fathers also founded St. Joseph's College in 1865.⁵⁵

Gallic wit was well represented by Father Parisot. When in 1865 or 1866 highway bandits west of Brownsville held up the stagecoach in which Parisot was travelling, Parisot told the robbers he had no money for them. Taking him at his word, the

bandits left him alone, thereby missing the \$120 Parisot actually had on his person. Father Parisot later explained that he had not lied, but had merely told the robbers that he had no money for them.⁵⁶ The same type of humor can be seen in Father Emmanuel Domenech, who hailed from Lyons, France, and first came to Brownsville in 1850. Among other wry comments, Domenech observed that "the majority of the drunken men I encountered were Mexicans little accustomed to alcoholic drinks, or Americans belonging to societies of temperance." The same gentleman offers an example of the French commitment to culture with his efforts to cultivate the local pastorelas and other Mexican traditions, and with his composition of a journal of his experiences.⁵⁷

French nuns aided in the process of bringing spiritual and educational support to the new town. In February 1853, a group of French nuns from Lyons arrived and soon founded the local Convent of the Incarnate Word, as well as a school for girls. A boy's school was later added.⁵⁸

The French presence continued to grow in Matamoros, too, reinforcing its presence locally. For example, L. N. Petitpain from New Orleans opened a dry goods import business on the corner of Abasolo and Séptima in that town in 1865.⁵⁹ Indeed, the French seemed to thrive initially on both sides of the river, with no notable problems with partisan feelings between the Mexicans and Americans. When Juan Cortina began his attacks on the new Brownsville establishment in 1859, the prosperous French community naturally sided against him in the name of law and order. Joe L. Putegnat and Henry Ligon were among the citizens who fought in the Brownsville Tigers under Major Heintzelman against Cortina's band.⁶⁰

However, the intertwined American and Mexican civil wars of the early 1860s put the local French on the spot. Napoléon III's military intervention in Mexico, in cooperation with the British government of Lord Palmerston, was intended to bring success to the Mexican Centralists (now under Emperor Maximilian I) and indirectly to encourage the Confederate States of Dixie. The presence of a French fleet off the mouth of the Rio Grande was held to be a major factor in maintaining the Confederate trade with the outside world via Brownsville and Matamoros.⁶¹ Furthermore, the Prince de Polignac, son of Charles X's premier and ancestor of Prince Rainier of Monaco, fought for the Confederacy with the rank of major general.⁶²

The Imperialista troops under General Tomás Mejía which occupied Matamoros in September 1864 included French and Belgian soldiers, who crossed over to visit Confederate-held Brownsville.⁶³ This Imperialista French presence was reinforced when four hundred French marines were landed at the same time from the French navy, which under the direction of Admiral Bosse and the immediate leadership of Capitaine A. Veron captured Bagdad.⁶⁴ This French presence was reinforced when more French soldiers were landed by Admiral de la Bedolière in December 1865.⁶⁵ Father Domenech, who served briefly as chaplain to Emperor Maximilian, returned to the area with the French troops.⁶⁶ A local legend tells about one of the Belgians who came in with this French expedition and stayed on in Matamoros after the war

as a respected and hard-working broom salesman.⁶⁷

Typical of the French love of culture, the French had not been in possession of Matamoros for even two days before Belgian engineers were contracted to build an opera house--the Teatro del Imperio (later called the Teatro de la Reforma)--to receive an expected visit from the music-loving Maximilian and his Belgian Empress Charlotte ("Carlota"). Despite the intensity of the war and the brevity of the French occupation of Matamoros, the Belgian M. Pellen managed to complete this theater in 1865, with an ingenious machine to convert the theater at times into a ballroom by raising the floor to stage level.⁶⁸

The general sympathies of the local Frenchmen naturally fell on the side of the Confederacy and its Mexican Imperialista friends. Members of the Putegnats family served as officers in the Confederate forces.⁶⁹ Emile Claudon, the French-born city secretary of Brownsville, published a pro-Imperialista Brownsville paper entitled the Rio Grande Courier, with English, Spanish, and French sections. Claudon acted as his own editor, with the Confederate officer John S. Ford as an associate editor.⁷⁰ Joseph Kleiber served as Brownsville postmaster under the Confederacy. He made a profitable business out of his participation in the trade in cotton, arms, ammunition, and medicine during the war.⁷¹ Captain Clark, the founder of Clarksville, left his wife in the care of "a Frenchman called Bob" when he joined other Confederate sympathizers in business in Bagdad.⁷² The French priests in general, and Father Parisot in particular, were held in suspicion by the Union forces when they occupied Brownsville for a time in 1863. Father Parisot flatly refused General Bank's order to pray for the Union government in his church services, saying he would only do so if obliged by his Bishop.⁷³

After the Yankee victory, some of the French suffered for their pro-Confederate sympathies. Joseph Kleiber suffered a major financial loss in his cotton trade and relocated to Matamoros.⁷⁴ In 1865, Celestin Jagou's Brownsville grocery and liquor store was raided and sacked by soldiers stationed at Fort Brown, although he was later compensated by the American government.⁷⁵ William Henry I Putegnats was dealt a severe wound in the forehead from a bayonet thrust when he tried to keep black Union soldiers from absconding with lumber being used for construction on Elizabeth and 8th Street (although this incident may have had nothing to do with political factionalism).⁷⁶ In 1866, Father Olivier and Father Vignolle were imprisoned by the Juaristas, who had just captured Matamoros the day before. Father Parisot crossed from Brownsville and arranged the release of the Matamoros French priests in exchange for giving Juarista General Carvajal the keys to the Matamoros church. By the time Carvajal learned that he had been given another set of keys (only to the passage-way at the side of the church), Father Parisot had rushed his fellow French priests to safety on the left bank of the river.⁷⁷ In 1867, Father Maurel, Superior of the Brownsville mission, was fined \$25 for wearing his cassock while visiting in Matamoros.⁷⁸

However, the local French families soon sprang back to life, and continued to play a leading role through the late 19th century and dawn of the 20th century. Of the sixty-two tax payers

of Brownsville in 1893 whose property was assessed at \$5,000 and upwards, ten were Franco-Americans, with Emile Kleiber listed with the highest assessment of the group, closely followed by Mrs. Mary Vivier, and then by the Putegnats, Combes, and Jagous.⁷⁹ John Kleiber was appointed district attorney in 1889, a post he still held in 1915.⁸⁰ Fred J. Combe served as Mayor of Brownsville from 1905 to 1910, until he lost his popularity when Pat Combe flew off the handle at a disturbance during a ballgame and restored order with the aid of pistol-brandishing and strong language. The ball park was subsequently burned down in the anti-Combe reaction.⁸¹ T. P. Barbour and Miss Lizzie Barbour were superintendents of the Brownsville Public Schools in 1898 to 1906 and 1913 to 1920 respectively.⁸²

The French families became notably involved in various attempts to revitalize the region by bringing in a railroad connection. In 1870, Joseph Kleiber, Charles André, and Nestor Maxan were part of a group of merchants who organized a newly planned Rio Grande Railroad Company.⁸³ Then in 1888, M. Seuzeneau, Mme. Bouchard, Jacques Lévy, L. M. Peliphaint, B. Hébard, M. Rougier, F. Aziz Puchot, and A. Dulcet were all local French merchants involved in a short-lived plan to build a railroad connection between Matamoros and the Mexican interior.⁸⁴

In the early 20th century, the local French element was swamped by the inrush of immigrants from the northern Great Plains, including large numbers of German-Americans. However, a new influx of French blood from Louisiana occurred in connection with the development of the shrimping industry in the 1940s and 1950s. The French actually were not instrumental in the launching of the local fishing, oyster, seafood restaurant, and boat-building industries based at Port Isabel, for this was the work most centrally of the Sicilian Valente and the local Barrientes families at the end of the 19th century.⁸⁵ However, Louisiana French immigrants were central to the development of the local shrimping industry.

The shrimping business began to become big business in the late 1940s, largely at the hands of Franco-American shrimpers from Louisiana and the neighboring Gulf coast of Texas. Previously, these shrimpers had concentrated on the white shrimp to be found along the continental shelf, which is wide off the coast of Louisiana, but narrows the farther south one moves along the Texas coast. In the mid-1940s, the shrimpers began to harvest the brown shrimp to be found in the deeper waters, overcoming the earlier marketing prejudice against this type of shrimp. Larger shrimp boats with improved trawling methods, together with the introduction of quick-freezing methods, also helped to make the exploitation of wider stretches of Gulf waters feasible. The shrimpers soon moved on to catch the pink shrimp from even deeper waters, and after 1947 the "Carmen White" shrimps from off the Yucatan coast. Once the whole Gulf became the shrimper's range of action, Brownsville's central location in the Gulf began to act as a magnet drawing in shrimpers to make their base in the area.⁸⁶

By the 1950s, over six hundred shrimp trawlers and major shrimp processing plants handling a multi-million dollar boom

were based locally. An annual shrimp festival was instituted at Port Isabel, complete with a blessing of the fleet, parades, dances, and the crowning of a Shrimp King and Queen.⁸⁷ By 1963, Port Isabel and the Port of Brownsville together ranked fourth among United States ports in dollar value of catch, and first in the number of shrimp caught.⁸⁸

Several examples of Louisiana French families coming into Brownsville at this time should suffice to give a flavor of the general phenomenon. One of the most dynamic shrimpers to join the migration was Louis Lapeyre. Born in Houma, Louisiana (fifty miles southwest of New Orleans), Louis came from a prominent old Louisiana family, which spoke only standard Parisian French. His great-grandfather had been responsible for bringing the first railroad to New Orleans, and his family had built a wing of the New Orleans charity hospital. Louis' father Emile had launched the Grand Caillou shrimp processing plant in Houma, Louisiana. Louis himself studied at Southwestern Institute in Lafayette and in 1950 married Barbara Routier of a family that had originally migrated to Louisiana from Alsace-Lorraine. They would be blessed with a close family of eleven children. They followed the shift of the shrimp boom to Brownsville, where in 1957 Louis opened the Shell-Tex shrimp processing plant (now called South Tex Plant). Louis Lapeyre became a city commissioner from 1969 to 1972. When Mayor Earl Griffey resigned due to ill health on 24 August 1972, Louis was appointed to fill out his term as mayor, down to 17 December 1973. In his term as mayor, he gave special attention to an attempt to beautify and develop Brownsville by alterations to Elizabeth Street and by the construction of a theme park in the Amigoland area to draw in tourists. However, the proposals bogged down in political controversy and were dropped due to the outcome of the following mayoral election.⁸⁹

Another of the incoming shrimpers was Ariste Lasseigne. Ariste was born into an old non-Cajun Franco-Louisianan family, which had already participated in repulsing the British landing near New Orleans in the War of 1812. Ariste's father François was a farmer with a country store on Bayou Lafourche south-east of New Orleans. Disliking farm work, Ariste drifted into oyster fishing and then shrimping, based at Morgan City, Louisiana. Joining the trend to relocate to the Brownsville area, Ariste began to shrimp from this region in 1948, and in 1951 he brought his wife Marceline and his six children to resettle in Brownsville. Here, Ariste went on from being a shrimp boat captain to buying his own boat. This was expanded by his sons Harris and Frank into a fleet of boats, which reached ten in number at its height, under the name of Lasseigne Enterprises. Harris is also President of the Texas Shrimp Association and a member of the Turtle Exclusion Device Committee.⁹⁰

Not all of the French Louisianans to settle in Brownsville in the post-World War II period were shrimpers, even though that industry inspired the heart of the migration. Paul Bourgeois, to take one example, came in as a telegraph operator for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Paul was raised in Lafayette, Louisiana, scion of the Cajun Bourgeois family evicted from Nova Scotia in the the late 18th century by the British. Farmers in

Nova Scotia, they became sugar plantation owners in Louisiana. Paul's great-uncle owned a Mississippi river boat and had dealings with Jean Lafitte. Paul's father Mack, out of a sense of adventure, at age sixteen joined General Pershing's expedition chasing Pancho Villa through Mexico.⁹¹

The Louisiana French influx helped to revive a certain French element to the local society. Louis Lapeyre brought the Christian dedication associated with many French families. Various of his relatives were priests or nuns, and his wife Barbara teaches at St. Mary's School in Brownsville. Louis and Barbara have visited in France and French Switzerland, and at least one of their children, their daughter Anne, has carried on an interest in speaking French and also visiting France. They also placed a typically French emphasis on fine cuisine; Louis' great-aunt had even been sent to a cooking school in France. Several generations of family recipes for French dishes have been handed down to present.⁹²

Harris Lasseigne still speaks French, his first and home language, as well as English and Spanish. The French spoken in his family is the "franglais" typical of Louisiana, with a strong English influence and such sound shifts as "zedecos" (from "des haricots") as the name for Cajun bands. Harris' very name is an Anglicization of his dad's name Ariste, in a sort of concession to the natural tendency of Anglos to distort the name into Harris. Harris has been able to maintain a French-speaking tradition in his own home, thanks to the fact that his wife Kathy Osburne spent several years in France, where her navy captain father was stationed, and is a French teacher at Pace High School. They even met in a French class at Southwest Texas University. Typical of many local French families, they emphasize Christian values, although atypically not Catholic, since Harris switched to the Methodist denomination of his wife. He also perpetuates the oft-encountered French love of experimental cooking.⁹³

Paul Bourgeois' parents spoke Cajun French in the home, even though a European aunt of Paul's mother, whose family had come to Louisiana directly from France, expressed some chagrin at this concession made by Paul's mother to his father. When Paul first came to Brownsville, he participated in a social circle of Cajun shrimpers. Most of these friends have since returned to Louisiana with the difficulties to hit the local shrimping industry in the early 1980s. Five neighbor shrimping families from Paul's street alone were among those to leave. Paul's Brownsville family has dropped the Francophone tradition, partly due to his marrying a wife bilingual in Spanish and English, Candy Quintanilla. Paul has become functional in Spanish as more useful locally. Yet Paul has retained many of the French characteristics. He typifies the strong Louisiana French commitment to Christianity, having been active first in the Immaculate Conception and Guadalupe churches and later (through the influence of their daughter Martha, now employed at the Brownsville Historical Museum) in the First Baptist Church. The French cultural impetus is amply manifest in Paul, who inherited his skill in wood-carving from his parents. Trained in art at Lafayette's Southwestern College, since age

fifteen Paul has sold his art commercially, including to greeting card companies and to newspapers in various parts of the country. He has also written performed plays and published short stories in many magazines. Paul also manifests the down-home Cajun joie de vivre humor. One of his early farces presented an attorney shouting, "It won't stand up in court!" When the judge asked what would not stand up in court, the lawyer replied, "A two-legged table."⁹⁴

A few French immigrants from other areas beside Louisiana also continued to dribble in. One immigrant born and raised in France was Andrée Petit from Provins, who came to Brownsville in 1974 when her Argentinian-American husband, Hugo Dominguez, was transferred here. She maintains a trilingual French-English-Spanish tradition in her family.⁹⁵ The Quebecois element, spilled over into Vermont, was represented by Tom LaFleur, a Francophone librarian who first came to the Lower Rio Grande in 1980 and came to be Director of the Texas Southmost College Library in Brownsville. He has come to speak fluent Spanish as well.⁹⁶ The Maine French community was represented by Joseph Petit (of no known relationship to the Andrée Petit mentioned above) from Maine, who was transferred to Brownsville as a member of the U.S. Coast Guard in 1972. Joseph is fully bilingual in French and English and maintains a French-speaking tradition through visits to his parents' home in Maine.⁹⁷

Cornelio Nouel, Jr. came in from a shipping company family relocated four generations previous from France to the Caribbean. Cornelio Jr.'s uncle Jean Nouel is a noted poet of Venezuela. Cornelio Sr., a pilot for Venezuela's Avensa Airlines, was trained by Pan American Airlines in Brownsville, where he met and married Gloria Ramirez. Cornelio, Jr. was sent during the political uproar of 1959 in Venezuela to live with his maternal aunts in Brownsville and attend St. Joseph's Academy. Educated at undergraduate and graduate levels at The University of Texas-PAB, Cornelio Jr. works as a Public Relations and Marketing Representative for the Charter Psychiatric Hospital of McAllen. Beside his commitment to helping people through social work, he is steeped in cultural and historical interests, most particularly in opera. He speaks and reads French.⁹⁸

The French wave of the post-war period was reversed in the following generation. The Magnusson Act in the early 1980s extended the territorial waters of the United States and Mexico to the 200-mile limit. This change shut the American fisherman out of Gulf shrimping to the south of the Rio Grande. As a result, the Rio Grande Delta was no longer central to the restricted American shrimping industry, but rather now at its very edge. The central base of the American shrimping industry thus shifted back to the Louisiana and East Texas area, to which many of the Franco-American shrimpers resettled. Already quite a few, nostalgic for their home area, had returned in 1957, a bad year for shrimping.⁹⁹

An attempt to found a Brownsville French club in the 1980s met with only a short-lived success. It is surprising that it flourished even for a time. French individualism is famous. The French playwright Eugène Ionesco described Frenchmen as antisocial

with an outlook that says, "I don't care what others think; its enough that I think for the others."¹⁰⁰ The local Franco-Brownsvillites have expressed the same observation about themselves. Michael Putegnat commented on how his family emphasizes socializing more in its own circle than with other Franco-American families, and he adds that the Putegnats who have remained in Lorraine have tended to fragment even from each other.¹⁰¹ Barbara LaPeyre spoke of their large and loving family get-togethers, preferred by her family to larger social gatherings.¹⁰² Harris Lasseigne likewise mentioned his family's mutual loyalty and love of socializing within its own circle.¹⁰³ Thus, it is not entirely surprising that the "Cercle Français or the Club Fleur-de-Lis" (as it was called) was largely the project of a trio of women with a bicultural Franco-German background.

The idea for forming a city French club was inspired by the vigorous German Edelweiss Club active at the time. Three Edelweiss members in particular took steps to establish the Club Fleur-de-Lis in 1987. One was Marie Madeleine Eydt ("Mady") Scott, of a bilingual, but basically German-speaking, family from Luxembourg which resettled in Montréal when Mady was ten. Mady came to Brownsville to purchase the Surf Motel on South Padre Island. A vivacious lady, she had already added her natural zest to the Edelweiss Club--including playing the role of a cuckoo springing enthusiastically from the cuckoo clock on the Edelweiss float in a Charro Days parade. Mady became the President of the Fleur-de-Lis.¹⁰⁴ The second organizer of the Cercle Français was the energetic Barbara Hartstock, a German-American from Cleveland who spoke only German until she started going to school. Part of Barbara's ancestry was French, including a great-grandfather from nancy who had sung in the boy's choir at Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral. Barbara was taught French from first grade on. Later, she was certified to teach German, French, and Italian. She also acted as President of Cleveland's German Club and started Cleveland's Les Bavards ("The Gabbers") French Club. She and her husband Bob Hartstock after retirement settled in Brownsville in 1980 in order to escape the harsh Ohio winter weather. Barbara became Vice-President of both the Edelweiss German Club and of the Fleur-de-Lis French Club.¹⁰⁵ The third principal organizer of the Fleur-de-Lis was Vivian Kundorf-Zgodzinsky Kearney, a World War II orphan born in the Warsaw Ghetto on the eve of its collapse and raised by Yiddish- and French-speaking aunts in the Francophone settings of Paris and Montréal. A graduate of McGill University, she lived and worked for a time in München, Germany, where she learned to speak German. Vivian moved to the Lower Rio Grande with her husband in 1970 and became a highschool French teacher. The membership of the Fleur-de-Lis Club was equally surprising, drawing on various German-Brownsvillites and such other ethnic backgrounds as the Francophone Catalan Carmelo Garcia from Barcelona, as well as a smattering of authentic Franco-Brownsvillites.

The Club Fleur-de-Lis lasted about two years, sponsoring such events as a high school puppet show production of Rutebeuf's play "Théophile," a reading of the poetry of Jacques Prévert, lectures on Luxembourg history and on French Gothic cathedrals,

wine- and cheese-tasting parties, and picnics.¹⁰⁶ Since the displacement of the heart of the shrimping industry and the dissolution of the Cercle Français, French culture seems to be on the wane in Brownsville. Hopefully, however, after so many years of colorful contribution to local society, it will never be lost. It is true that "tout passe, tout casse" (everything passes, everything breaks), but in the case of the Franco-Brownsvillite presence, may the more appropriate proverb prove to be "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (the more things change, the more they stay the same).

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

¹ "French-American Relations: Rapprochement," The Economist, 16 March 1991, 20.

² John C. Rayburn and Virginia Kemp Rayburn, Century of Conflict, 1821-1913: Incidents in the Lives of William Neale and William A. Neale, Early Settlers in South Texas (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1966), 35.

³ Henry N. Ferguson, The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley (Brownsville: Springman-King Press 1976), 47-48.

⁴ A. B. J. Hammett, The Empresario: Don Martin De Leon (The Richest Man in Texas) (Kerrville, Texas: Braswell Printing Co., 1971) 13-14.

⁵ Leroy P. Graf, "The Economic History of the Rio Grande 1820-1875," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1942, 26.

⁶ Graf, 46.

⁷ James Heaven Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County, Texas," Master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1965, 75.

⁸ Macedonio Támez Guajardo, Población Francesa en Texas: Consideraciones Históricas (Ciudad Victoria: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1979), 9.

⁹ The French Texans (Austin: Institute of Texan Cultures, The University of Texas, 1973), 1.

¹⁰ Graf, 48-49.

¹¹ Eliseo Paredes Manzano, Homenaje a los Fundadores de la Heróica, Leal e Invicta Matamoros en el Sesquicentenario de su Nuevo Nombre (H. Matamoros: Impresos Alfa, 1976), 69.

¹² Eliseo Paredes Manzano, La Casa Mata y Fortificaciones de la Heróica Matamoros, Tamaulipas (H. Matamoros: Impresos Alfa, 1974) 26; and French Texans, 11.

¹³ Ohland Morton, "Life of General Don Manuel de Mier y Terán as it Affected Texas-Mexican Relations," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2, October 1944, 193-194.

¹⁴ Eliseo Paredes Manzano, Conmemoración del CXXV Aniversario de los Honrosos Títulos, de Heróica, Leal e Invicta (H. Matamoros: Imprenta El Norte, 1976), 3.

¹⁵ French Texans, 11.

¹⁶ Támez, 9.

- 17 Graf, 134-135.
- 18 French Texans, 16-17.
- 19 José Raúl Canseco Botello, Historia de Matamoros (Matamoros: Litográfica Jardín, S.A., 1981), 104.
- 20 Walter W. Hildebrand, "The History of Cameron County, Texas," Master's thesis, North Texas State College, August 1950), 47.
- 21 Thompson, 72.
- 22 Thompson, 73.
- 23 Lieutenant W. H. Chatfield, The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande: Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico (New Orleans: E. P. Brandao, 1893), 18.
- 24 Thompson, 75.
- 25 A. A. Champion (with Mary Champion Hengglar, Consuelo Champion, and Vivian Kearney), "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism (1830's to 1890's)," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 142.
- 26 Peter Gawenda, "Brownsville, Model City of Texas in 1879," in Milo Kearney (ed.), Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1986), 187.
- 27 French Texans, 24.
- 28 Hildebrand, 47; and Ferguson, 145.
- 29 Ferguson, 111.
- 30 Interview with Joe Vivier, 21 July 1989.
- 31 Betty Bay, Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide (Brownsville: Brownsville Historical Association, 1980), 169.
- 32 James Robert Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," Master's thesis, Texas Tech University, December 1969, 84; and Thompson, 79.
- 33 Minnie Gilbert, "Caravans to the Rio Grande," in Valley By-Liners (ed.), Roots by the River (Mission, Texas: Border Kingdom Press, December 1978), 6; Thompson, 114-115; and Interview with Joe Vivier, 21 July 1989.
- 34 Memorandum Book of Victor Egly, by year.
- 35 The Palmetto, Vol. XVIII (Brownsville: Homer Hanna High School, 1991), 352.
- 36 John F. Schunk (ed.), 1850 U.S. Census: Cameron, Starr and Webb Counties, Texas (Wichita, Kansas: S-K Publications, 1987), no page numbers given; and Interview with Michael Putegnat, 5 April 1991.
- 37 Interview with Michael Putegnat, 5 April 1991.
- 38 Eugène Ionesco, "Nos Contemporains Les Gaulois," in Camile Bauer and Margaret D. Barton, Lire, Parler et Ecrire (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 195-196; and Interview with Michael Putegnat, 5 April 1991.
- 39 Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, Brownsville: A Pictorial History (Norfolk/Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1982), 38-39; J. Lee Stambaugh and Lillian J. Stambaugh, The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas: Its Colonization and Industrialization, 1518-1953 (Austin: The Jenkins Publishing Company San Felipe Press, 1974), 91; Chatfield, back inside cover; and Ferguson, 161.
- 40 Chatfield, 11.

- 41 Chatfield, 11.
- 42 Wooldridge, Brownsville, 52.
- 43 Raymond W. Neck, "History of the Esperanza Ranch: A Significant Agricultural and Scientific Site, Brownsville, Texas," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 268-270; Hildebrand, 59; and Stambaugh, 183.
- 44 Chatfield, front inside cover.
- 45 Brian Robertson, Rio Grande Heritage: A Pictorial History (Norfolk/Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1982), 80; Trudie Waddell Huie, "A History of the Water Problems of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas," Master's thesis, Texas A and I, August 1957, 5; Wooldridge, Brownsville, 50, 65, and 83; Hildebrand, 55-56; and Bay, 168-169.
- 46 1860 Census, no page numbers; and Schunk, no page numbers.
- 47 French Texans, 1.
- 48 Ferguson, 191-192.
- 49 Stambaugh, 289.
- 50 French Texans, 12 and 18; and Stambaugh, 288.
- 51 Bernard Doyon, The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande, 1849-1883 (Milwaukee: Bruce Press, 1956), 25; and Chatfield, 5.
- 52 Rev. P. F. Parisot, The Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary (San Antonio: St. Mary's Church, 1899), 88-89.
- 53 Chatfield, 5 and 8.
- 54 Crews, 17.
- 55 Chatfield, 17.
- 56 Parisot, 57.
- 57 French Texans, 22-23.
- 58 Chatfield, 10 and 17-18.
- 59 Chatfield, 36 and 45.
- 60 Frank Cushman Pierce, Texas' Last Frontier: A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Menasha, Wisconsin: The Collegiate Press, George Banta Publishing Company, 1917; republished March 1962), 151.
- 61 T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 359.
- 62 French Texans, 27-28.
- 63 Fehrenbach, 387-388.
- 64 Paredes Manzano, Casa Mata, 38; and Canseco Botello, 147.
- 65 Paredes Manzano, Casa Mata, 48.
- 66 French Texans, 23.
- 67 Manuel F. Rodriguez Brayda, "El Belga," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 246-247.
- 68 Canseco Botello, 147.
- 69 Interview with Michael Putegnat, 5 April 1991.
- 70 Champion, 139-140.
- 71 Crews, 48; and Ferguson, 161.
- 72 Minnie Gilbert, "Safe in No-Man's Land," in Valley By-Liners (ed.), Roots by the River (Mission, Texas: Border Kingdom Press, December 1978), 70-71.
- 73 Parisot, 102-103 and 107.
- 74 Ferguson, 162-163.

- 75 Neck, 269.
 76 Pierce, 120.
 77 Graf, 66-67 and 70-74.
 78 Graf, 76-77.
 79 Chatfield, 25.
 80 Pierce, 96; and Stambaugh, 214-215.
 81 Ralph Schmeling, "The Murder of Joe Crixell," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 319; and Stambaugh, 296.
 82 Stambaugh, 296.
 83 Crews, 104-107; and Thompson, 108-109.
 84 Canseco Botello, 178-179.
 85 Teresa Chapa Alamillo, "Queen of the Waterfront," in Valley By-Liners (ed.), Roots by the River (Mission, Texas: Border Kingdom Press, December 1978), 85.
 86 Charles Daniel Dillman, "The Functions of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas: Twin Cities of the Lower Rio Grande," Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1968, 137; Wooldridge, Brownsville, 176; Ferguson, 294; and Interview with Harris Lasseigne, 4 May 1991.
 87 Wooldridge, Brownsville, 178 and 180-181.
 88 Dillman, 137; and Ferguson, 294.
 89 Interview with Barbara Lapeyre, 12 April 1991; and Robert S. Lewis, "What Ever Happened to the Good Old Days?," in Milo Kearney (ed.), Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1986), 245-246.
 90 Interview with Harris Lasseigne, 4 May 1991.
 91 Interview with Paul Bourgeois, 6 April 1991.
 92 Interview with Barbara Lapeyre, 12 April 1991.
 93 Interview with Harris Lasseigne, 4 May 1991.
 94 Interview with Paul Bourgeois, 6 April 1991.
 95 Questionnaire filled out by Andrée Dominguez in spring 1991.
 96 Questionnaire filled out by Tom LaFleur in spring 1991.
 97 Questionnaire filled out by Joseph Petit in spring 1991.
 98 Interview with Cornelio Nouel, Jr., 11 April 1991.
 99 Interview with Harris Lasseigne, 4 May 1991; and Interview with Paul Bourgeois, 6 April 1991.
 100 Ionesco, 196-197.
 101 Interview with Michael Putegnatt, 5 April 1991.
 102 Interview with Barabara Lapeyre, 12 April 1991.
 103 Interview with Harris Lasseigne, 4 May 1991.
 104 Interview with Mady Scott, 6 April 1991.
 105 Interview with Barbara Hartstock, 4 May 1991.
 106 Interview with Mady Scott, 6 April 1991.

A Historical Sketch of Brownsville's German-Americans

by

Milo and Sean Kearney

In contrast to Brownsville's Franco-American community, its German-American community, from a somewhat weaker start, has grown steadily in numbers. This phenomenon is based in the fact that the Germans, unlike the less Anglophilic French, have felt an affinity for both the Hispanic and Anglo societies. This dual attraction has made the history of the local German-Americans, like that of the local Franco-Americans, atypical of the general flow of German history in either the United States or Mexico. In this case, as in so many, Brownsville history has followed more a regional than a national pattern.

Germans were among the first generation of foreigners to settle in Matamoros when its trade to the outside world was first opened up in 1822. Germans had settled in Mexico since the reign of Carlos V, who had ruled over Spaniards and Germans alike.¹ Furthermore, a new wave of emigration out of Germany was in full swing in the 1820s and 1830s, propelled by economic depression and political oppression under the Metternich System.² To the north of the Rio Grande Delta region, large numbers of Germans, most particularly from west-central Germany's hill country from Elsass through Hesse to Thüringen, were pouring into Texas' west-central Hill Country in the 1830s and 1840s.³

The clearest motivation for those Germans who moved into the Lower Rio Grande Delta was economic, consistent with the general business drive of German settlers.⁴ Most notably, speculation that the Americans were going to grab the area prompted some of the Germans to move into the delta as real estate speculators. Adolphus Glaeveycke moved to the area, at about age seventeen in January 1836.⁵ Glaeveycke had left his native Germany convinced he could make his fortune quicker in America than by completing his German medical studies as urged by his father. He came to the Lower Rio Grande out of land speculation, convinced that the Texas was going to make good its claim to all the area down to the river and cause the left bank toward the mouth to boom. Glaeveycke rapidly became a land-owner--of Rancho San Pedro on the left bank about fifteen miles west of the later town of Brownsville.⁶ This development was doubtless facilitated by his marriage to Concepción Ramirez, a member of the prominent de la Garza clan.⁷

Never forgetting his plan, when the anticipated American army appeared in 1846, Glaeveycke did all he could to help its success. General Ampudia's suspicions of Glaeveycke, who was told to report to the general every morning, were well-grounded. Breaking his promise to Ampudia, Glaeveycke volunteered as a scout for reconnaissance parties, as a wood supply agent, and as a courier carrying secret dispatches for General Zachary Taylor, at considerable risk to his own safety and without any significant

payment for his services. Glaevecke expressed a qualified satisfaction at the result of the American take-over for his personal plans. He opened a wood yard to supply wood to steamboats, and did a good business from selling produce from his ranch to the incoming settlers as far upriver as Rio Grande City, although he complained that he had not become nearly as rich as he had hoped. Political rewards came Glaevecke's way, too. In August or September 1848, he was elected as the first tax assessor and collector for Cameron County, with Caspar Glaevecke (eight years younger than Adolphus and perhaps his brother) elected as constable. Adolphus later became Cameron County clerk from 1874 to 1891. Juan Cortina was quite correct in targeting Adolphus as a traitor to the Mexican cause, even though there was also a nonpolitical grievance over Glaevecke's role in having Cortina indicted for cattle rustling. Antonio Tijerina also charged in District Court in 1857 that Adolphus had eaten out the Tijerina estate.⁸

It may be that John Stryker, another early immigrant into Matamoros, had a similar land speculation in mind when, already in 1834, he obtained the Banco de Santa Rita on the left bank across from town. It is to be noted that as soon as the American army under Taylor occupied Matamoros in 1846, many of the American residents of Matamoros crossed over to establish a town on Stryker's acquired property--the first on the left bank of the delta.⁹

The Schatzell family, which settled in early Matamoros, also showed a closeness to Americans which may have been connected with the same frame of mind. In April 1836, during the War for Texas independence from Mexico, John Schatzell led a group of local residents in offering \$20,000 to the Mexican government for the lives and freedom of rebel Texan prisoners captured by General Urrea.¹⁰ In 1848, J. P. Schatzell, by then one of the two wealthiest merchants in Matamoros, was acting as the United States Consul in that town.¹¹

There was a noticeable German element among the Texan independence revolt against Mexico. To mention but two names, German-Jewish Hermann Ehrenberg fought with the Texans at Goliad, and the inventor of the Bunsen burner, Gustav Bunsen, gave his life in the same cause.¹² Indeed, many Germans left Mexico during both the Texas Revolution and Mexican-American War.¹³ The new town of Brownsville, established in 1848, experienced a significant German settlement. German became one of the town's everyday languages, along with Spanish, English, and French, making a postmaster quadrilingual in these four tongues desirable still in 1890.¹⁴ The occupations listed for the German settlers of the Lower Rio Grande region in the 1850 census and for the German-Brownsvillites in the 1860 census were farmer (the stereotypical occupation of incoming German-Americans farther north and a herald of things to come in the Lower Rio Grande area), brewer (natürlich!), watchmaker (another stereotype), policeman (German discipline), musician (the German emphasis on music even teaches, "Wo man singt, da lass Dich ruhig nieder; boese Menschen haben keine Lieder," i.e. "Where people sing, there make your home; for songs are shunned by evil folk alone"), merchant, hotel keeper,

carriage maker, cigar maker, miller, teacher, tailor, clerk, shoemaker, blacksmith, tinner, saddler, wheelwright, carpenter, grocer, butcher, baker, seaman, laundress, servant, and laborer.¹⁵

One of the new German settlers was Henry Miller, born as Heinrich Müller in 1820 in Germany. (Schunk) Henry Miller as owner of the Miller Hotel on Elizabeth and Thirteenth Street was Brownsville's equivalent of San Antonio's Wilhelm Menger, proprietor of the Menger Hotel in that city. Constructed in 1848 and originally called the Cameron House, the Miller Hotel was the most elegant hotel in town. With a bar-room and restaurant patronized by the military officers from Fort Brown and by the local residents alike, the hotel became a gathering place for all sorts of get-togethers, including even meetings of the town council and county court (which still lacked their own accommodations).¹⁶

Miller made a success of his establishment by applying to it certain winning German characteristics. Germans are known for their discipline and hard work, with such reinforcing sayings as "Arbeit macht das Leben süß" ("work makes life sweet").¹⁷ German efficiency gave the hotel such a good reputation as to draw in such famous guests as Richard King, Colonel Robert E. Lee, and seemingly John James Audubon.¹⁸ The German love for joining in organizations and gatherings is also legendary.¹⁹ This gregariousness helped shape into jovial get-togethers such a motley assembly of folks that Miller's Bar came to be nick-named "Noah's Ark." The German love of eating leans more to an emphasis on the consumption than the preparation as a work of art per se. They say, "Hunger ist der beste Koch" ("Hunger is the best cook"). This emphasis on good food brought Miller to import a master chef.²⁰

Another of the first settlers and founder of an enduring Brownsville clan was Georg (George) Joseph Krausse. Born in Hamburg about 1821, George came first to Galveston as organist in Trinity Church. There he met and married Augusta, a singer in the choir, whose family had immigrated from Dresden. About 1850, the young couple moved to Brownsville, where George taught music and sold musical instruments.²¹ The traditional German honesty and trustworthiness were said to be a factor in the success of the Krausse business establishment. Their son Henry Krausse I later earned a reputation for his typically German reliability and skill, as a watchmaker and jeweler in Brownsville.²²

Henry I Krausse married Teresa Puente, who introduced buñuelos, tamales, and other Mexican touches into the Krausse family. While Henry I retained his German fluency alongside Spanish and English, a trilingual tradition in a bilingual area is difficult to pass down. However, Henry III received a bachelors degree in French and German from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. Henry IV, presently a reporter for the Austin Statesman living in San Marcos, has learned a bit of German. This branch of the Krausse family came to specialize in the diplomatic service. Henry II was a U.S. Consul in Reynosa, Mérida, Yucatán, and Veracruz. Henry III and his wife Rita Boch both served in the Foreign Service in countries as far-flung as Japan, Argentina,

and Brazil. Another branch of the Krausse family specialized in law and law enforcement. George Joseph Krausse III served as a justice before dying in the early 1940s. Gustavo (Gus) Krausse, a son of George Joseph Krausse IV, served prior to his death in 1985 as a local sheriff.²³

Brownsville's first bookstore was opened by one of the German immigrants, Ferdinand Schlickum--a reminder that the Germans were as concerned with education as the French.²⁴

A further early German immigrant into Brownsville was the Jewish Austrian Leopold Schlinger, who left his home country in 1847 and who would serve as a Cameron County commissioner in 1868.²⁵ Fringe groups, while difficult to classify, are often among the most productive members of a folk, and this is illustrated in the case of the Germans by both the bilingual Franco-Germans of the Alsatian-Luxembourgeois western border and by the German-speaking Jews. The latter are an especially difficult case to classify, since there is such a wide range of identities from fully German-speaking and German-cultured Jews to Russian Ashkenazi Jews speaking Yiddish, a German-based language. There is also understandably a wide spectrum of reactions from the Jewish community as to whether individuals wish to be identified as a branch of German-Americans. At any rate, they should not be left out of any consideration of German culture, to which they have made such a rich contribution.

Adolph Marks I provides an example of another Jewish German coming into Brownsville in the early years. Born seemingly in Ingenheim near Mannheim, Germany (down the Neckar River from Heidelberg) in 1842, Adolph I's home language was strictly German; he knew no Yiddish. Come to Matamoros in search of business opportunities, he founded an import-export company with connections principally to New Orleans. He also established the Casino Matamorensis (meeting place of the town's high society) and served in 1868 as a trustee of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros, under the Presidency of S. M. Blum. German was squeezed out of the family tradition by absorption of the local Spanish-English bilingualism--the usual reason for the loss of German usage locally. Through intermarriage with local Hispanics, the family converted to Catholicism. The German tradition has survived in Adolph I's great-grandson John Marks, owner of Mark's Interiors interior decorating company and architect and interior designer of Brownsville's Garden Palacxe Chinese Restaurant. John speaks some German, and has a love of Germans (whom he describes as polite and friendly) and German culture. John has visited back in Adolph I's home town of Ingenheim, where he was saddened to find that the Nazis had burned the synagogue his father once attended.²⁶

After the initial settlement of Brownsville, the local Germans for the coming century were placed by one war after another under suspicion of being on the "wrong side," in contrast to the local French. The Civil War brought great difficulties to the town's Germans, at the same time it was bringing business opportunities to its Frenchmen. Having come from a German society fighting for principles of freedom from the heavy-handed Metternich System, and having founded free family farms

throughout the American Mid-West, the German-Americans generally felt no sympathy for the pro-slavery views of the majority of Anglo-Texans.²⁷ Especially those Germans who had fled from the crack-down on German liberals that followed the Revolution of 1848 made their anti-slavery opinions clearly known.²⁸ This and other considerations made the German-Texans generally pro-Union in the Civil War, placing them in an awkward political position at the extreme end of the Confederacy.²⁹

Thus, at the outset of the war, George Krausse took his wife Augusta and their children back to Germany for the duration of the war. Their son Henry Krausse was born in Stuttgart in this period.³⁰ Likewise, Leopold Schlinger and his wife Regine, also in sympathy with the Yankee cause, moved to Matamoros when the war broke out. They crossed back to Brownsville when the town was occupied by Union forces, Leopold joining the Loyal National League and Regine taking an oath of allegiance to the United States in May 1864. When the Confederates retook Brownsville, the Schlingers again fled to Matamoros for the duration of the conflict.³¹

One group of sixty-five German-Texan Union sympathizers from the Fredericksburg area tried to march under Fritz Tegener south to Mexico. A fellow German-Texan named Charles Bergman betrayed them, so that Tegener's men were ambushed near the Nueces River on their way. On 10 August 1862, more than half of the German-Texan party were massacred at the several-hour-long "Battle of the Nueces." When Tegener fell, command was assumed by Emil Scheiner, purportedly with the shout, "Lasst uns unser Leben so teuer wie möglich verkaufen" (Let's sell our lives as dearly as we can"). Some of those who escaped made it into Mexico. After the war, a monument, still surviving, was erected in Comfort, Texas, to the memory of those German-Texans killed. The inscription reads, "Treue Der Union" ("Loyal to the Union").³² Hundreds of other German-Texans succeeded in making it into Mexico, enough of them continuing on to form several cavalry companies in the Union army. The traitor Charles Bergman at the end of the war reportedly became the head of a group of bandidos in Mexico, where he was killed and his corpse was tossed into the Rio Grande.³³

Adolphus Glaevecke was one exception to this rule, holding loyal to the Confederacy, perhaps because his mortal enemy Juan Cortina was a champion of the anti-Confederate Juarista forces on the right bank.³⁴ This left Glaevecke little choice, and placed him in a difficult situation when the Yankee forces occupied Brownsville. Glaevecke evaded them, but General Heron's Union troops grabbed six hundred goats from Glaevecke's step-daughter. The goats were returned only after General Heron was convinced that no blood relationship existed between Glaevecke and the woman.³⁵

Local German fortunes improved after the Civil War, as German-Texans, who swore the Ironclad Oath and joined the Republican party en masse, found themselves trusted and forwarded by Radical Reconstruction governments.³⁶ This surge in German-Texan confidence and culture was accompanied by the step-by-step unification of Germany under Bismarck's aegis, culminating in the

creation of the Second Reich in 1871. Exstatic Germans opened Bismarck Kneipe (saloons) all over the state.³⁷ Union Lieutenant Frederick E. Starck, post adjutant of Fort Brown in 1864, was made Cameron County clerk in 1866 and 1868, and was then appointed alderman in June 1869. He married the Vidal step-daughter of Mifflin Kenedy and settled in Brownsville.³⁸ As a Brownsville delegate to a state convention in June 1868, Ferdinand Schlickum pushed for the creation of a new state to be formed out of South and West Texas, to strengthen the Republican Party.³⁹ When the Union troops divided Cameron County into five precincts in the fall of 1869, three of the appointed commissioners were German-Brownsvillites--the Jewish Austrian merchant Leopold Schlinger, Prussian baker Frank Thielan, and ex-Bremen postal clerk Henry Haupt.⁴⁰ Among the new Germans coming to town in this favorable period was Solomon Ashheim, who left Germany in 1862 and after a time in Victoria, Texas, came to Brownsville in 1865 and opened the Star Clothing Store. Ashheim served as Cameron County Treasurer.⁴¹

As part of the surge of German-Brownsvillite influence as Franco-Brownsvillite standing hit a nadir, Ferdinand Schlickum's Republican newspaper entered into a competition against Emile Claudon's partly-French Rio Grande Courier, driving it out of business in August 1868. Claudon gave up on the area and moved to Houston.⁴² Partisan tempers flared, and Schlickum, an appointee of Radical Reconstruction Governor Davis, was accused of tampering with a ballot box during an election for county judge in 1870.⁴³ One political opponent called Schlickum a "Dutch Jackass."⁴⁴ John S. ("Rip") Ford, who had previously served as an editor for Claudon, joined the staff of the anti-Reconstruction newspaper the Sentinel, from which he began to attack the present local and state establishment so vehemently that he was temporarily denied the right to vote. The bad feelings did not stop with that. On 16 February 1870, Rip Ford had been spending that Wednesday night playing billiards in the Miller Hotel, when Sheriff Rudolph Krause (who had come to Brownsville after the end of the Civil War and was seemingly not related to George Krausse's family) and his deputy came in and began to insult Ford. After completing his game, Ford tried to choke Krause, and Krause pulled out his pistol and shot Ford in the hand. The shot would have been fatal had Krause's aim not been foiled by the struggle. The two men were then separated. Factional tension following the incident was at such a feverish pitch that it was a wonder that no riot ensued.⁴⁵ One member of the old Confederate merchant elite tried unsuccessfully to arrest Sheriff Rudolph Krause and his deputy in 1870, on the charge of having assaulted Ford.⁴⁶

On 13 July 1870, five of the eight members of the new town council--Henry Haupt, Leopold Schlinger, J. H. Schaeffer, Henry Aphold, and H. C. Hune--were born in Germany. Schlinger (who owned a dry goods store) was the only one of these German town councilmen who held real estate.⁴⁷ The position of city tax assessor and collector was assigned first to ex-sheriff Rudolph Krause and then to Ferdinand Siebert, a new German resident.⁴⁸ In March 1871, Henry Haupt, who in that year was both editor of the

Radical Republican newspaper Ranchero and acting mayor of Brownsville, was shot and seriously wounded, with suspicions of political motivations for the assault on him.⁴⁹ In 1873, the town council included both George Krausse and Adolphus Glaevecke, while Mr. Siebert was city marshall. Nestor Maxan resigned as city attorney.⁵⁰

However, the ending of radical reconstruction in Texas in 1874 brought the Brownsville French again to the top of the seesaw, while the local Germans banged back to the ground. That year, "Rip" Ford was elected Brownsville mayor in a triumph over his old enemy Rudolph Krause.⁵¹ The German immigration to Texas had been halted in 1860, and now large numbers of German Texans moved to Mexico (many of these families not returning north of the Rio Grande until driven out by the fighting of the Mexican Revolution), the northern United States, or back to Germany (then in the process of unification by Bismarck).⁵²

Even though he had been connected with the pro-Confederate faction, ageing Adolphus Glaevecke shared in the unpleasantness to hit German-Brownsvillites after 1874. Most sensationally, in August 1879, he suffered days of a mysterious attack of brickbats hurling against and into his house. Glaevecke himself ascribed the onslaught to hostile neighbors.⁵³ If the 1906 Brownsville Raid was the work of local residents, it might be another possible example of Germanophobia that the house of Fred Starck was shot up in the process, Starck's sleeping children being saved only by an intervening brick wall.⁵⁴

As Texan-Germans fell under suspicion and a new national policy to push English-language education started with President Ulysses S. Grant, German culture lost something of its earlier confidence. Thus German-Texan determination to retain a Germanophone tradition was dealt its first notable blow in connection with this fall from power.⁵⁵ This was true despite a continuing German immigration for a time into Texas. One local example was Mrs. H. Bollack, who in 1878 moved to Brownsville from Bavaria via Louisiana and opened a big dry goods store on Twelfth Street.⁵⁶ The German influx, however, dramatically fell off after the mid-1880s due to the economic success of Bismarckian Germany.⁵⁷ German attention was also somewhat diverted to the development of Germany's new colonies, beginning with Southwest Africa in 1883, through the Kameruns, Togo, and German New Guinea in 1884 to German East Africa in 1885.⁵⁸ At any rate, the natural push to assimilation of second- and third-generation immigrants was doubtless a more important factor in Spanish-English bilingual Brownsville.⁵⁹

Gradually, the old antagonisms that had divided German-Brownsvillites and Franco-Brownsvillites died down. In 1888, six German businessmen (Henry Krause, Adolfo Marks, Michael Schodts, J. P. Boesch, Mr. Bremer, and Mr. Scholtz) are found joining with local French businessmen in supporting a transitory scheme to provide Matamoros with a railroad link to the Mexican interior.⁶⁰ In 1893, three German-Americans (Michael Scholtz, Robert Dalzell, and Mrs. Johanna Dreyfous) were still to be found among the sixty-two tax payers of Brownsville whose property was assessed at \$5,000 and upwards.⁶¹ In the same year, one German-American,

Christian Hess, was among the seventy-two residents who owned over one thousand acres in Cameron County.⁶² However, this back-seat role was about to change in a major way.

The coming of Brownsville's rail link to the north in 1904 with the completion of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad Company (later to become the Missouri Pacific Railroad), heralded a new major era in the history of the local German-Americans. The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the late 1920s reinforced the change.⁶³ The tracks were scarcely laid down when a massive movement of land investors and farmers from the American Midwest to the north set in, encouraged by real estate company promotional efforts, establishing farms in a wide variety of crops all over the Lower Rio Grande area. Brownsville's non-Hispanic element grew from about 20% in 1922 to almost 50% in 1936. A significant segment of this immigration was from the German-Americans who had settled the U.S. Midwest earlier. Such German-Americans as John Burkhart, I. R. Stahl, and Louis Witte were among the early large-scale shippers of local vegetables north.⁶⁴

One of the most notable of the incoming German-American farmers was Frederick William I Rusteberg, grandson of Andreas Rusteberg, who left his native Hannover in about 1830. Frederick William I settled in the Horseshoe Lake area in 1906. He came with his German-speaking family on a train from Chicago at age 29. After three years of bouts with pneumonia in Chicago, he had been advised to move to the extreme south by his doctor. He joked, "I don't think the doctor knew whether the Rio Grande Valley's climate was good for that sort of thing. He just thought I was going to die and wanted to get rid of me," but he combined economic and health interest and took the advice. His family's German-speaking tradition typically soon gave way in face of the Spanish-English bilingualism of the new home. His five-year-old son Frederick H. Rusteberg at first laughed with his sister over how the other children could not understand German. Yet he soon picked up Spanish from the farm hands and later English as well. However, Frederick William I's son Colonel Edwin Rusteberg visited his grandmother's home in Kassel, Germany.⁶⁵

Frederick William Rusteberg I rapidly became a successful potato farmer, known as the "Potato King." He became President of the Associated Growers and managed the El Jardín Irrigation District. He and his son Frederick H. helped to popularize the purplish-red bougainvilleas in Brownsville, and sold them to the town for planting on Palm Boulevard. His farm became a regular stop on early promotional land tours.⁶⁶

The Rusteberg family amply exemplifies the stereotypical German business acumen. Frederick H. Rusteberg carried on his father's vegetable farming tradition, becoming founder of the Southmost Soil Conservation District, and president of the Valley Farm Bureau and of the Associated Growers. From 1965, he was a banker at Brownsville's First National Bank. Frederick H.'s son Frederick William II Rusteberg, a graduate of Texas A & M University with post-graduate work in International Finance from Texas Tech University, became president of the International Bank of Commerce and a member of the port bridge commission.⁶⁷

The Rustebergs also illustrate the typical German community involvement. Frederick H. Rusteberg was active in many eleemosynary projects, including his role as board member for Mercy Hospital, the American Heart Association, and United Way. His role as trustee and board member secretary for Texas Southmost College, and most especially his efforts in bringing the construction of the college's vocational education building, was acknowledged by the structure being christened the Rusteberg Building.⁶⁸

Another German-American family coming into Brownsville with the development of large-scale farming was the Keller family. Henry Keller, son of an immigrant from Hannover, moved from Chicago to Brownsville in 1909, interested in the move by his brother-in-law, Frederick William I Rusteberg. Keller also gave the typical German emphasis to potato and cabbage farming. Henry's son Walter served as a local constable and a deputy sheriff--a good friend of police chief and sheriff Gus Krausse. Walter carried on the German tradition, although in a local German-Spanish-English "flip-flop," passing on some German linguistic heritage to his daughter Evelyn Keller Benton. Evelyn has since studied German and has visited Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, maintaining contact with cousins in Germany, especially one Frankfurt/Main. Evelyn also served as president of Brownsville's Edelweiss German Club.⁶⁹

Still another of the German-Americans to move down from the Midwest was Adolph Dittman, Sr., born in Berlin and brought in 1885 at age eight with his family to settle in Salt Lake City. In his early twenties, Adolph, Sr. had become a sleight-of-hand card magician with a circus and a song-writer. One of his songs about an unrequited love is in the possession of the Historic Brownsville Museum. After touring the Caribbean and Florida, Adolph, Sr. in 1907 came to Brownsville looking for a good business investment as the town was first opened up by the railroad. Having little success with the farm he established (where Palm Garden Nursery now stands), Adolph, Sr. in 1908 opened an "Electric Theater" in a rented facility on Washington Street. This did so well that in 1910, he built his own Dittman Theater building. This he owned down to his death in 1965. He also launched Brownsville's first trailer park, on Central Boulevard, noting that winter tourists were beginning to come in and were parking their trailers close to filling stations, to be able to use their restrooms and running water. He also found time to found the Dittman Outdoor Poster Advertising Firm and to serve on Brownsville's tax equalization board. His son, Adolph Dittman, Jr., a graduate of Texas A & M University, returned to his father's original farming interest, and developed the Dittman and Green Ruby Red Grapefruit. He is married to June Rusteberg, daughter of Frederick H. Rusteberg. Although Adolph, Sr. kept up his German, especially enjoying his German-language get-togethers with his friend, Matamoros jeweler Mr. Bartel, his Anglo wife never learned German, which was not passed on to Adolph, Jr.⁷⁰

A good example of the German penchant for creativity, Adolph, Sr. not only wrote songs, but also was a photographer who took pictures of developments in the Mexican Revolution for Pathé

News. At one point, he filmed General Lucio Blanco's camp at Rio Bravo, at a time Blanco was preparing to storm Matamoros. The rowboat that took him across to the right bank had just brought over a corpse of some other man, which gave Dittman food for thought, but he found a warm reception in Blanco's camp nonetheless. However, this reception made him persona non grata in Matamoros, until that town was captured by Blanco. Three months later, Blanco brought Dittman to Cd. México as his guest.⁷¹

The influx of Midwestern German-Americans also brought in with it Brownsville's first Lutheran church. While the majority of German settlers into Texas were Lutheran,⁷² the lack of a Lutheran church in Brownsville had tended to divert earlier German Lutherans into either the Episcopal or Presbyterian denominations, bringing with them their cultural penchant for beer drinking and dancing.⁷³ Thus, George Krausse's family joined the Episcopal Church, where George became a warden and their daughter Mary Minnie was the first infant to be baptized. Musical as the Krausses were, they also helped to organize the church choir.⁷⁴ Similarly, Frederick William Rusteberg I and Henry Keller, although Lutherans previously, led their families into Brownsville's First Presbyterian Church.⁷⁵

In 1912, a Lutheran missionary station was launched by Reverend E. F. Moerbe. In 1919, Reverend H. Meyer began to come down from his Lutheran church in San Benito to preach in Brownsville to a group of about thirty-five believers meeting in personal homes until Mr. O. Manske arranged for them to buy a small chapel. In 1934, Trinity Lutheran Church was formed by a group of overwhelmingly German-Americans consisting of the Belitz, Brown (Braun?), Hockenson, Hornholdt, Manske, Miller (Möller?), and Schroeder families. His moved into a church building on Palm Boulevard and St. Francis in 1935, and was served by its own sequence of German-named pastor (Reverend W. Graumann, from 1939 to 1942, followed by Reverend Carl Gaertner to 1951, Reverend Hobart Meyer to 1955, Reverend William Schuster--under whom a new church on Boca Chica was dedicated in 1965--to 1967, Reverend Carl Kruse to 1972, Reverend Edgar Keller to 1973, and Reverend Willard Meyer to 1979, followed by Reverend Timothy Koenig).⁷⁶ In 1966, in a typical German emphasis on the Christmas tree, Vera Schuster introduced a custom of decorating a Chrismon Tree with handmade Christians symbols into Trinity Lutheran Church.⁷⁷ A smaller segment of the incoming German-Americans were Catholic.⁷⁸ However, whether German-Brownsvillites belonged to the Protestant and Catholic denominations appropriately never made any great difference locally.⁷⁹ However, the Lutheran church did tend to foster a lingering German cultural identity longer than most other Texan institutions.⁸⁰

A new group of German-cultured Jews also moved into Brownsville at this time, mainly oriented to providing mercantile services to the new farm boom. One such was Max Wiesenthal, of a family whose first language had been German and which came from Franz-Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Wiesenthals hailed from a village where her family was already

friends with the family of Brownsville's Sam Perl. Max was a second cousin of (and his sister Yetta a life-long friend of) Simon Wiesenthal, famous for his identification of ex-Nazi war criminals after World War II. Raised partly in Galveston and then settled in Brownsville, Max Wiesenthal founded the Eagle Farm Machines Company.⁸¹

In 1915, Max Wiesenthal's sister Yetta came from Galveston to visit him, while her parents were visiting back in Wien. During her visit, Yetta met Morris Edelstein, from Kalvaria, Lithuania, who had come to Brownsville in 1912. Morris was then an itinerant peddler selling wares from town to town and ranch to ranch. He was sometimes accompanied on his rounds by William II Liebermann (better known as William King and Snake King), a Yiddish-speaker from Warsaw come to Brownsville in 1904 who would buy snakes from the ranches to supply his snake farm or to ship north. Stagecoach travellers had objected to riding with a freight of snakes, so the railroad came to Brownsville just in the nick of time to make Liebermann's snake export business a success. Isidore ("Issie") Dorfman, also from Austria, who opened a downstore jewelry store in 1924, later bought the Snake Farm and converted it into Palm Shopping Center on Palm Boulevard. In early August, 1915, Morris Edelstein travelled to Galveston to ask for Yetta's hand in marriage, just in time to be hit by the titanic tidal wave that inundated Galveston Island at that time. However, Yetta accepted the proposal and the two set up house in Brownsville in 1916.⁸²

Fitting the usual pattern, Yetta Wiesenthal's German-English bilingualism gave way in her Brownsville family (as was happening concurrently in the Liebermann/King family) to Spanish-English bilingualism. Morris' fluency in Spanish saved his life in October, 1915, when a band of bandidos derailed and shot up a train coming into Brownsville, but left Morris unharmed since he was sitting visiting in Spanish with a Mexican family. Morris went on to found Edelstein Furniture Company. His eldest son, Ruben Edelstein, served as Brownsville mayor from 1975 to 1979. He has been a local patron in many ways, including his help in the building of the new Temple Beth-El and of the Brownsville Community health Clinic, his presidency of of the Rotary Club's Endowment for Teaching Excellence, and his work in establishing the Clegg-Edelstein Chair for Computer Science.⁸³

Another significant contribution from incoming German Jews was made by Sam Perl, whose family left Austria for Galveston at the end of the 19th century. First brought to Brownsville on a promotional trip in 1926, Sam and his brother Leon opened Perl Brothers Fashion Store for Men downtown. A prime example of many German traits, Sam Perl was affectionate gregariousness, kissing his lady customers in what seems reminiscent of the Viennese "Küss die Hand" greeting. He also delivered a five-minute radio show daily over many years, featuring local news, using the phrase, "Remember, we love everybody" for his sign-off. He perpetuated the Viennese coffee house custom by chatting over coffee before work every morning and again in the afternoons. He loved to play cards and to crack jokes. A lover and patron of Hispanic culture, Sam was largely instrumental in the

establishment of Charro Days, for which he served as Director of the Mr. Amigo Association and Chief Justice of the Charro Days Brush Court (arresting men for not sporting a beard). He also promoted Mexican tourism to Brownsville through his activities as president of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce. His concern for community leadership also led him to be a major force in building the Villa del Sol public housing for the elderly, as well as lay rabbi at the Temple Beth-El, whose first synagogue he helped to build. He was appropriately honored by his adopted town toward the end of his life with the official designation of "Mr. Brownsville."⁸⁴

The German-American farm pioneers had to cope with a good amount of local unrest occasioned by the major ethnic shifts represented by the inrush of German-American farmers and the far vaster immigration of Mexican farm hands to work for them. These tensions were further heightened by the occasional use of excessive force by the Texas Rangers in their attempt to maintain law and order in the face of increasing banditry and brought to an apex by the chaos occasioned by the Mexican Revolution on the right bank of the Rio. Frederick H. Rusteberg and his siblings at times were obliged to hide under beds while their father took up guard with his rifle when bandidos were spotted on the military highway near their farm, but the desperados always rode past without incident. His Mexican farm hands had all given him their guns for safe-keeping, as in those days if a Ranger caught a Mexican with a gun, he would assume he was a bandit. One night about eleven o'clock, hearing horses headed toward the farm house, Frederick William I waited with weapon in hand until the horses were about fifteen feet away, and then shouted, "Halt!" "Soldiers!" came the response. Angered by the scare, Frederick William admitted that he must have told those cavalrymen a lot of things they didn't want to hear. The situation grew sufficiently worrisome that in 1916 or 1917, Frederick William I moved his family for safety to their Rancho Las Prietas (named for the black horses of its previous owner and now called the Garden Park suburb).⁸⁵

A further humbling of German-American culture resulted from the military confrontation between the United States and Germany in World War I. The war placed the local German-Brownsvillites in an even more difficult position than most German-Americans, due to schemes of Kaiser Wilhelm I's government to sour Mexican-American relations. A panic was created among local Mexicans at the start of the war by a rumor planted by German agents that Mexican residents of Brownsville would be drafted into the army and their possessions taken from them. The resulting line of frightened Mexicans trying to cross the Old Bridge back into Mexico stretched up to ten blocks.⁸⁶

Another scare was created by the discovery in January 1915 of the Plan of San Diego, Texas, calling for a Mexican-American revolt to return the U.S. Southwest to Mexico. More than two hundred residents of Brownsville packed a meeting at the Cameron County Courthouse, asking for more state and federal protection. The German Consul in Monterrey, prominent merchant Johann ("Pablo") Burchard, was accused by some people of being the

moving force behind the plot leaders, most notably Luis de la Rosa, a Brownsville grocer, and Aniceto Pizaña, also of Brownsville. Burchard had given an expensive ring to de la Rosa as a gift, and the American Vice Consul in Monterrey, Robertson, with reinforcement from the Spanish and Italian Consuls, charged both Burchard and the Austrian Consul in Monterrey with backing the Plan financially, although if this was true, the backing seems to have been extremely sparing with the money given. A special U.S. agent, J. B. Rogers, was sent to Mexico to investigate these allegations. However, no solid evidence was ever produced. On 18 October of the same year of 1915, de la Rosa was said to have been the leader of the bloody train derailling, shoot-up, and robbery that occurred between Brownsville and Olmito. Pizaña was also involved in banditry activities.⁸⁷

A new war-related unpleasantness for the local Germans developed when on 25 February, 1917, the so-called Zimmerman Telegram was relayed through London and passed on by the British government to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Addressed to Germany's Ambassador in Mexico from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann, the telegram proposed German support for Mexico both financially and in claims on territory lost in the Mexican-American War in the event that Mexico declare war on the United States. The Zimmerman Telegram played a role, along with unrestricted German U-boat attacks on American ships, in bringing President Wilson on 2 April 1917 to lead the United States into joining World War I against Germany.⁸⁸ Shortly after, in the spring of 1917, a German saboteur named Witzke arrived in Mexico.⁸⁹

The German-language American newspapers for the most part exhibited an initial lack of enthusiasm for the American declaration of war against Germany, and German-American loyalty to the United States was soon being called into question from certain quarters. Talk spread of German-American espionage for the German government. One of the charges leveled against Texas Governor Jim Ferguson when he was impeached and removed from his office in September of 1917 was that he had received a loan from German-Texan brewers. Both Ferguson and W. P. Hobby intensified this antipathy against Germans in their gubernatorial campaign pitches during the Democratic primary of 1918.⁹⁰ Discredited by public opinion and often harassed, Germans in many areas were obliged to bring an end to formal use of German in newspapers, business, schools, and churches (which had been used in about 70% of German-American churches still in 1914), a process already underway due to a variety of non-war related causes.⁹¹ From 1918 on, Texas public schools prohibited the use of any language but English for instruction, as a response to the Smith-Towner Act, which ended federal financial support for education to those states which did not enact such a law.⁹² The cowering of German-Texan influence also weakened Texan resistance to women's suffrage and prohibition.⁹³

By the 1930s, with the overcoming of the problems of local banditry and the blossoming of the farm investments made over the previous two decades, the Brownsville area sprouted an airport and a modern port.⁹⁴ Again, German-Americans were in many of the

key leadership positions in Brownsville's development. Most notably was the first director and developer of the new Port of Brownsville with its seventeen-mile-long ship channel, F. W. ("Fritz") Hofmokol. A native of Ansbach, Bavaria, and a veteran of the German navy in World War I (in which his U-Boat had been sunk), Hofmokol had subsequently studied at Columbia University, hoping to escape the post-war economic disruption in his fatherland. He and his wife, Elizabeth (Elsa) Schoenfelder of Bremen, first established residence in Louisiana, where he came to be director of the Port of Baton Rouge. Although he was raised a (Bavarian) Lutheran, his wife was a (North German) Catholic (in a reversal of the usual German geographic denominational pattern), and their family attended the Catholic Church. Their family retained a German-speaking tradition (one of their daughters and granddaughters still speaking the language), and family members have continued to travel back for visits in Germany. Their daughter Gerda, a Brownsville prize-winning artist, demonstrates the family's cultural interest. Great entertainers, hosts of many parties for which Elsa did the cooking, the outgoing Hofmokels provided a good example of German sociability. In 1936, Hofmokol accepted the post of director of the Port of Brownsville. Part of the attraction for them was their interest in Spanish (which they learned to speak) and in Mexico (where they travelled extensively).⁹⁵

From 1936 down to his accidental death by drowning while swimming at the beach on South Padre Island in 1965, Hofmokol built up a significant local port, with Mexican imports, various steamship and tanker lines, a new shrimp basin, oil refining, chemical factories, and a grain elevator complex, which increased the volume of its business one hundred fold. By means of "El Loophole" (as the arrangement was dubbed), Hofmokol had brought in large quantities of Mexican oil. A 1959 presidential proclamation had raised steep quotas on petroleum products shipped into the United States, but none on petroleum being brought across land borders (to placate Canadian producers). For a time, Hofmokol had Mexican oil brought in by ship loaded onto trucks at the Port of Brownsville, driven across the Gateway Bridge into Mexico, and then at once returned by the same bridge as "land imports." Hofmokol was followed as port director from 1965 to 1969 by Richard Schultz.⁹⁶

To further promote Brownsville's growth and tourism, in 1937 the Chamber of Commerce proposed the idea that led to the launching in 1938 of the annual spring Charro Days celebration. German-Brownsvillites were major movers in this brain-storm as well. Sam Perl's central role in the founding and management of Charro Days has already been mentioned.⁹⁷ The name of "Charro Days" (a "charro" being an elegantly-dressed Mexican cowboy) and the Charro Days slogan, "A Charro Never Sleeps" were both proposed by J. H. Stein, the editor-publisher of The Brownsville Herald.⁹⁸

Local German-Americans suffered some unpleasantness due to the confrontation between the United States and Nazi Germany again in World War II. German language and culture were dealt still another blow.⁹⁹ One of Evelyn Keller Benton's boyfriends

at the time, not realizing her heritage, commented in her home that all Germans should be killed, at which Evelyn's mother pointed to her and said, "She's German," after which her beau piped down.¹⁰⁰ More seriously, Port director Fritz Hofmokol was accused without evidence of being a Nazi agent and obliged to retire for the duration of the war to San Antonio on the promise not to travel within fifty miles of the coastline. The Brownsville Navigation District Commissioners staunchly supported Hofmokol in this period of trial, retaining him as a port consultant, and he was allowed to return to his post as director at the war's end.¹⁰¹

Germans and families with a German tradition continued to move into Brownsville after the Second World War. Two main patterns seem to have been emphasized in this latest immigration. One was the category of German women who married local men while they were serving in the American forces occupying West Germany in the wake of the war. One such is Inge Knappich Slater from Leipzig, who left Germany in 1953 as the wife of a U.S. infantry captain from Texas. In Brownsville, she owns Inge's Restaurant, which features German dishes and is managed by another German-born lady, Barbara Nelson.¹⁰² Another example is provided by Judith Pradel from Aschaffenburg, Germany. She met Steve Cervantes of Brownsville while he was serving in the armed forces in Germany and married him in 1973. In Brownsville, the Cervantes have managed to continue to practice German in the home and with friends. Judith opened Judith's Country Store and became secretary of the Edelweiss Club.¹⁰³

The other principal new type to appear since the war has been the German-Midwesterners who have come into Brownsville's growing retirement community, either as winter visitors or year-round residents. In the 1990-1991 winter Texan season, Brownsville ranked second after San Antonio in cities most visited by Winter Texans, with Padre Island in third place and neighboring Harlingen in fourth place. More came from Illinois than from any other state, followed by Iowa and then Ohio, Wisconsin, and Indiana.¹⁰⁴ From Cleveland, Ohio, came Barbara Ruetenik, with her husband Bob Hartstock (Bob of Dutch ancestry). Barbara's great-great-grandfather migrated from Moravia to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania around 1800. Despite the many intervening generations, Barbara spoke only German until she started school. She was later certified to teach German, as well as French and Italian, and served as president of a German Club in Cleveland. She and Bob moved to Brownsville in 1980.¹⁰⁵

Canada's Midwest also sent its own German-Canadian "snow birds." Bill and Agatha Giesbrecht, farmers from Waldheim, Saskatchewan, began wintering in Brownsville in 1981, leaving their son to watch their farm. Bill grew up in a German-speaking family and a German-singing Mennonite church. As a conscientious objector in World War II, he was placed on one of two buses to be sent to work on Vancouver Island. Noticing that some of the other fellows were feeling rather down about being sent off, Bill decided to cheer them up with some antics. While the bus driver was called away for a few minutes from the bus, Bill got into the driver's seat and started to drive off, as if he was going to

abduct the bus, and then would back up again. Everybody laughed, and one of them on the trip came to sit beside Bill and they became good friends. This new pal was none other than Agatha's brother, so that Bill subsequently wrote and then met Agatha and asked her to marry him. The Giebrechts represent a traditional German Christian feeling of community spirit. After their first child, who had been born crippled, died at age nine, they began to raise foster children along with their own surviving son and two daughters. They took care of as many as fifteen foster children at a time. In Brownsville, they have continued the same spirit with their involvement as volunteer workers at a local nursing home.¹⁰⁶

Various members of Brownsville's retirement community hailed originally from German Central Europe. Such was the case with Joseph Strahl, a jocular Germanophone barber born in Franz-Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire (where as a little boy, he was already scolded by his mother for talking with some Austrian soldiers in World War I and sharing their rations). One might jokingly say of Joseph, as he has jested with a twinkle in his eye of one of his friends, that he is ein guter Kerl, aber mehr Kerl als gut. After Tito's Communists came to power in Yugoslavia (including Joseph's Croatian home area, now detached from Austria), Joseph moved in 1957 to Chicago, and much later retired in Brownsville).¹⁰⁷ Another example is provided by Bernhard and Trudy Ott (who left their native Stuttgart in 1951 due to post-war economic difficulties and first came to Brownsville in 1978).¹⁰⁸

The general drift of the American population to the sunbelt also continued to bring in German-Americans and even some Germans to work in the Valley. Some came to teach. Dr. Tony Knopp, whose family left Westphalia, Germany, in 1842, came from Minnesota to Brownsville in 1976 to teach history at Texas Southmost College. His family stopped speaking German in his father's generation, and Tony has developed a local Spanish-English bilingualism.¹⁰⁹ Dr. George K. Green, descended from a Bavarian family that crossed to America about 1750, also came to Brownsville in 1976, to teach Spanish at Pan American University at Brownsville. He holds a Ph.D. in Latin-American literature from Columbia University and speaks various languages, including German and French. He has worked and studied in Germany. He married Lucy Bermudez, of a local family, and maintains a bilingual Spanish-English tradition in his home.¹¹⁰ Dr. Elise Buettgen, a native German holding a Ph.D. from The University of Kiel, came to Brownsville with her husband and children and began teaching Economics at Pan American University in Brownsville in 1976 as well.¹¹¹ Gerhard Muecke, whose parents immigrated to the United States from Glogau, Germany in 1924, came with his wife from Powell, Wyoming in 1985 to teach mathematics at Faulk Intermediate School. German was discarded as a family language during World War II.¹¹² Thomas Welther, from Prien, Upper Bavaria, and his German-speaking German-American wife Lucille Hansen came to Brownsville in 1990 to teach German at Texas Southmost College.¹¹³

From 1986 to 1989, German culture in Brownsville found a brief center of focus in the Edelweiss German Club. This was

launched due largely to the dynamism of Dr. Peter Gawenda, along with such enthusiastic co-organizers as Evelyn Keller Benton (its president), Barbara Hartstock (its vice-president), and Judith Pradel Cervantes (its secretary). Born in 1937, Gawenda was raised in Memmingen, Bavaria, and served in the German military as a Lieutenant Colonel on the General Staff. Sent to McAllen on a flight-training mission, he met and married Irma Lozano. In 1981, Gawenda resigned from German government service and moved with his wife, his daughter Brigitte and his son Philipp to Brownsville, where he became the Assistant to the President and Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Pan American University at Brownsville. He continued a German-speaking, as well as a Spanish- and English-speaking tradition in his home.¹¹⁴

Peter Gawenda's exodus to Brownsville was not as accidental as the above sketch might suggest, however, for he and other members of his family had felt an attraction to this general region. Peter's uncle Otto Gawenda had earlier come as a Catholic missionary to Mexico and Texas; a widow of an Otto Gawenda is living in the Lower Rio Grande area. A great-uncle of Peter's aunt's husband also came as a priest to Texas and lies buried in Panna Maria, northeast of Corpus Christi. Peter himself developed an interest in the Rio Grande already as a boy through reading the books of Karl May (a German convict who wrote adventure stories about a Texas he had never visited). He and his brothers collected maps, pictures, postcards, and books about Texas, receiving materials on request from the Texas Office of Tourism. A sculptor, painter (especially of icons), and sketch artist (trained in part at München's Kunstakademie on the Theatinerstrasse by the Siegestor and with exhibits in various countries), Gawenda's creative talents also extend to writing.¹¹⁵ He has penned his own verse explanation of the pull he felt toward the Rio Grande border:

Als Kind träumt er oft von Mesquite und Kakteen,
von Abenteuern, von Wolken, die am blauen Himmel ziehn.

Er lief mit Benito auf Trampelpfaden
und half Cortez Maultiere mit Gold beladen.

Mexiko...

Azteken, Spanier, Revolutionäre,
Indios und Freiheit waren tägliche Lektüre.

Er fuhr mit Columbus über's weite Meer,
überstand Stürme, Schiffbruch, Reisen ohne Wiederkehr.

"Nur einmal am Rio Grande" wurde ein Lebensziel
für den Jungen, der einem fremden Land verfiel.

Mexiko...

Die Jahre verflogen, doch die Träume blieben
so wie Bilder an den Wänden seiner Stuben.

Seine Freunde machten sich lustig und trieben
Unfug mit dem Glauben des kleinen und des grossen Buben.

Mexiko...

Er wollte studieren, Skulptur, Malerei und Kunst,
doch der Mensch denkt, - Gott vergibt die Gunst.

Aus der Schule holte ihn das Militär,
er wurde Soldat in der Bundeswehr.

Keine Chance für den Traum in Übersee?
Keine Sonne, keine Wüste, nur Kälte und Schnee?

Die Jahre vergingen, er wurde Flieger,
doch seinem Traum träumte er immer wieder.

Mexiko...

Dann kam er nach Texas, - San Antonio.
Sofort fuhr er zur Grenze nach Mexiko.

Er verlor sein Herz im Morgengrau'n,
er stand am Rio Grande, als die Sonn' aufging.
Das Land war grösser, schöner als der Traum,
den er schon hatte als kleines Kind.

Doch er durfte nicht bleiben, musste zurück
in sein Heimatland, - jenseits des Atlantik.

Er träumte weiter seinen Traum von dem Land
der Sonne, wo er Ruhe fand.

Mexiko...

Er kam zurück nach vielen, vielen Jahren.

That is, in rough translation:

As a child he often dreamed of cactus and mesquite,
of adventures under clouds in the blue sky's heat.

He rode with Benito on paths of old,
and helped Cortez load mules with gold.

Mexico...

Aztecs, Spaniards, revolucionarios,
Indians and freedom found a young aficionado.

He sailed with Columbus over the wide seas,
survived storms, shipwreck, and one-way journeys.

"At least once to be on the Rio Grande"

became a life goal for the lad, who craved a foreign land.

Mexico...

The years flew by, yet the dreams stayed on
like the pictures on his bedroom wall.
His friends found it comical and poked fun
of the dreamer, first little, then tall.

Mexico...

I'll be an artist, he supposes.
Yet man proposes; God disposes.

The army yanked him out of school early;
he became a soldier in the military.

His overseas dream would he never know?
No sun, no desert, only cold and snow?

The years flew by, he became a pilot,
yet his boyhood dream he never forgot.

Mexico...

Then he came to Texas, - San Antonio
and drove at once to Mexico.

He lost his heart in the morning light,
standing on the Rio Grande.
The view was bigger, more beautiful and bright
than he had dreamed about this land.

Yet the trip was short, he could not stay,
but returned to his homeland so far away.

He dreamed once more without surcease
of the sunny world, where he'd found peace.

Mexico...

He came back after many, many years.

Teaching classes in German as well, Gawenda made these classes the foundation for founding the Edelweiss German Club, inviting in people from the community in general to join in. The response was large-scale and eager. Meeting one evening a month, with special extra events, the club offered such activities as a wine-tasting seminar, polka dances, a float in the Charro Days parades, travelogues (including of the Romantische Strasse), lectures (including on German superstitions, on German castles, and on the German roots of various Christmas traditions), German food, and socializing (some of it in German). The club also helped students who wanted to visit Germany make friendly

contacts there. The response came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; the German and Yiddish-speaking Sommers from Roumania, German-Mexican County Court Commissioner Rosenbaum, Ukrainians, Balts, Italians, and other ethnic backgrounds were all participants.¹¹⁶

When Dr. Gawenda was called to Edinburg as one of the special coordinators helping to bring about the merger of Pan American University into The University of Texas System, the Edelweiss Club ran into difficulties. Without Dr. Gawenda's position as German instructor at Texas Southmost College, the club lost its campus base and shrank to serving the non-campus community alone. This posed problems of a reduced membership, in addition to the loss of Dr. Gawenda's magnetic presence. The group continued on for a time, and then decided to have the club restricted to women. A group of about nine women met to eat together once a month at Inge's German Restaurant.¹¹⁷

In 1991, the German government sponsored a program whereby four Brownsville Independent School District administrators and two BISD language teachers are to attend a three-week summer training course in Berlin, while six Germans will teach in the Brownsville system in the 1991-1992 school year.¹¹⁸ How fitting it would be should this grow into an introduction of German as a foreign language in Brownsville high schools. Brownsville's German-American strain is thus continuing to develop despite the many difficulties it has undergone in the past. One lesson the Germans have eminently mastered is how to pick up the pieces of a failed generation and start all over. In the words of Johann Strauss Jr.'s Die Fledermaus, "Glücklich ist, der vergisst, was doch nicht zu ändern ist" ("Happy he who feels free from what can never altered be").

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

¹ Peter-Bodo Gawenda, "The Use of the German Language in the Schools of San Antonio, Texas, from 1880 to 1910," Ed.D. dissertation, The University of Houston, April 1986, 229-230.

² Gilbert Giddings Benjamin, The Germans in Texas: A Study in Immigration (Philadelphia: Reprinted from German-American Annals, Vol. VII., 1909), 3.

³ Terry G. Jordan, German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 33; and The German Texans (Austin: Institute of Texan Cultures, The University of Texas, 1974), 4.

⁴ Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 610.

⁵ John F. Schunk (ed.), 1850 U.S. Census: Cameron, Starr and Webb Counties, Texas (Wichita, Kansas: S-K Publications, 1987), no page numbers.

⁶ Lieutenant W. H. Chatfield, The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande: Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico (New Orleans: E. P. Brandao, 1893), 23.

7 Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991) 8 36.

8 James Robert Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," Master's thesis, Texas Tech University, December 1969, 117; James Heaven Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County, Texas," Master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1965, 28; J. Lee Stambaugh and Lillian J. Stambaugh, The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas: Its Colonization and Industrialization, 1518-1953 (Austin: The Jenkins Publishing Co., San Felipe Press, 1974) 9 91 and 104; Schunk, no page given; and Chatfield, 23

9 Stambaugh, 91.

10 Kearney and Knopp, 44.

11 Chauncey Devereux Stillman, Charles Stillman (New York: privately printed, 1956), 6.

12 Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 232.

13 Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 229.

14 Peter Gawenda, "Brownsville, Model City of Texas in 1879," in Milo Kearney (ed.) Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1986), 187; Thompson, 73; and Chatfield, 18.

15 June 12, 1860 Census for Brownsville, Cameron County, no page numbers given; Schunk, no page numbers given; and Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 579.

16 A. A. Champion, "The Miller Hotel in the Antebellum Period," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 163-167; and Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 236.

17 Joe B. Frantz, "Ethnicity and Politics in Texas," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (ed.), German Culture in Texas (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a division of G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), 198; Gilbert J. Jordan, "German Cultural Heritage in the Hill Country," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (ed.), German Culture in Texas (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a division of G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), 181; and Benjamin, 76.

18 Champion, "Miller Hotel," 163-167.

19 Frantz, 199 and 217; and Benjamin, 111.

20 Champion, "Miller Hotel," 163-167.

21 Interview with Henry Krausse III, 13 March 1991; Schunk, no page number given; and Chatfield, 22.

22 Frantz, 201; Benjamin, 77; and Chatfield, 22.

23 Interview with Henry Krausse III, 13 March 1991; and Information provided by Martha Kate Krausse Wright.

24 Crews, 74.

25 Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter, Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews (Austin: Eakin Press, 1990), 25.

26 Interview with John Marks, 15 March 1991; and Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, A Pictorial History of Brownsville (Norfolk/Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1982), 61.

27 Benjamin, 74, 82, and 85.

28 Glen E. Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (ed.), German Culture in Texas (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a Division of G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), 66.

- 29 German Texans, 23.
- 30 Chatfield, 22.
- 31 Winegarten, 25.
- 32 German Texans, 23.
- 33 Francis Edward Abernethy, "Deutschtum in Texas: A Look at Texas-German Folklore," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (ed.), German Culture in Texas (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a Division of G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), 211-212; and Benjamin, 110.
- 34 Crews, 64.
- 35 Reverend P. F. Parisot, The Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary (San Antonio: St. Mary's Church, 1899), 103.
- 36 Benjamin, 110.
- 37 Lich, 67 and 70.
- 38 Crews, 71.
- 39 Crews, 67.
- 40 Crews, 68.
- 41 Chatfield, 25.
- 42 A. A. Champion (with Mary Champion Hengglar, Consuelo Champion, and Vivian Kearney), "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism (1830's to 1890's)," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 140-142.
- 43 Crews, 92.
- 44 Crews, 74.
- 45 Champion, "Frontier Journalism," 143-144; and Interview with Henry Krausse III, 13 March 1991.
- 46 Crews, 72.
- 47 Crews, 73.
- 48 Crews, 75-76.
- 49 Crews, 89.
- 50 Crews, 109.
- 51 Margaret Wentworth Petrovich, "The Civil War Career of Colonel John Salmon 'RIP' Ford," Master's thesis, Stephen F. Austin State College, August 1961, 159; and Champion, "Frontier Journalism," 147.
- 52 Lich, 67 and 69; and Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 227.
- 53 Peter Gawenda, "A Brick-throwing Ghost," in Milo Kearney (ed.), Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1986), 205-207.
- 54 Frank Cushman Pierce, Texas' Last Frontier: A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Menasha, Wisconsin: The Collegiate Press, George Banta Publishing Company, 1917, republished March 1962), 121; and Wooldridge and Vezzetti, Brownsville, 92.
- 55 Lich, 70; and Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 227 and 278-280.
- 56 Abernethy, 205-206; and Chatfield, 22.
- 57 Mack Walker, "The Old Homeland and the new," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (ed.), German Culture in Texas (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a Division of G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), 81.
- 58 Wilfried Westphal, Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien (Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein, 1987), 51 and 336-337.

- 59 Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 303-316 and 331.
- 60 José Raúl Canseco Botello, Historia de Matamoros (Matamoros: Litográfica Jardín, S. A., 1981), 178-179.
- 61 Chatfield, 25.
- 62 Chatfield, 38.
- 63 Walter W. Hildebrand, "The History of Cameron County, Texas," Master's thesis, North Texas State College, August 1950), 64 and 74.
- 64 Gilberto Rafeal 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 Publiushers, Inc., 1979), 24 and 32; The Reverend W. H. Bewie, Missouri in Texas: A History of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in Texas, 1855-1941 (Austin: The Steck Company, 1952), 126; and Stambaugh, 234.
- 65 Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991.
- 66 Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991.
- 67 Hector F. Garza-Trejo, "Commissioners support new bridge," The Brownsville Herald, 28 February 1991, 11; and Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991.
- 68 Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991; and Information provided by Mrs. Adolph Dittman, Jr.
- 69 Interview with Evelyn Keller Benton, 14 March 1991.
- 70 Interview with Adolph Dittman, Jr., 27 April 1991.
- 71 Interview with Adolph Dittman, Jr., 27 April 1991.
- 72 Benjamin, 122 and 124.
- 73 Bewie, 31; and Frantz, 197.
- 74 Chatfield, 9 and 22.
- 75 Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991; and Interview with Evelyn Keller Benton, 14 March 1991.
- 76 Trinity Lutheran Church, 1934-1984: A Brief History (Aurora, Missouri, MWM Color Prtess, 1984), 2-7; and Bewie, 42-43, 83-84, and 126.
- 77 Trinity Lutheran Church, 6.
- 78 Cruz, 32.
- 79 Interview with Evelyn Keller Benton, 14 March 1991.
- 80 Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 330.
- 81 Interview with Ruben Edelstein, 29 March 1991.
- 82 Interview with William King III, 25 May 1991; Interview with Ruben Edelstein, 29 March 1991; and Wooldridge and Vezzetti, Brownsville, 145.
- 83 Interview with Ruben Edelstein, 29 March 1991; and Interview with William King III, 25 May 1991.
- 84 Harriett Denise Joseph, "A Tribute to Sam Perl, 1898-1980," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 367.
- 85 Interview with Mrs. Frederick H. Cabler Rusteberg, 15 March 1991.
- 86 Wooldridge and Vezzetti, Brownsville, 101.

- 87 Brian Robertson, Wild Horse Desert: The Heritage of South Texas (Edinburg, Texas: New Santander Press, 1985), 258; and Jake Watts, "The Plan of San Diego and the Lower Rio Grande Valley, in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 326-328.
- 88 Robert A. Divine, T. H. Breen, George M. Fredrickson, and R. Hal Williams, America Past and Present, Vol. II (New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984), 698-699.
- 89 Watts, 328.
- 90 Mark Richard Sonntag, "Hyphenated Texans: World War I and the German-Americans of Texas," Master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1990, 30-31, 38, 43, and 53-57.
- 91 Abernethy, 225; Gawenda, "Use of the German Language," 50; and Sonntag, 72 and 89.
- 92 Sonntag, 75.
- 93 Sonntag, 121.
- 94 Bewie, 126.
- 95 Interview with Mrs. Fritz Hofmokol, 23 March 1991; and Henry N. Ferguson, The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley (Brownsville: Springman-King Press, 1976), 270-271 and 273.
- 96 Charles Daniel Dillman, "The Functions of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas: Twin Cities of the Lower Rio Grande," Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1968, 145-149; and Ferguson, 299, 301-305, and 309.
- 97 Joseph, 368.
- 98 Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, "The Founding of Charro Days," in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), 390; and Wooldridge and Vezzetti, Brownsville, 131.
- 99 Abernethy, 225-226.
- 100 Interview with Evelyn Keller Benton, 14 March 1991.
- 101 Ferguson, 280-282; and Interview with Mrs. Fritz Hofmokol, 23 March 1991.
- 102 Interview with Inge Slater, 29 March 1991.
- 103 Interview with Judith Cervantes, 25 May 1991.
- 104 "Brownsville among state's most-visited places," The Brownsville Herald, 24 March 1991, 5A.
- 105 Interview with Barbara Hartstock, 4 May 1991.
- 106 Interview with Bill Giesbrecht, 30 March 1991.
- 107 Interview with Joseph Strahl, 29 May 1991.
- 108 Questionnaire filled out by Bernhard and Trudy Ott.
- 109 Questionnaire filled out by Tony Knopp.
- 110 Questionnaire filled out by George Green.
- 111 Campus Profiles, 1990-1991 (Brownsville: Texas Southmost College and The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville, 1991), 158; and Catalog, The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville, 1990-1991, 213.
- 112 Questionnaire filled out by Gerhard Muecke.
- 113 Questionnaire filled out by Thomas Welther.
- 114 Interview with Peter Gawenda, 14 March 1991.
- 115 Interview with Peter Gawenda, 14 March 1991.
- 116 Interview with Peter Gawenda, 14 March 1991.
- 117 Interview with Evelyn Keller Benton, 14 March 1991.

118 Elise Ackerman, "TEA: BISD board is biggest obstacle to accreditation," The Brownsville Herald, 22 May 1991, 13A.



THE PERIOD BEFORE 1846



Mr. A.E. Anderson, "The Father of Valley Archaeology,"
and his "Indian Relic Collection"

by

Antonio N. Zavaleta

Brownsville's recognition as the city with the second most important history in Texas is cause for considerable pride. However, it should be noted that the designation does not take into consideration an equally significant pre-history. While much of Brownsville's history lies unknown to her own people, by comparison, her pre-history is completely unknown. It is time that this lamentable fact be reversed. This may be accomplished by digging into Brownsville's history to discover her pre-history.

Historians are unanimous in their recognition of the significant role that the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Brownsville have played in Texas and American history.(1) Throughout the 20th century countless observers have drawn similar conclusions regarding the importance of Brownsville's history as being pivotal in the understanding of the dynamics of International and Regional relations along the border. First there was the relationship between Spain and Mexico, followed by the relationship between Mexico and Texas, and most recently, the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. Few believe that these dynamic relationships have played themselves out.(2) As we observe the development of the North American Free Trade Agreement, we literally observe the unfolding of Brownsville's future. Brownsville's unrecognized pre-history is equally significant as her history. However, it lies buried in the sands of the Rio Grande in the mud along the banks of our Resacas and Bancos, and in the clay and sand dunes of our coastal lowlands and seashores.(3)

At present the full significance of the Valley's coastal archaeology is unknown outside of academic circles. While there have been significant contributions made in our knowledge of pre-history in recent years, most of this information has been either forgotten or overlooked when Brownsville history is taught in local schools.(4) The result is that most of the people in Brownsville and the Valley, and especially our school children, are not aware of a substantial part of our history and cultural heritage. Year after year, as Jr. High School teachers embark upon their discussion of Texas Indians, there is a general lack of information available to them, plus the fact that little mention is made in textbooks about the geo-cultural significance of the lower Texas Gulf coast Indians. (5)

Our young students often have their questions left unanswered:

1- Did Indians live in our area?

2- What were they like?

- 3- Were they important in Texas history?
- 4- Are there any Indian sites in our area?
- 5- Do we have any of their artifacts?
- 6- What did they look like?
- 7- What language did they speak?
- 8- What tribe did they belong to?
- 9- What happened to them?

Our Brownsville and Valley students have had to settle for sparse answers to these important questions, thus perpetuating a massive cultural and historical void in their education.

Extensive answers abound for each of these questions, supported by an archaeological record which is unique to the area from Port Mansfield in Willacy County, and as far south as the Rio San Fernando in the Mexican State of Tamaulipas.(6)

The fact that Brownsville's archaeological record is all but unknown to local people is the major topic and purpose of this article. This treatise is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of Brownsville's pre-history, but rather, it is intended to educate by accomplishing the following tasks:

- 1- To introduce the reader to Mr. A.E. Anderson, the "Father of Valley Archaeology."
- 2- To introduce the reader to the existence of the "Anderson Collection."
- 3- To survey academic literature pertaining to local pre-history.
- 4- To briefly summarize the archaeological theories pertaining to the Brownsville culture, 1932 to 1991.

WHO WAS MR. A.E. ANDERSON?

Andrew Elliott "A.E." Anderson was born on April 2, 1886 in Stephenville, Texas, in Erath County. He was the eldest son of Andrew Anderson and Bettie Morrow, of the Williamson County Morrow. Andrew's mother died when he was eight years old, leaving the care of her two young sons and a daughter to her husband who worked as a teacher and Methodist Minister. The elder Mr. Anderson rode the circuit around Central Texas preaching. Andrew's and his younger brother and sister, Allie's and Mary's, adolescent years were most likely spent in the Texas hill country around Georgetown, Austin, and San Marcos.(7)

Little detail is known about the early and formative years of A.E. Anderson, although it may be assured that he quietly endured life as the eldest son of a widowed preacher whose responsibility became the raising of three small children.

young Andrew was expected to accept considerable responsibility at a young age. He had instilled in him strict principles of conservative Christian doctrine, and he quietly endured his childhood which prepared him for his life in Brownsville.

It is known from family records that the elder Anderson was a teacher and that at least during some years of their lives, the Rev. Anderson was also his son's teacher. Rev. Anderson was born in Denmark and along with his family emigrated to the area of Denmark, Kansas in the middle 19th century. The Rev. Anderson left Kansas as a trail boy with a cattle drive returning to Texas. The elder Anderson was educated in Central Texas where he married and settled. (8)

The young A.E. Anderson studied Civil Engineering and Surveying at the University of Texas at Austin graduating around 1907. After completing his education at U.T., Anderson decided to seek his fortune in the rapidly developing area of Texas, south of Corpus Christi, and thus he arrived in the Lower Rio Grande Valley around 1908. While it is not known how Anderson made the decision to come to the Valley upon completing his education, it may be safely assumed that he was either recruited to work with the Valley surveying firm of Amthor and Vann, while still at U.T., or it is speculation that news of the rapid development of south Texas in 1908-1909, led him to seek his fortune in the Valley. Anderson family records romanticize his decision by stating, "He wished to help the comparatively new state of Texas to develop, and decided on the lower Rio Grande Valley as an ideal location." (9). This theory is completely plausible given the land development "boom" that was occurring in the Valley early in the 20th century.

In any event, A.E. Anderson first appears in Valley records as a young engineer and a student in an evening Spanish class of Miss Ida Petite O'Dell, the daughter of William J. O'Dell and Josephine Johnston of Hidalgo County. Family lore suggests that Anderson found learning Spanish more difficult a task than falling in love with his teacher. Anderson and O'Dell were married at Pharr-San Juan on Christmas Day, 1909. The young couple established their home in Brownsville where they raised their seven children. (10)

In 1921-22, with his surveying and engineering business thriving and the family growing, Anderson with the help of his father, built the family homestead on four acres in a beautiful rural area east of urban Brownsville. Located in the El Jardin section and fronting on Resaca de la Palma, this prime farm land had water readily accessible. Their rich land was planted in citrus, a popular crop for small estates in the early part of this century. Small country estates were an ideal place to bring up the kids in the best tradition of South Texas values. The Anderson family house still stands where it was built on Fruitdale in Brownsville. The 1920's was a very prosperous time for the Anderson engineering business. The Valley was booming. Anderson, a very personable sort of fellow, was liked and admired by all who knew him and was elected to serve on the Brownsville School Board in the late 1920's. Anderson's oldest daughter, Margaret, married the son of Oscar Dancy, Cameron County's re-

spected County Judge. Mr. Anderson was personally acquainted with some of the most famous men of his time. However, 1933 was to be a year that shattered the happy lives of the Anderson family. The family grove thrived until it was devastated by successive hurricanes that year. (11)

Tragedy struck the Anderson family a severe blow with the untimely death of his wife, Ida Anderson. Like that of his father, history appeared to be repeating itself. He was now the sole parent of his seven children. The great depression, successive hurricanes, and the loss of his wife were catastrophes sufficient to devastate the average man, but A.E. Anderson was a person accustomed to self-reliance and responsibility. Bolstered by strong pioneer Texas values, this man who participated in carving the Valley out of "monte," circled the wagons, keeping his family together and his business going in the face of overwhelming odds. But those who knew him agree that A.E. Anderson was never the same after the loss of his wife.

A.E. Anderson survived his wife by 11 years, and with failing health and a weakened heart, followed his wife in death on March 10, 1944, in Brownsville, Texas. He was 58 years old. (12) Mr. Anderson spent 35 years of his life laying out property lines, filing deeds, building roads and bridges, working on irrigation projects, and literally walking through the most inhospitable virgin brush country in south Texas.

A.E. Anderson was truly a remarkable man. His life and work in the Valley guaranteed his place in Brownsville history. Any meander through the property records and deeds at the Cameron County Courthouse reveals an endless trail of his work. Today engineers and planners agree that Anderson's "metes and bounds" surveys provide the most accurate and reliable descriptions of Cameron County property available. Anderson's fame as a surveyor developed into tremendous proportions during his lifetime and into folklore status in the decades after his death. Both Mr. Kermit Cromack and Mr. Matt Claunch of Brownsville indicate that Anderson was responsible for the survey of virtually every major farm plat in the lower portion of Cameron County. (13) Most of the subdivisions developed in Brownsville from the period 1910 to 1940 were Anderson's. Among the most notable were the Los Ebanos development built around Palm Blvd., as well as the West Brownsville area. The Los Ebanos area continues to this day to be a favorite location for families wishing to combine natural beauty with maximum land use. (14) The El Jardin and the Barrera tracks were among Anderson's larger and more complex surveys. Mr. Cromack recalls Anderson being employed by his father, Mr. Bertham Cromack, who had come to Brownsville in the early 1900's from Oklahoma to develop the area around "four corners." The elder Cromack regarded Mr. Anderson as "one of the most capable persons he had ever met," referring to him as "The Valley's" surveyor. (15)

Anderson was often called upon to testify in land title cases that were common in the early part of the 20th century. "When Anderson would testify about a land survey, his word was always final. There was no cross-examination." Years later, Mr. Cromack recalls being present in a court-of-law in Cameron County

in which a surveyor who was testifying claimed, "I got within 6 inches of Anderson's point and at that moment everyone smiled," indicating that the testifying surveyor had done almost as good a job resurveying the property in question as Mr. Anderson had originally done. (16) Arriving in Brownsville in 1908, Anderson was reported to have been the only person to know the "exact" locations of downtown Brownsville's property lines.

Mr. Matt Claunch was himself, an active surveyor in Brownsville from 1952 to the middle 1980's. While he never knew Mr. Anderson personally, he is uniquely qualified to substantiate the significance and quality of A.E. Anderson's work, as well as the importance of his work in Cameron County and Brownsville. Mr. Claunch, a highly regarded surveyor, was recruited from the International Boundary Commission in the early 1950's to work for the firm of Archie Ruff and Theodore Settles, after the retirement of W.O. Washington. W.O. Washington had previously been Cameron County Engineer. All of the concrete roads in Cameron County were build during Washington's tenure. The partnership of Ruff and Washington had purchased Anderson's engineering and surveying business after his death, including the extensive Anderson files covering all of the development in the lower portion of Cameron County from 1908 to 1944. Ruff and Washington then became Ruff and Settles. Upon the death of Archie Ruff in 1955, the firm became Settles and Claunch.(17) This highly respected firm was the descendant of Anderson Engineering and was active in the Brownsville area though 1970. The partnership was dissolved in 1971. Theodore Settles died in 1973, and his firm eventually evolved into what is now the Gonzales Engineering Co. Upon the dissolution of the partnership, Matt Claunch retained possession of the "Anderson Files," referring to them as "the most complete set of plats, maps and surveys on Brownsville in existence." For example, Figure 1 is a letter from Anderson to Miss Lula Champion dated July 28, 1931, discussing the changes in her acreage northwest of Brownsville as a result of the "cut-out" of bancos during flood stages of the Rio Grande River. (18)

It is Matt Claunch's thirty years of surveying "over the footsteps of Anderson," that most qualifies him to attest to the historical importance of Anderson's work. Mr. Claunch recounts that of all the early surveyors in Cameron County, Anderson is the only one that can still be "followed" accurately. "He set ground markers that are there today, and are still recoverable." Most surveys today are "retracement surveys." Today all land is privately owned. Therefore, surveys today are retracements of "original" surveys. Most of the "original" surveys in the lower portions of Cameron County are A.E. Anderson's. For example, Mr. Claunch recalled his being able to locate the old resort and clubhouse on Brazos Island(Boca Chica beach) by tracing backward from an Anderson monument. (19)

Probably the most significant statement that could be made about Anderson's work was made by Mr. Claunch. "Anderson seemed to be aware, more than any of the other early surveyors down here, of what he was doing and its importance on the historical development of this country (Cameron County), and he left excellent tracks. He was so good, most people just took him for

granted. Today we can follow right along on top of an Anderson survey. In the early days, we'd have a project come into the office and if it was located in an old Anderson survey area, it got immediate attention, otherwise it sat around awhile." (20)

It is because of Anderson's meticulousness, his training in professional drawing, surveying, and note taking, that one of the most significant and archaeological collections in Texas comes from Cameron and Willacy Counties. The "Anderson Collection," is testimony to his lifetime of work.

Anderson's penchant for detail was reflected in every aspect of his life. His youngest daughter, Katherine Celaya Reed, fondly recollects that her father was an impeccably and conservatively dressed man who, "always dressed the same." Anderson dressed in a conservative suit with a thin black monogrammed necktie and a monogrammed dress shirt. He always sported a hat appropriate for the season and Brownsville's weather. His daughters recall that "he never wore boots in the house, because gentlemen just didn't do that in those days," (21) A.E. Anderson was respected and admired by all who knew him, and he was acquainted with the true legends. Anderson counted among his personal friends the great Texas author and folklorist, J. Frank Dobie, as well as other famous early 20th century naturalists. Anderson's daughters tell of their father's collection of Dobie's books, each personalized by the author, including "little notes," to Anderson on Mexican culture. Dobie apparently had a great respect for his friend's intimate knowledge of the Mexican people of the south Texas "monte," and their customs. Two of Dobie's most popular works are entitled, "Tongues of the Monte," and "Puro Mexicano." We may surmise that Brownsville's A.E. Anderson had personal input in shaping Dobie's immortal lines in these famous books. (22)

My conversation with Mr. Kermit Cromack revealed still more fascinating information about this remarkable man. As a young boy, Kermit recalls paddling up the Resaca de la Palma in his dory to the Anderson place. Anderson's oldest son Peter was a contemporary of Cromack's and Kermit remembers Mr. Anderson showing him cuttings, grafts, and hybrids he had just received from Luther Burbank out in California. While the Anderson daughters, Mrs. Weich and Mrs. Celaya Reed, vaguely remember daddy's "cactus garden," it appears that Mr. Anderson's interest in horticulture and native plants was much greater than recreational. As an amateur horticulturist in touch with Burbank at the time he was making history out in California. Anderson once again demonstrated that he was himself on the cutting edge of science from his home in Brownsville, Texas. Cromack recalls Mr. Anderson explaining the Burbank experiments to him. Anderson had a large group of plants and trees that Burbank had sent him. (23)

Anderson's interest in botany and native plants led him to be the first person in the Valley to experiment with spineless cactus, which he had growing in his garden on Fruitdale. Mr. Cromack recalls a strange event which occurred after Anderson's death: "the spineless cactus began to grow spines." (24)

Remembered as the "perfect combination of the physical and

the intellectual," Mr Cromack describes A.E. Anderson as a "pleasant, quiet sort of man, with a real sense of humor and with an engaging group of children." (25) As a true naturalist, Anderson rounded out his interests with the geology of the coastal river delta area. Conversation with Matt Claunch revealed the existence of a set of letters in the Anderson files from noted Texas geologist W. Armstrong Price, written to Anderson during the years 1937-1939.(26) This correspondence clearly indicates that Anderson had a sophisticated knowledge of local geology including river delta and alluvial deposits.

A.E. Anderson was also a close personal friend of Mr. R.D. Camp the first Audubon ornithologist in the Cameron County area and the warden on Green Island for many years in the early part of the 20th century.(27) The Anderson daughters remarked that "daddy felt that the coastal flat lands should remain public lands and not be sold to private concerns." (28) When one considers Anderson's wide variety of interests in nature and natural forms, it is clear to see that he was truly visionary in his desire to preserve our coastal wetlands.

This remarkable man made an even greater contribution to Brownsville history, one that is not fully appreciated outside of a handful of historians and anthropologists. Anderson's boyhood hobby of collecting "arrowheads" began in the hill country of central Texas and developed into a lifetime of collecting Indian artifacts in the Valley. For 35 years Anderson collected artifacts in the coastal areas of south Texas and northeastern Mexico. It is because of his precision, his training in professional drawing, surveying, and note taking, that one of the most important archaeological collections in Texas comes from Cameron and Willacy Counties. (29)

Without a doubt Anderson's most significant and long lasting contribution to Brownsville's history is his "Indian Relic Collection." Anderson family history depicts Anderson at the age of 7 collecting arrowheads in the area around Georgetown, Texas. (30) His passion for arrowhead collecting would never wane throughout his life, and in fact, it sustained him during the dark days of 1933 and beyond by occupying his mind for hours in his den after the tragic loss of his wife. In fact, Anderson's daughters speak lovingly of their father as a man whose life was consumed by his love for his family, his work, and his "Indian Relic Collection." (31)

From 1908 until his death in 1944, Anderson sighted a surveying instrument, pounded stakes, and clawed his way through the relentless south Texas "monte" where no man since coastal Indians had trekked. In this regard, Anderson was truly a Valley pioneer. It is said that A.E. Anderson had an uncanny ability to locate the remains of Indian camp sites, hearths, shell middens, and burial sites. In many instances these sites were intact and in "perfect undisturbed condition." Always true to his training, Anderson recorded every site location, drew maps, took notes, made drawings and numbered specimens to correspond with each site location. He kept all the materials he found no matter how insignificant they may have appeared. It is completely due to this discipline and dedication to his profession and "hobby" that

the Anderson Collection lives on. Although Anderson did not leave a will, he obviously realized the importance of his collection. Anderson let it be known that it was his wish that the collection along with the notes and maps would be "loaned" to the archaeological laboratories (TARL) at the University of Texas. (32)

Anderson's death resulted in his youngest children being sent either away to school or to live with their older siblings. With his children scattered across the nation and the world at war in 1944, we are fortunate that the Anderson collection actually found its way to the University of Texas in 1945. Almost all other Anderson family possessions which were left in the home, including his collection of Dobie books, remain unaccounted for to this day. (33) It is clear that the men from the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratories knew the value of Anderson's collection because they promptly arrived to claim it.

During the years between 1908 and 1944, Anderson spent much of his professional and recreational time in the "out back" of Cameron County, Texas. His years of keen observation resulted in the documentation of nearly 400 Indian site locations. See Figure 2. (34) While Anderson sites stretch from Willacy County to as far south at San Fernando in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, the majority of Anderson sites are located in Cameron County and in the Municipio of Matamoros to the south. Within these two counties, the majority of Anderson sites are located either along the coast or along the banks of fresh water ways such as resacas, bancos, and the Rio Grande River. (35)

The man and his collection were so renown along the lower border that Mexican "rancheros" would bring "piedras" that they found in the "monte" to "El Senor Anderson." Mr. J.D. Weich, Anderson's son-in-law, remembers that unless Anderson found an artifact himself and could attest to its location, he always referred to those pieces brought to him as, "said to have been found at a certain location." (36) Anderson's constant attention to scientific detail contributed to the significance of his collection to Texas Archaeology. Anderson's eldest son Peter was a contemporary of Mr. Kermit Cromack, who remembers Mr. Anderson taking the boys out in his Model "T" to scour Indian sites. "We'd go out and he'd have us scratch around looking for things." (37)

Anderson stored the bulk of the collection in the family den, which numbered in the thousands of individual pieces. The den also served as his "inner sanctum," and was off limits to all others except by special invitation. During the Great Depression, several of Anderson's married daughters and their families temporarily returned to the family home in Brownsville. Mr. Anderson's den was off-limits at all times except during special occasions. It was these times that under his watchful eye, family and friends could venture a peek at daddy's Indian relic collection. Remembered for the rows and rows of cigar boxes filled with stone, pottery, and shell, the daughters recollect that the boxes came from Mrs. Saunder's Cigar and Magazine Shop on Elizabeth St., located on the first floor of the Merchants National Bank in downtown Brownsville. In his later

years, A.E. Anderson maintained his office "upstairs" in that historic building which still stands in Brownsville. The daughters remember the wide eyed amazement with which they eagerly waited to be rewarded with a peek inside the handsome felt-lined box Anderson kept in his office. It contained his most highly treasured prizes, including finely carved and decorated, polished mother-of-pearl gorgets, and Indian relics which had been crafted into jewelry for his wife. (38) These special treasures were most probably excavated from coastal burial sites. These rare and beautiful pieces were once the proud possessions of the nobility of Cameron County's pre-historic populations.

Some of the Anderson children's happiest memories include accompanying "daddy" on a family outing to a "dig," in which an Indian burial was to be excavated. The daughters proudly recall their tasks of carefully sifting soil. They slept under the stars on the coastal salt-flats, or near Mexican "jacales," while the smell of beans cooking over an open fire filled the night air. (39) Anderson is also reported to have played a role in the surveying and layout of the Port of Brownsville ship channel. Built in the 1930's, it traversed 15 miles of the most archaeologically rich coastal lands in Texas. Fortunately for us, Anderson was there to collect the artifacts, which fell out of the spoil and dredge as it was piled up on the banks of the ship channel. Anderson documented the location of each site as the channel cut across the clay dunes and salt-flats to the Gulf of Mexico, Figure 3.

It was from this same area along the newly excavated Brownsville ship channel that Anderson collected fossilized fragments of Pleistocene mammals. These enormous animals roamed our area tens of thousands of years ago. Anderson sent his findings to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. for identification. Mr. Anderson also communicated his discoveries and interests in Texas' geology to his friend Dr. W. Armstrong Price of Corpus Christi. He was also known to correspond with paleontologists at the University of California. During the years, 1937-1939, Anderson and Price corresponded often. Commonly their letters reflected their theories on coastal geology and archaeology. In a letter dated December 13, 1937, Figure 4, Price remarks that the rare Folsom point Anderson found near the mouth of the Rio Grande indicates an ancient occupation. Price wrote, "Mr. Jackson from the Dept. of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Texas, went into the field with Benedict and me Saturday to see Benedict's locality where he dug out a bright red pot. Inside were the cremated bones of a child." (40) As a result of his efforts, Anderson provided us with one of the earliest records of the paleontological material from the southern Texas coast, and the first records from the area of Brownsville and Cameron County. In another letter from Price to Anderson, dated June 20, 1938, Figure 5, Price notes, "your elephant teeth on Padre Island and the fossil crab might tie in with Richard's tooth." (41) In a final example of correspondence from Price to Anderson dated August 5, 1938, Figure 6, Price wonders, "Does the occurrence of the larger points at 18 inches to 2 feet to 6 feet in clay dunes mean that the users of them

were very recent, merely not the latest? The cover on the recent delta of the Rio Grande might have covered up every thing older than 1,000 years." (42) Anderson's daughter, Mrs. Virginia Weich, was with her father the day he found a major fossil which was eventually sent to the Smithsonian. She recalls the story of proudly taking the fossil home and scrubbing the bones in front of the family hearth in a pan of soapy water. (43)

A.E. Anderson was Brownsville's first naturalist and environmentalist who left us his outstanding surveys and his geological maps. He was an avid botanist, but most of all, Anderson made a lasting contribution to our knowledge of Brownsville's pre-historic populations by leaving us his "Indian relic" collection. Many of his artifacts are still in their original cigar boxes just as he left them.

THE ANDERSON COLLECTION

The Anderson Collection is presently on loan from the Anderson family to the University of Texas. The collection is stored at the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratories at the Balcones Research Laboratories in Austin, Texas. The Anderson collection is accessible to any serious student who wishes to examine it. (44)

The Anderson Collection consists of approximately 5,000 individual artifacts and artifact debris collected by him between 1908 and 1944. The collection represents materials collected from both the U.S. and Mexican sides of the Rio Grande River. The material in the collection is evenly divided between the U.S. and Mexican sides of the river. There is no significant difference between the materials from the U.S. and the materials from the Mexican sides of the border. Unless site locations are consulted, the materials are homogeneous, representing a "single" culture complex. (45) The "Brownsville Complex," as it has been called, was bounded on the east by the Gulf of Mexico, to the south by the San Fernando River, and extended northward into Willacy County, but not beyond the northern limit of Willacy County. The Brownsville Complex did extend to the west, but at no point along its length did it intrude more than 32km (approximately 19 miles) inland (west toward Hidalgo County). (46)

The majority of the material from the U.S. side of the river comes from Cameron County, with some material collected from the southeastern area of Willacy County. Anderson identified approximately 200 sites in Cameron County. The majority of these sites were located in the eastern coastal sections of the county. A good number of sites were located along resacas in the central and southern parts of the county (San Benito, Los Fresnos, Olmito, and Brownsville). While the majority of sites were coastal, there is no significant difference between the material collected near the coast and material collected from sites in the central and southern expanses of Cameron County. Figure 3, from the work of Hall, describes an area along the Brownsville ship channel eastward to the Laguna Madre. Along this route no fewer than 11 Anderson sites are identifiable. (47) Figure 2, is cut-out from the East Brownsville quadrant of the U.S.G.S. map series and

indicates the locations of 11 Anderson site locations. (48)

The Indian artifacts found in the Anderson Collection include the following: Flint projectile points, knives, scrapers, drills, tubes, hammerstones, pumice-stone pipes, rubbing stones, pottery and potsherds of Mexican origin. Both human and animal bone material is represented in the form of tools and ornaments. Split bone awls and tubes decorated with incised lines are represented. Marine shell artifacts are generously represented in the forms of tools and ornaments, including hand axes, scrapers, tinklers, beads, disks, sockets, plugs for drills, fish hooks, projectile points, pendants, gorgets, gouges, gaming disks, and band ornaments. (49) Figures 7 through 12, represent typical lithic artifacts found in the collection. Figures 13 and 15, describe "Huastecan" type painted pottery which is typical of the Brownsville complex. Figures 14 and 16, indicate pottery cut-outs and potshers also plentiful in the Brownsville area. Figures 17 through 24, describe representative types of shell and bone artifacts in the collection common to the Brownsville culture. The wide variety of shell artifacts found in this coastal culture are named above.

The more unusual artifacts represented in the Anderson Collection include freshwater shell artifacts, and glass artifacts obviously fashioned from material from an early historic origin (after 1519). While the majority of the material in the Anderson Collection represents surface collection, it has been determined that A.E. Anderson excavated sites he considered to be the most significant including occupation sites and burial sites. (50)

Working first with the Anderson Collection materials and subsequently by relocating Anderson sites, several investigators have characterized the "Brownsville Complex" by describing it as follows:

" The most distinctive characteristic of the Brownsville complex is the abundance of shell artifacts, in particular, projectile points fashioned from conch-shell columella. Other commonly occurring shell ornaments and tools include chipped-shell disks, centrally pierced ground-shell disks and carved pendants. They vary in presence or in absence of design and shape. They range from square or triangular(conch) to rectangular, oval, or natural(mollusca). Also included are Oliva shell beads and tinklers, columella beads and plugs, mussel-shell scrapers, and shell fish hooks." (51)

The "Brownsville Complex" is generally accepted in Texas archaeology as not being older than 1,000 A.D. and continuing to the early historic period. While the overwhelming majority of materials in the Anderson Collection are representative of the "Brownsville Complex" (1,000 A.D. to 1,800 A.D.), a few isolated Paleo-Indian (5,000 B.C.) artifacts(dart points) are found in the collection. In 1933, A.E. Anderson collected a Clovis (Folsom) point from a location near the mouth of the Rio Grande. Years

later Dr. W.A. Price observed mammoth bones eroding from approximately the same area. Thus, evidence of occupation in the Brownsville coastal area can be documented as far back as 5,000 B.C. (52)

LITHIC ARTIFACTS

Bifaces

Projectile Points

- a-Abasolo: a large unstemmed triangular point with a well rounded base. Similar to Catan but larger in size.
- b-Almagre: a large, broad and comparatively thick point with an irregular body.
- c-Angostura: A long slender, leaf-shaped point.
- d-Cameron: A tiny, equilateral, triangular point.
- e-Catan: A triangular, unstemmed point, rounded base.
- f-Cliffton: A roughly triangular, crudely chipped form.
- g-Clovis: A lanceolate outlined point with a short wide flute on one side and a narrower flute on the back.
- h-Ensor: A highly variable point with broad stems, and shallow side notches.
- i-Fairland: A large broad triangular point with narrow shoulders and an expanding stem formed by a long shallow notch that produces a strong flaring base.
- j-Folsom: A lanceolate point recognized by excellent chipping, thinness and distinctive flutes.
- k-Fresno: A stemless, triangular point that has straight to slightly convex or concave lateral edges, and a convex or slightly concave base.
- l-Frio: A point with a triangular body, short and broad with wide side or corner notches and a concave base.
- m-Langtry: A thin well made point with straight to concave or recurved lateral edges and strong shoulders.
- n-Lerma: A slender, bipointed outline, usually thinned on one end.
- o-Martindale: A point with prominent shoulders and short barbs formed by corner-notching. The base is formed by two convex curves.
- p-Matamoros: A small thick triangular or subtriangular unstemmed point similar to Tortugas.
- q-Perdiz: A triangular point usually well barbed at the shoulders and a contracted stem, often sharply pointed.
- r-Refugio: No stem, elongated triangular point.
- s-Scallorn: A triangular, corner notched point with straight to convex lateral edges and barbed shoulders
- t-Starr: A triangular point with slightly concave lateral edges and a pronounced base concavity.
- u-Tortugas: A large unstemmed triangular point.
- v-Toyah: A small triangular point with two side notches.

(53)

Other lithic artifacts include, scrapers, perforators, gouges, gravers, and abraders. Lithic debitage include, cores, flakes, chips, and blades. Lithic artifacts are either knapped, knapped and pecked, or ground types. The knapped and pecked types include hammerstones and anvils, while the ground type includes "manos." Lithic resource material in the collection includes, Aphanitic chert, Quartzite, Chalcedony, Ogallala chert, Rhyolite, Siltstone, Limestone, and Petrified wood.

A SUMMARY OF 25 ARCHEOLOGICAL THEORIES PERTAINING TO THE PREHISTORIC "BROWNSVILLE CULTURE"

- 1- In the years after the first contact with the Spanish, 1500's numerous small bands of nomadic indians were pushed northward into the area of the Rio Grande River Delta.
- 2- In his book on the Indians of Texas, Newcomb described the "Western Gulf Culture" area which extended from Galveston in Texas to the Rio Panuco in southern Tamaulipas.
- 3- Most of the groups in this area can be grouped linguistically into a category called Coahuiltecan.
- 4- A related group, the Karankawas were entirely a coastal living group unlike the Coahuiltecan who ventured to the west. The Karankawas existed on Padre Island from Corpus Christi to as late at 1843. After this time the remaining members were probably pushed southward into Mexico.
- 5- By the middle 1700's most Coahuiltecan bands had been relocated to Spanish missions and were living peacefully.
- 6- In the 1700's North American settlement in Texas pushed the Lipan Apache and Comanche groups into south Texas and the Valley. These warlike people scared the remaining Coahuiltecan deeper into Mexico.
- 7- Mr. A.E. Anderson was the first person to take interest in Brownsville and Valley pre-history. He theorized that there was only one culture which existed in the lower river delta.
- 8- In the 1930's and 1940's the first professional reconnaissance began in the area based upon Anderson's work. Initial survey was with the purpose of the preliminary delination of the area's cultural complexes and their interrelationships.
- 9- Early surveys encountered abundant painted ceramic from the Huastecan area of southern Tamaulipas. This pottery along with shell artifacts would come to distinguish the Brownsville complex from other cultures.
- 10- In his early work in the 1940's, MacNeish, recognized adjacent but different cultures to the south in Mexico. The Barril complex is the most important.
- 11- MacNeish supported the possibility of a cultural relationship between prehistoric Mexican cultures to the south and those to the north in the southeastern U.S. Passing through Brownsville.
- 12- MacNeish characterized the Brownsville, Abasolo, and Repelo complexes as important to south Texas and northeast Mexico.
- 13- In 1946, MacNeish revisited 14 Anderson sites and examined the material from 58 others.

- 14-MacNeish identified the Abasolo complex as a neighbor to the Brownsville complex. The Abasolo complex extends from the Rio de las Palmas in Tamaulipas, northward along the coast to the San Fernando River. Then concentrated inland to Reynosa and into southern Texas.
- 15-In the 1940's, Kelley called the same culture the "Monte" culture. The Coahuiltecan, Abasolo, and Monte cultures were basically the same.
- 16-In the 1950's, extensive study in the area of the Falcon Dam construction site led to the discovery of Brownsville complex materials in Falcon sites indicating some trade.
- 17-Paleo-Indian sites were definitely found to the West in the Falcon area.
- 18-Brownsville area has not produced a Paleo-Indian culture although Paleo-Indian materials have been found. Paleo-Indian cultures represent peoples who lived before 5,000 B.C.
- 19-The Falcon Dam area had an Archaic culture beginning around 5,000 B.C. and continuing right up to the earliest contact with the Spanish. In the Falcon focus the dominant projectile points are, Tortugas, Abasolo, and Refugio.
- 20-The Mier focus was a transitional phase between the Archaic and Neo-American Indians. The Mier focus is represented by Matamoros, Catan, Fresno, Perdiz, and Starr projectile points.
- 21-The Brownsville focus was clearly recent, falling into the Neo-American Indian period. That is, 2,000 A.D. to the time of contact, 1,500 A.D.
- 22-It is now believed to have had two unique cultures living at the same time. The Brownsville culture on the coast, and the Barril or Abasolo to the west.
- 23-During the 1960's and 1970's, Thomas R. Hester, conducted extensive archaeological study in south Texas and is regarded as the leading expert on the topic.
- 24-As recently as 1974, Elton Prewitt revisited 60 Anderson sites Cameron County, locating 38 new sites.
- 25-Prewitt identified five types of sites in the Brownsville complex: Clay dune-laguna, Resaca-laguna, Clay dune-lake, Resaca, and Barrier Island sites.(54)

A HISTORIC CHRONOLOGY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES PERTAINING TO THE BROWNSVILLE CULTURE

- 1932: A.E. Anderson, Brownsville surveyor and naturalist publishes an article which describes the artifacts that he had collected along the Rio Grande Delta over a 35 year period.
- 1935: E.B. Sayles is the first professional archaeologist to take interest in the Anderson collection which is discussed in an archaeological survey of Texas.
- 1940: A.T. Jackson compared stone tubes from the Anderson Collection to similar specimens from other areas of Texas.

- 1945: T.N. Campbell, studied stone tools from the Aransas focus and attempted to draw a relationship between " early horizons along the Gulf coast of the southern U.S. and northeastern Mexico.
- 1944: A.E. Anderson died in Brownsville, Texas.
- 1947: R. MacNeish, publishes preliminary results of his archaeological survey of the Sierra de Tamaulipas, and coastal Tamaulipas north of the Soto la Marina River as well as a small portion of south Texas including Anderson sites.
- 1947: J. Hughes, at about the same time as McNeish surveys a lengthy stretch along the Matamoros-Victoria highway. Hughes examined the banks of resacas, and basins for sites as Anderson had.
- 1947: J. Charles Kelley, publishes an article on the "Monte Aspect of the Balcones Phase," and draws conclusions to the cultures of the Gulf Coastal Plain southward.
- 1949: T.N. Campbell and Frizzell, furthered the concept of the "Monte Aspect," including Repelo and Abasolo complexes.
- 1950: Krieger and Hughes, publish annual reports of their fieldwork from Zapata and Starr counties and the Falcon reservoir area.
- 1951: Aveleyra, a Mexican archaeologist who worked on the Mexican side of the Falcon project.
- 1951: Hartle and Stephenson, published their investigations at the Falcon Reservoir construction project.
- 1952: J.F. Cason, reported on pre-historic sites at the Falcon Reservoir construction site.
- 1952: E.B. Jelks reports on the river basin archaeological survey in Texas.
- 1953: E.B. Jelks, more reports on the river basin survey.
- 1953: Arguedas and Aveleyra, Mexican archaeologists publish a brief report on the discovery of a Plainview point on the Mexican side of the Falcon Dam project.
- 1953: F. Ruecking, publishes article on the economic systems of the Coahuiltecan Indians of southern Texas.
- 1954: Suhm, Krieger, and Jelks, produce the first edition of the Introductory Handbook of Texas Archaeology, which includes material for eight south Texas counties.
- 1956: F. Weir, reports on an important pre historic site in Starr County.
- 1958: R. MacNeish, publishes a major publication based on 21 months of fieldwork in Tamaulipas and northern Mexico. MacNeish's work studied the Anderson Collection and re-surveyed Anderson sites.
- 1958: W. A. Price, Anderson friend, Corpus Christi geologist publishes a major work on Gulf Coast geology.
- 1960: T.N. Campbell, publishes a major article on the archaeology of the central and southern sections of the Texas coast.
- 1961: W.W. Newcomb, publishes the Indians of Texas.
- 1962: R. Troike, publishes notes on Coahuiltecan ethnography.
- 1964: T.N. Campbell, works on Padre Island reporting on 15 sites.
- 1967: C.Tunnell and J.E. Corbin, establish the Cameron County file at the TARL at U.T. Austin.

- 1968: M.B. Newton, reports on the La Perdida site in Starr County.
- 1969: M.B. Collins, T.R. Hester, and F. Weir, report on the very important Floyd Morris cemetery site in Cameron County.
- 1969: T.R. Hester, continues his work in south Texas with a Kleberg and Kenedy County sites.
- 1971: T.R. Hester and R.W. Rodgers, gain additional information concerning burial patterns in the Brownsville complex.
- 1971: J.P. Nunley, finishes his dissertation concerning Archaic sites in the Falcon Reservoir area.
- 1972: D.R. Brown, assess the archaeological resources affected by the construction of the Retamal Dam in Hidalgo County.
- 1973: T.R. Hester, publishes his paper on Hunters and Gatherers of the Rio Grande Plain and the Lower Texas Coast.
- 1974: E. Prewitt, a student of Campbell spends three months locating Anderson sites in Cameron County for a student paper.
- 1974: Scurlock, Lynn, and Ray, assess the archaeological resources of Padre Island.
- 1974: G. Doran, completes a Master's Thesis on the Long Bones of Texas Indians.
- 1974: G.D. Hall and K.A. Grombacher, conduct an archaeological assessment of the Brazos Island area.
- 1975: T.R. Hester and H.J. Shafer, discuss the importance of flint resources and blade technology along the Texas coast.
- 1975: Nunley and Hester, conduct a systematic survey of sites along the Arroyo los Olmos in Starr County, a total of 52 sites are identified.
- 1975: G.J. Paull arrives at Texas Southmost College.
- 1976: E.P. Baxter and K.L. Killen perform an archaeological survey of the Palo Alto Battlefield near Brownsville.
- 1976: A.N. Zavaleta arrives at Texas Southmost College, Paull and Zavaleta become the first professional anthropologists and archaeologists in the Valley.
- 1977: R. Mallouf, B. Baskin, and Killen, publish a major survey of the cultural resources of Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.
- 1978: T.R. Hester, publishes an article entitled, Archaeology of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.
- 1979: R. Mallouf and A.N. Zavaleta, publish a report on the skeletal remains found at the Unland site in Cameron County.
- 1979: G.J. Paull and A.N. Zavaleta are contracted to survey the Boscaje de Palmas in the Southmost area of Brownsville. Photograph the Anderson Collection in Austin.
- 1980: L. Highley and T.R. Hester, publish papers on The Archaeology of the Texas Coast.
- 1980: T.R. Hester, publishes Digging into South Texas Pre-History
- 1980: L.F. Brown and others, publish a major work on the Environment and geology of the Texas coast, Brownsville and Harlingen area.
- 1983: G.J. Paull and A.N. Zavaleta publish a report on the Boscaje de Palmas in the Borderlands Journal.
- 1985: E.S. Turner and T.R. Hester, publish a Field Guide to the Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians.

- 1989: A.N. Zavaleta, publishes a chapter on the pre historic importance of resacas and bancos. Includes photographs from the Anderson Collection.
- 1990: M. Salinas, publishes a major work on the Indians of south Texas and northern Mexico.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

- 1- Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom or Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville, 1991, Eakin Press, Austin
- 2- Niles Hansen, The Border Economy: Regional Development in the Southwest, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981.
- 3- Antonio N. Zavaleta, Resacas and Bancos in Brownsville History, In, More Studies in Brownsville History, Edited by Milo Kearney, Pan American University at Brownsville, pp.3-30.
- 4- Personal communication with numerous area Jr. High School teachers, 1976-1991.
- 5- Thomas R. Hester, The Archaeology of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, In, Proceedings of An Exploration of a Common Legacy: A Conference on Border Architecture, Texas Historical Commission, 1978, pp.66-79.
- 6- Robert Mallouf, and others, A Predictive Assessment of Cultural Resources in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties, Texas, Office of the State Archaeologist Survey Report 23, Texas Historical Commission, 1979, pp.51-88.
- 7- Anderson family history single photocopied sheets.
- 8- Anderson family history, Ibid.
- 9- Anderson family history, Ibid.
- 10-Anderson family history, Ibid.
- 11-Anderson family history, Ibid.
- 12-The Brownsville Herald, March 11, 1944.
- 13-Personal conversations with Mr. Kermit Cromack and Mr. Matt Claunch, Tape Recorded in Brownsville, Texas, June 1991.
- 14-Matt Claunch, Ibid.
- 15-Kermit Cromack, Ibid.
- 16-Kermit Cromack, Ibid.
- 17-Matt Claunch, Op. Cit.
- 18-A letter from Mr. A.E. Anderson to Miss Lula Champion, dated July 28, 1931, discussing a property survey on the Rio Grande River and including Bancos. Letter is the personal property of the author.
- 19-Matt Claunch, Op. Cit.
- 20-Matt Claunch, Ibid.
- 21-Personal conversations with Mrs. Virginia Anderson Weich and Mrs. Katherine Anderson Celaya Reed, tape recorded in Brownsville, Texas, in June of 1991.
- 22-Weich and Reed, Ibid.
- 23-Kermit Cromack, Op. Cit.
- 24-Kermit Cromack, Ibid.
- 25-Kermit Cromack, Ibid.

- 26-Letters from W.A. Price to A.E. Anderson between 1937-1939 are the property of Mr. Matt Claunch, from the Anderson Files.
- 27-Personal Communication with Mrs. Rose Farmer curator of the Sabal Palm Audubon sanctuary in Southmost, Texas.
- 28-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 29-Mallouf, Op. Cit.
- 30-Anderson family records, Op. Cit.
- 31-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 32-Mallouf, Op. Cit.
- 33-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 34-MacNeish, R. S. A Preliminary Report on Coastal Tamaulipas, Mexico, *American Antiquity*, 13(1):1947 pp.1-15.
- 35-MacNeish, *Ibid.*
- 36-Personal communication with Mr. J.D. Weich in Brownsville, Texas in June of 1991.
- 37-Kermit Cromack, Op. Cit.
- 38-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 39-Weich and Reed, *Ibid.*
- 40-Letter from W.A. Price to A.E. Anderson, dated December 13, 1937, property of Mr. Matt Claunch.
- 41-Letter from W.A. Price to A.E. Anderson, dated June 20, 1938, property of Mr. Matt Claunch.
- 42-Letter from W.A. Price to A.E. Anderson, dated August 5, 1938, property of Mr. Matt Claunch.
- 43-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 44-Personal communication with Dr. Thomas R. Hester, Director of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratories, Austin, Texas.
- 45-MacNeish, Op. Cit.
- 46-MacNeish, *Ibid.*
- 47-Grant D. Hall and K. A. Grombacher, *An Assessment of the Archeological and Historical Resources to be Affected by the Brazos Island Harbor Waterway Project, Texas, Research Report No. 30, Texas Archeological Survey, The University of Texas at Austin, 1979, p.2.*
- 48-U.S.G.S. 1970 series, East Brownsville Quadrangle.
- 49-A.E. Anderson, *Artifacts of the Rio Grande Delta Region, Texas Archeological and Paleontological Society*, 4:29-31.
- 50-Weich and Reed, Op. Cit.
- 51-A.E. Anderson, Op.Cit.
- 52-Mallouf, Op. Cit.
- 53-E.S. Turner and T.R. Hester, *A Field Guide to Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians*, 1985 Texas Monthly Press, Austin.
- 54-Mallouf, Op. Cit.

References

- Anderson, A.E. 1932 *Artifacts of the Rio Grande Delta region, Bulletin of the Texas Archeological and Paleontological Society* 4:29-31.
- Arguedas R. de la Borbolla, sol, and Luis Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda 1953 *A Plainview point from northern Tamaulipas. American Antiquity* 18(4):392-393.

- Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda, Luis 1951 Reconocimiento arqueologico in la zona de la Presa Internacional Falcon, Tamaulipas y Texas. *Rivista Mexicana de Estudios Antropologicos* 12:31-59.
- Baxter, Edward P., and Kay L. Killen 1976 A study of the Palo Alto Battleground, Cameron County, Texas. *Anthropology Laboratory Report* 33. Texas A&M University, College Station.
- Brown, Douglas R. 1972 An assessment of the archaeological resources to be affected by construction of Retamal Diversion Dam, United States Dike and modified Hackney Floodway and closure of Mission Floodway, Hidalgo County, Texas. Texas Archeological Survey Project Report 15. The University of Texas at Austin.
- Brown, L.F. and others 1980 Environmental geologic atlas of the Texas coastal zone: Brownsville-Harlingen area. Bureau of Economic Geology, the University of Texas at Austin.
- Campbell, T.N. 1960 Archeology of the central and south sections of the Texas coast. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 29(for 1958):145-176.
- Campbell, T.N. 1964 Appraisal of the archeological resources of Padre Island, Texas. Report submitted to the National Park Service by the University of Texas at Austin.
- Campbell, T.N. and Jack Q. Frizzell 1949 Notes on the Ayala site, lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological and Paleontological Society* 20:63-72.
- Cason, J.F. 1952 Report on archeological salvage in Falcon Reservoir, season of 1952. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 23:218-259.
- Collins, M.B., T.R. Hester, and F. A. Weir 1969 The Floyd Morris site (41CF2): a prehistoric cemetery site in Cameron County, Texas. Pt. 1. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 40:119-146.
- Doran, G.H. 1974 The long bones of Texas Indians. Master's Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Hall, Grand D. and K.A. Grombacher 1974 An assessment of the archeological and historical resources to be affected by the Brazos Island Harbor Waterway Project, Texas. Texas Archeological Survey Research Report 30. The University of Texas at Austin.
- Hartle, D.D. and R.L. Stephenson 1951 Archaeological investigations at the Falcon Reservoir, Starr County, Texas. Mimeographed report. On file, Texas Archeological Research Laboratory.
- Highley, L. and T.R. Hester 1980 Papers on the Archaeology of the Texas Coast, Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, Special Report, No. 11.
- Hester, T.R. 1969 Archeological investigations in Kenedy and Kleberg counties, Texas, in August 1967. Archeological Program Report 15. Texas State Building Commission, Austin.
- 1976 Hunters and gatherers of the Rio Grande Plain and the Lower Texas Coast. Issued by the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio.

- 1975 A chronological overview of prehistoric southern and south-central Texas. Paper presented at conference on the prehistory of northeastern Mexico and Texas, Monterrey, Mexico.
- Hester, T.R. 1978 The archaeology of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. In Proceedings, an exploration of a common legacy: a conference on border architecture, pp.66-73. Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
- Hester, T.R. 1980 Digging into South Texas Prehistory: A Guide for Amateur Archaeologists, Corona Publishing Co., San Antonio.
- Hester, T.R., M.B. Collins, F.A. Weir, and F. Ruecking 1969 Two prehistoric cemetery sites in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society, 40:119-166.
- and R.W. Rodgers 1971 Additional data on the burial practices of the Brownsville complex. The Texas Journal of Science 22:(4):367-372.
- and H.J. Shaffer 1975 An initial study of blade technology on the central and southern Texas coast. Plains Anthropologist 20(69):175-185.
- Jackson, A.T. 1940 Tubular pipes and other tubes in Texas. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological and paleontological Society 12:99-137.
- Jelks, E.B. 1952 The river basin surveys archeological salvage program in Texas. The Texas Journal of Science 4(2):131-138.
- Kelley, J.C. 1947 The cultural affiliations and chronological position of the Clear Fork focus. American Antiquity 13(2):97-109.
- Krieger, A.D. and J.T. Hughes 1950 Archeological salvage in the Falcon Reservoir area: Progress Report 1, Mimeographed. Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, Austin.
- MacNeish, R.S. 1947 A preliminary report on coastal Tamaulipas. American Anthropologist 13(1):1-15.
- MacNeish, R.S. 1958 Preliminary archeological investigations in Sierra de Tamaulipas, Mexico. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 48:6.
- Mallouf, R.J. B. J. Baskin, and K.L. Killen 1977 A Predictive Assessment of Cultural Resources in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties, Texas, Archeological Survey Report 23, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
- Mallouf, R.J. and A.N. Zavaleta, 1979 The Unland Site: A Prehistoric Group Burial from Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Cameron County, Texas. Office of the State Archeologist Special Report 25, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
- Newcomb, W.W. 1961 The Indians of Texas from prehistoric to modern times. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Newton, M.B. 1968 The distribution and character of sites, Arroyo Los Olmos, Starr County, Texas. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 38: 18-24.
- Nunley, J.P. 1971 Sociocultural units of the southwestern Texas Archaic: An analytic approach. Ph.D. Dissertation. Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

- Nunley, J.P. 1975 An assessment of archeological resources in portions of Starr County, Texas. Archaeological Survey Report 7, Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Paull, G.J. and A.N. Zavaleta 1983 Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Boscaje de Palmas, The Borderland Journal, 6(2) 111-149
- Prewitt, E.R. 1974 Preliminary archeological investigations in the Rio Grande delta area of Texas. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 45: 55-65.
- Price, W.A. 1958 Sedimentology and Quaternary geomorphology of south Texas. Transactions of the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies 8:41-75.
- Ruecking, F. 1953 The economic system of the Coahuiltecan Indians of southern Texas and northeastern Mexico. The Texas Journal of Science 5(4): 480-497.
- Ruecking, F. 1955 The Coahuiltecan Indians of southern Texas and northeastern Mexico. Master's Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Salinas, M. 1990 Indians of the Rio Grande Delta: Their Role in the History of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico. The University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Sayles, E.B. 1935 An archaeological survey of Texas. Medallion Papers 17. Gila Pueblo, Globe, Arizona.
- Scurlock, D, W.M. Lynn, and T.R. Hester 1974 Archaeological assessment: Padre Island National Seashore, Texas. Office of the State Archeologist Special Reports 11. Texas Historical Commission.
- Suhm, D.A., A.D. Krieger, and E.B. Jelks 1962 Handbook of Texas archeology. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 25.
- Troike, R.C. 1962 Notes on Coahuiltecan ethnography. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 32(for 1961):57-63.
- Tunnell, C. and H.P.Jensen n.d. Notes on file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
- Turner, S.E. and T.R. Hester 1985 A Field Guide to Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians, Texas Monthly Press, Austin.
- Weir, F.A. 1956 Surface artifacts from La Perdida, Starr County, Texas. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 27:59-78.
- Zavaleta, A.N. Resacas and Bancos in Brownsville History, in More Studies in Brownsville History, edited by Milo Kearney, Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989.



**Mr. Andrew Elliott "A.E." Anderson
1886 - 1944
- The Father of Valley Archaeology -**

A. E. ANDERSON
CIVIL ENGINEER
MEMPHIS, TENN.

July 28-31

Miss Lula Champion
City

Dear Miss Champion,

My recent re-survey made for you of Sherr 10, Linceo Ranch shows a total acreage of 226.3 acres. On the plat I show protected and unprotected acreage, as well as acreage in lease right-of-way. This information is for the purpose of valuation.

River meanders are along top edge of Tract. I would judge that erosion and accretion to this river frontage are about balanced at present. The upper bluff Tract shown on plat is eroding but slightly and can easily be held by small amount of protection work. The lower bluff Tract however is cutting away badly and is in need of immediate attention. The County will probably assist in protection work on this lower section in order to protect thickness. If this is done the accretion to your tract would soon amount to several acres - possibly ten.

The boundaries, between river and highway, are all recognized fences and therefore no posts or monuments are necessary.

The highway front boundary I surveyed fifty feet from centerline of present concrete pavement. Knowing that the State Highway Com. are requiring the County to secure a one hundred foot right-of-way for Military Road, I made your survey in accordance just as if you had already deduced right-of-way

to the County (about 1.5 acres).

The original fieldnotes to Sherr 10, show with a very reasonable amount of error, and the acreage calculated 219 Acs instead of 263 as called for. Evidently the original surveyor made a miscalculation or else he included an estimated amount of acreage in the river land below Linceo tract which had been same ownership, but it cut off by annexation into Mexico as Las Puñtas Banco in 1905. You have apparently been paying taxes on about 45 Acres too much land since 1905.

Sincerely
A. E. Anderson

Figure 1
Letter from A.E. Anderson
to Miss. Lula Champion

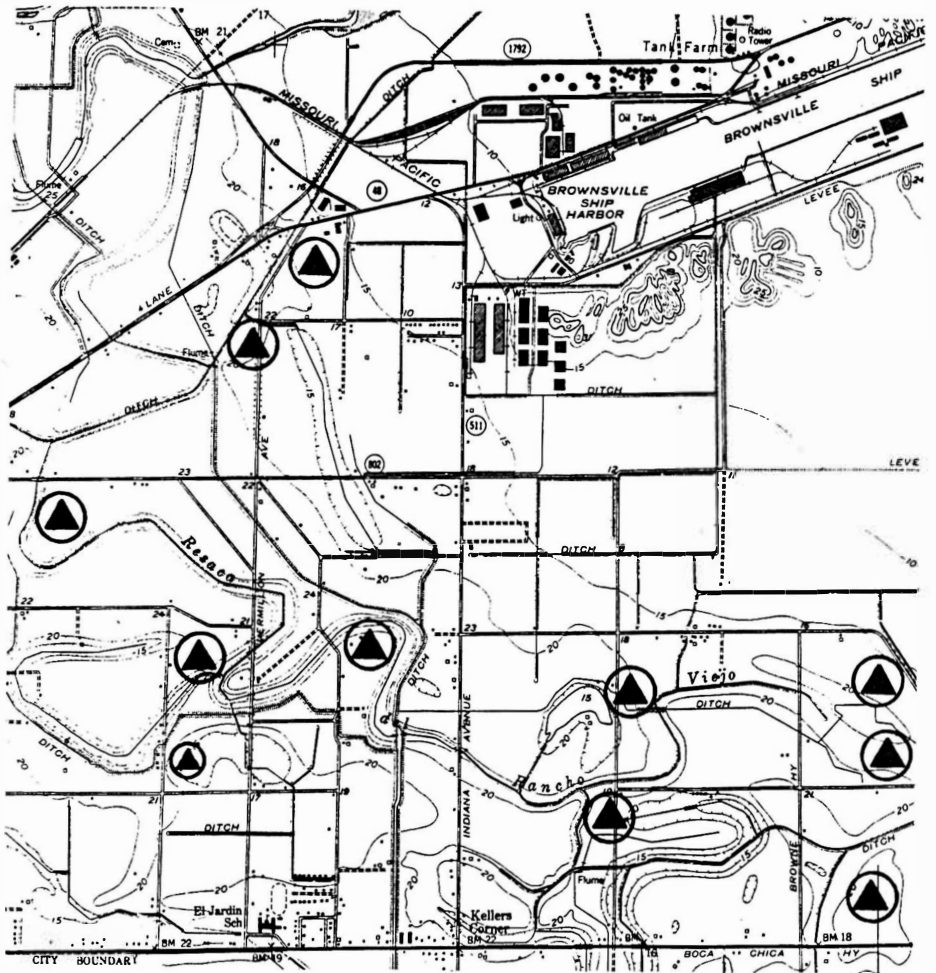


Figure 2
Anderson sites located on
East Brownsville Quadrangle
U.S.G.S. Map

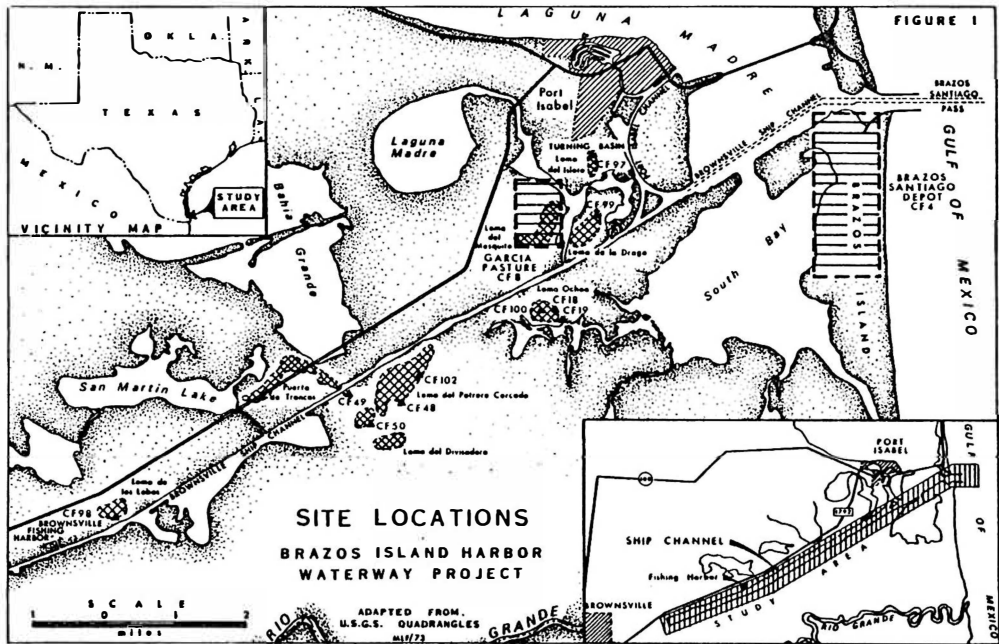


Figure 3
Archaeological Sites near the
Brownsville Ship Channel

Corpus
Dec. 13 '37

Dear Anderson:

I have at last checked your observation of the point like the one labeled "a" on Pl. xli of the Mojave book. Benedict has also found several similar to points in that Mojave lot.

There seems to be little doubt that we have artifacts on this coast like those of the Folsom group.

I enclose the Stirton letter - apologies for overlooking it.

I have not yet received the papers which I am to take to the Valley. Will let you know as soon as I set a date for going.

Please do not take me into consideration on the Sellards trip. I cannot make a special trip for it and do not ~~now~~ now think it vital enough for me to do so.

Mr. Jackson from the Dept. of Anthropology and Archaeology, Univ. of Texas, went into the field with Benedict and me Saturday to see Benedict's locality where he dug out a bright red pot, 2 feet below surface of Beaumont at 30' above sea. It was at Portland, northwest side of Corpus Christi Bay, a few hundred feet back from present bay cliff. The pot is cylindrical, rounded at each end, the only ~~two~~ openings being no larger than a pencil, one at each end. Inside was a sandy or ashy core and the inside of the vessel is charred, with the print of a fibre sack and one charred ~~two-fibre~~ two-fibre cord left.

The contents has not been critically examined. They guess it may be a cremation of the bones of a child. They say it is unique, only some similar, not identical, things having been found before.

I may spend the rest of the month at Weslaco, as there is some talk of my watching our well there and relieving Dr. Boos.

Regards,

W. Armstrong Price.



Benedict's pot.

possibly 4" x 12"

Figure 4
December 13, 1937 Letter from
Price to Anderson

W. ARMSTRONG PRICE

June 20, 1938

Telephone
2-8871
2-8813

P. O. Box 118
CROFTS CREEK, TEXAS

Mr. A. E. Anderson,
Brownsville, Texas.

Dear Anderson:

Will you kindly send me, at your convenience, sketches of the positions of the stakes of the camp which you think may be General Taylor's camp on Brazos or Padre islands. I would like to have them when I go to Austin some time this summer to check the location against the maps in references which I have gotten for descriptions of this camp.

The references are as follows:

The Far With Mexico, J. H. Smith, a number of references, especially Vol. I, pages 162, 205, 481.

Senate Ex. Doc. No. 32, 31st. Congress, 1st Session, a map.

House Doc. No. 309, 29th Congress, 1st Session, some information on the camp, especially p. 29.

It is said that a more extensive search in Far West. publications would probably uncover an exact map of the camp.

These references and remarks were furnished by Dr. F. Stull Holt, Department of History, Johns Hopkins Univ.

I have no immediate plans for work in the Valley.

Sincerely yours,

W. Armstrong Price

*Your elephant track on Padre Island
and the creek (Arroyo?) which
Padre's town with may be in
with a point I know about.*

*It would mean shallow erosion
of Pleistocene by waves or key-remant, river channels. W. A. P.*

Figure 5
June 20, 1938 Letter from
Price to Anderson

W. ARMSTRONG PRICE

August 5, 1938

2-2071
2-2212

P. O. Box 112
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

Mr. A. S. Anderson
Brownsville, Texas.

Subject: Random Reflections!

Dear Andersons:

Hope you did not get washed away.

I have at last finished all the papers for the Texas Academy Handbook and shipped them to Houston.

In finishing up my paper on the Coastal Prairies I realized that in the Corpus Christi area we have not yet made any good separation of materials at 18 inches down from surface materials (that is, the other collectors do not think my numbers are representative).

I have seen a bushel of the thicker, coarser types of arrow (atlatyl?) points in place in the middle layer of a 12-foot clay dune, the dune being undoubtedly Recent.

Also, we have collected such points from a depth of 18 inches in other clay dunes (and at 2 ft.). Also 2 1/2 ft. in ~~clay~~.

I personally have not seen anything but the finer "bird points" at the surface of these unplowed clay dunes. Where plowing has been done on sandy land I have seen coarse points at the surface.

But my personal collections have been ~~few~~ ^{few} and some of these other men say they get the small ones from the top down and the coarse ones also in both situations. However, I am still skeptical of their accuracy either of observation or memory. They do not keep or consult records adequately.

Does the occurrence of the larger points at 18 inches to 2 feet to 6 feet in clay dunes mean that the users of them were very recent, merely not the latest? The cover on the Recent delta of the Rio Grande might have covered up every thing ~~very~~ older than 1000 years. Stone was worked up to 1500-1600, when Captain Cook says a brisk trade in iron across America led to the immediate abandonment of stone working — at least where he saw the Indians. Stone might have been used a while longer in South Texas.

Have you found camp debris in layers within clay dunes?

Harbert Davenport told a young girl from here who went to see him about history of Padre Island that General Taylor did not have a camp on the Island. Did you not have positive evidence to the contrary?

Regards,

W. Armstrong Price

Figure 6
August 5, 1938 Letter from
Price to Anderson

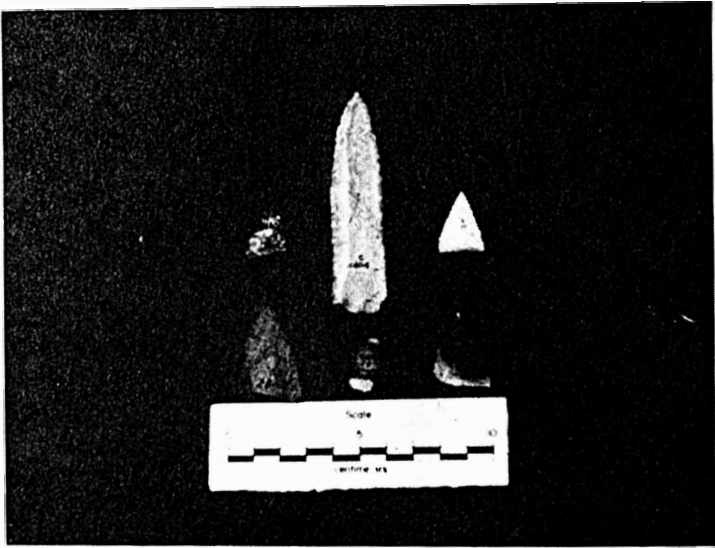


Figure 7
Assorted Lithic Artifacts

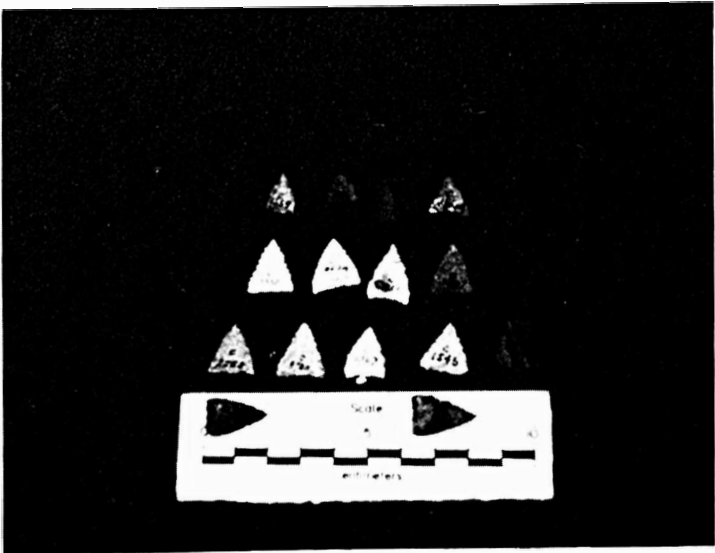


Figure 8
Assorted Lithic Artifacts

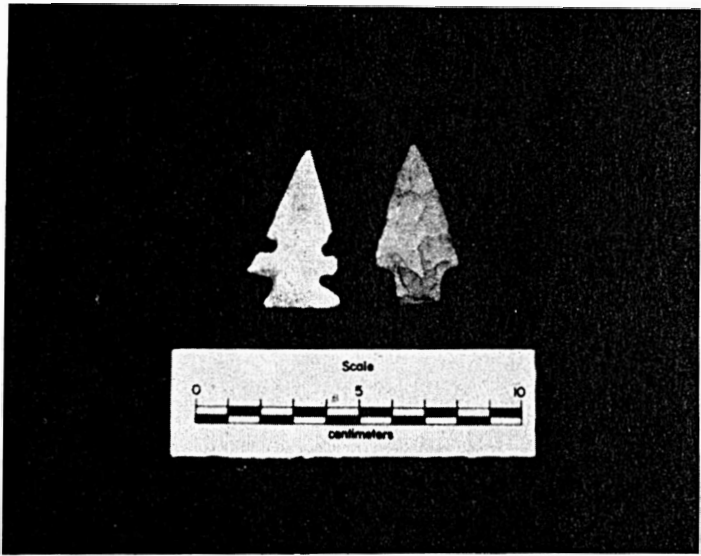


Figure 9
Assorted Lithic Artifacts

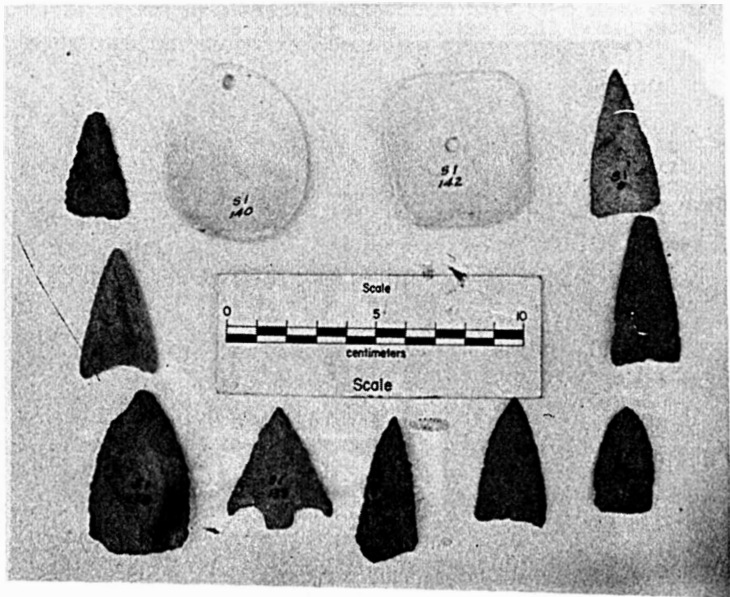


Figure 10
**Assorted Lithic Artifacts,
Shell Pendants**



Figure 11
Assorted Lithic Artifacts

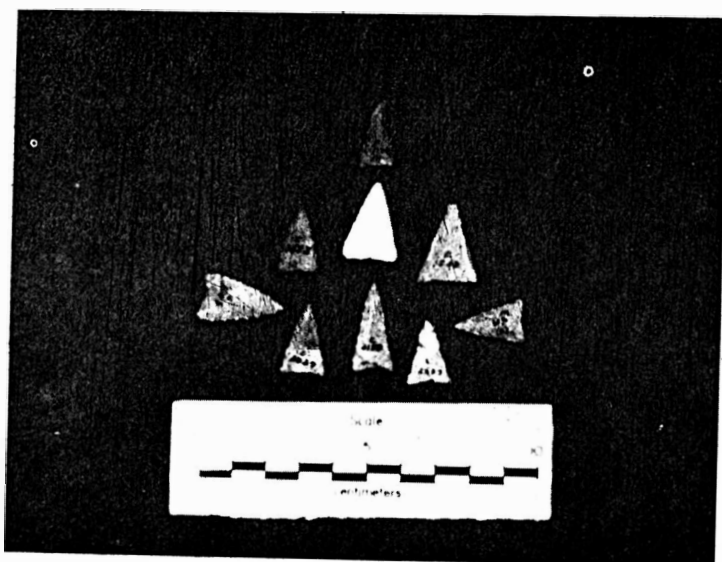


Figure 12
Assorted Lithic Artifacts



Figure 13
Mexican Huastecan Origin
Pottery

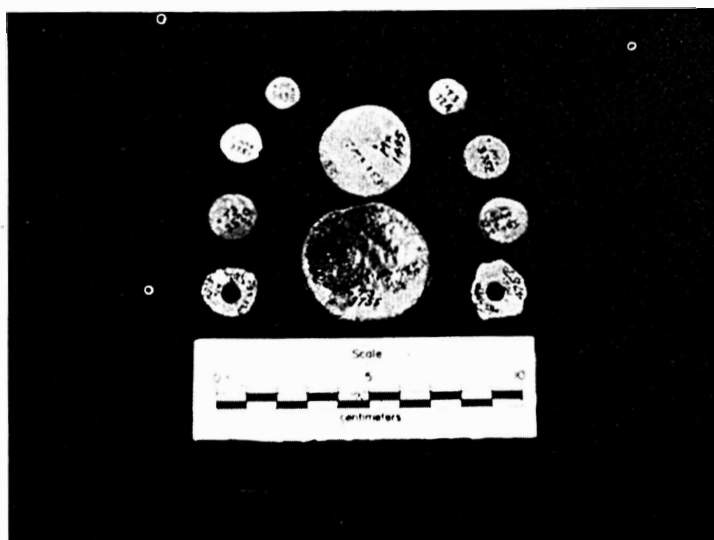


Figure 14
Pottery Cut-Outs

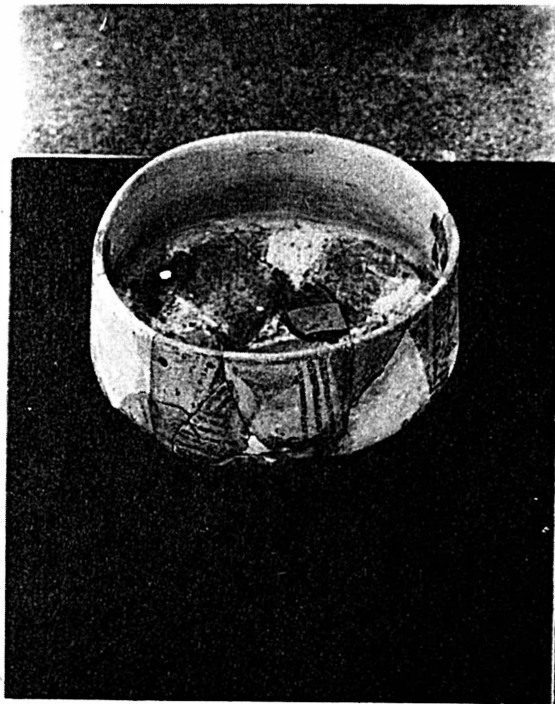


Figure 15
Mexican Huastecan Origin
Painted Pottery



Figure 16
Assorted Potsherds



Figure 17
Assorted Shell Ornaments

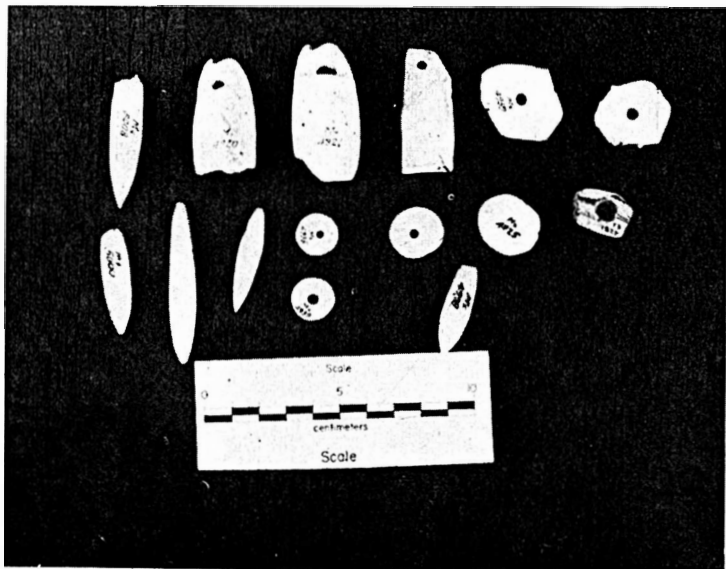


Figure 18
Assorted Shell Ornaments

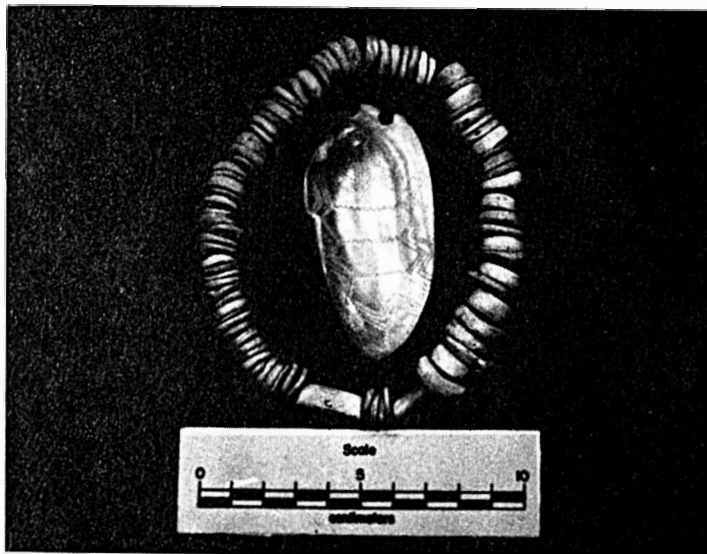


Figure 19
Shell Necklace and Gorget

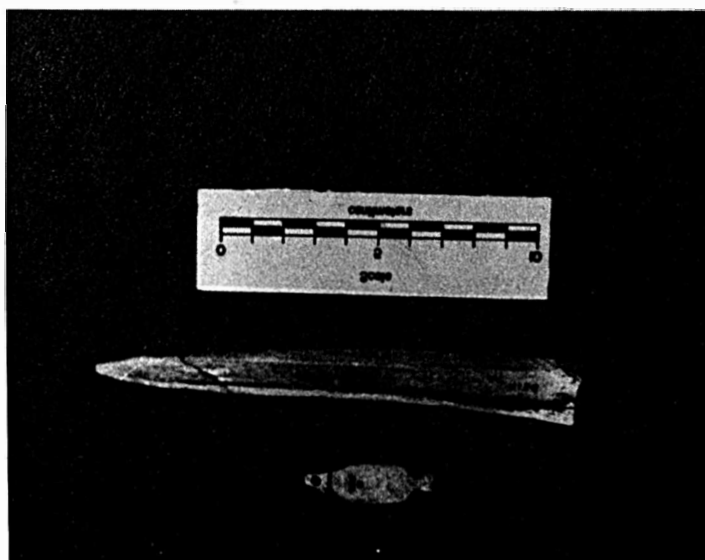


Figure 20
Ornamental Fish and Bone Implement

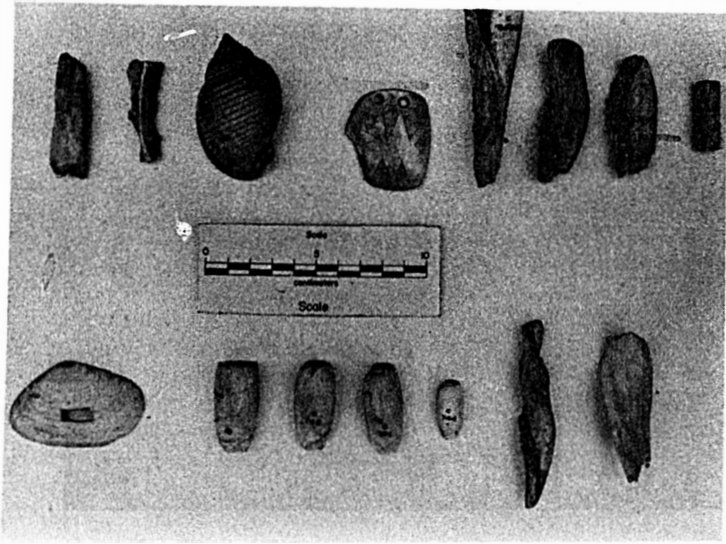


Figure 21
Assorted Shell Artifacts

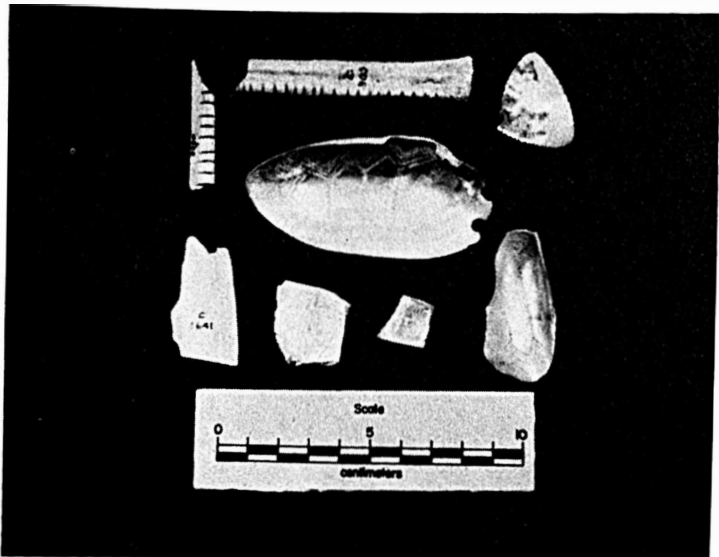


Figure 22
Assorted Shell and Bone Artifacts

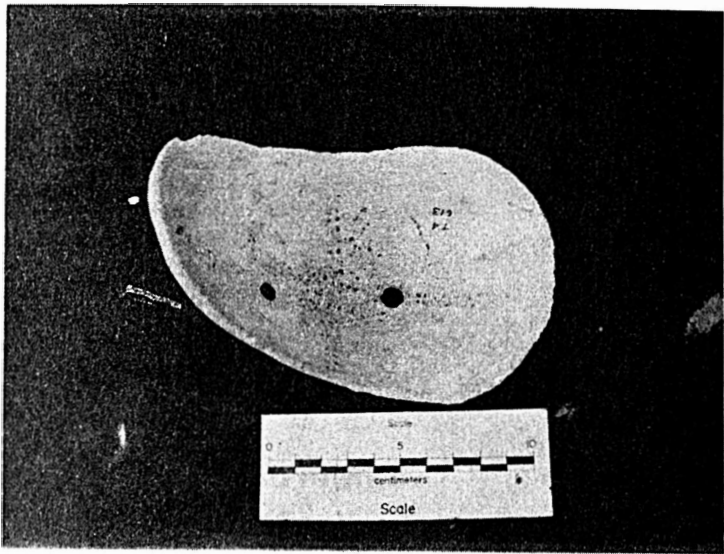


Figure 23
Shell Gorget



Figure 24
Assorted Shell Pendants



Abasolo



Cameron



Catan



Fresno



Lerma



Matamoros



Perdiz



Tortuga



Refugio



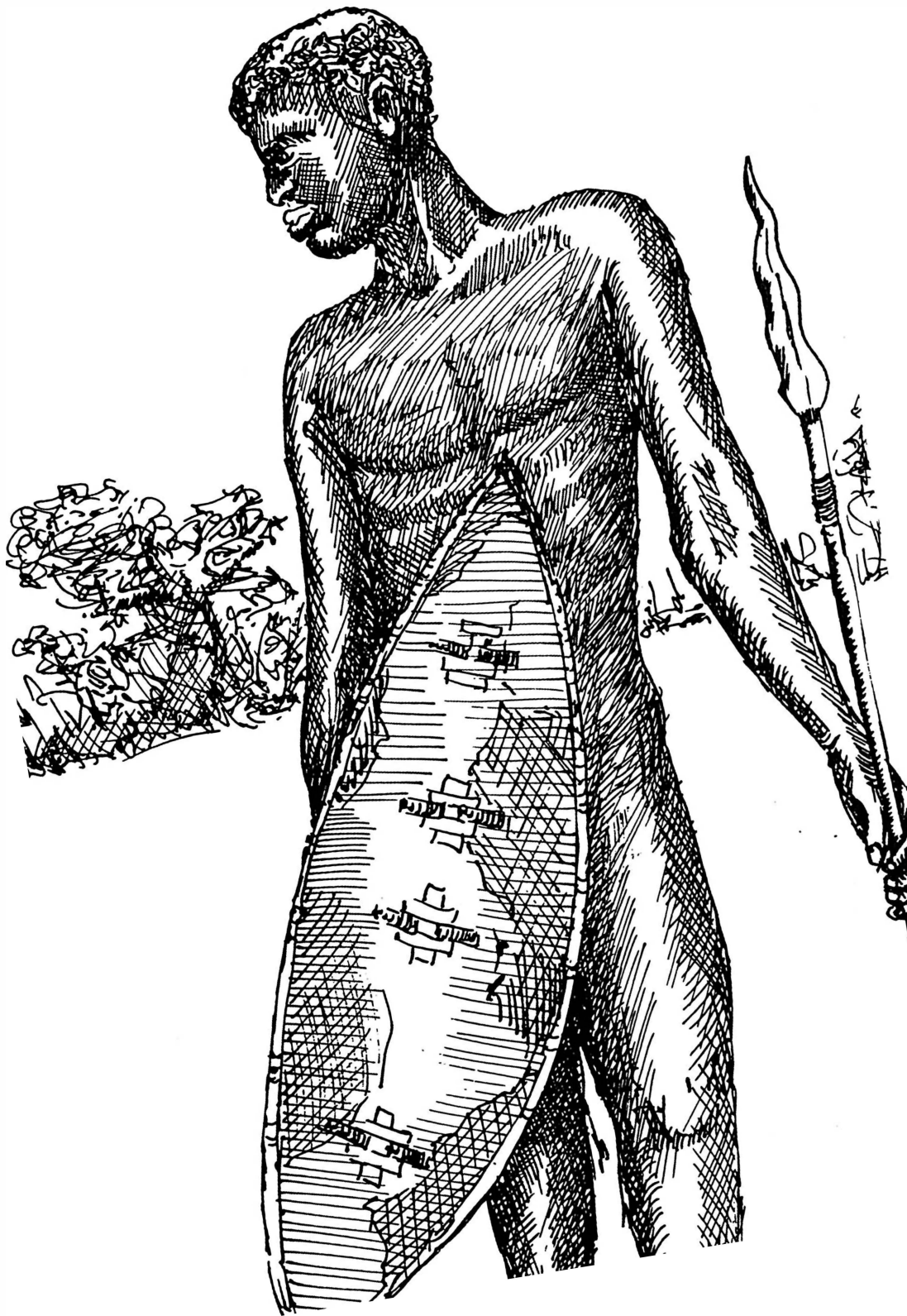
Starr

Figures adapted from, "Field Guide to Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians,"
Texas Monthly Press

Figure 25
Lithic Projectile Points Common in the
Anderson Collection



Robert Cray



The Leather Shields

A Folktale told by

Peter Gawenda

San Juanita said that she was about five or six years old when her grandfather told her the story for the first time, the story about the oscuros, the people with the leather shields, and at that time, her grandfather was already in his sixties. "Mi Abuelito," her tired eyes sparkled when she referred to her grandfather this way, "was born some place in Coahuila during the year when the war of independence broke out. Abuelito did not remember his father who had disappeared when Abuelito was still a child. He was brought up by his own grandfather who had worked in the vineyards somewhere around Parras." San Juanita had mentioned at one time that she really did not know where either one was born, but it is possible that she had forgotten. She did have a few Mexican coins from her grandfather that were from the 1880's, and two Spanish eight reales pieces that were dated around 1770. She also had an old newspaper from 1881. The newspaper was from Matamoros.

But, back to the story of her grandfather. Whenever Abuelito returned from the fields he would first take care of his two horses. He would ask San Juanita to bring the wooden bucket. Juanita had to drag it across the back porch, down four stairs, through the pigs' pen and then to the cattle trough. He would then come and fill the bucket for the first horse. "Its name was Luna because it was a pale brown horse." Juanita said she was sometimes allowed to ride it. "After the first horse it was Negrito's turn, the second horse." It was really afraid of that horse because it never stood still and it constantly blew air through its nostrils." She said, "Abuelito always told me that Negrito had the color of the people with the leather shields, those that lived on the Islas del Rio."

San Juanita usually did not talk that much she loved to watch the children on the side walk or in the store, but this time, she seemed to enjoy having a listener. She was well educated and spoke an almost flawless English. Although she and her husband ran a little grocery store since the twenties, she had a diploma in a beautiful black frame on the wall stating that she had completed the Normal School and that she was entitled to be an elementary school teacher. When she told the story, she must have been in her eighties because, if I remember correctly, the date on the diploma was 1889.

"I was named after my Abuelito. He was called Juan de Dios, or Juanito. He was a tall man, you see," she pointed at a picture on her dresser. "Abuelito made frequent trips to San Antonio. He took horses and cattle and brought back fine linen and always red German sugar candy. But sometimes, when they crossed the Rio Grande they would steal his horse." Juanita lowered her voice and bent forward. "But, I know people do not believe me, el abuelo de mi Abuelito...He saw the men with the leather

shields. They would sneak into the camp at night, kill the men, and take the horses and women. Abuelito always said that these strange Indians were very dark. They were tall, two heads taller than the Spaniards and three heads taller than other Indians, and they never wore anything on their bodies. Their skin was shiny and they could outrun a horse. Yes, my great-great-grandfather swore on the Holy Cross that he had seen those tall dark men, and he had a big scar to prove it"...and this is the story which San Juanita had heard from her own grandfather several times.

"Abuelito, my grandfather always sat in his old Spanish chair, when he told us of the old times...this chair," Juanita pointed at her old chair with the carved legs and the embroidered pillows. "The story was first told in 1823, my grandfather's grandfather was eighty-five years old. It was the morning of Abuelito's communion day. His father had left for Mexico City one month before and had not returned,...in fact, he never returned. The whole family was gathered on the rancho for Juanito's big day." San Juanita stopped briefly and then added, "Well,...they would always remember the eighty-fifth birthday and Juanito's communion day, because on that day Iturbide had abdicated." She nodded and then continued, "Juanito's grandfather came to the boys' bedroom that morning to dress in his white shirt, his black pants and his striped coat. He wanted to look festive when receiving the priest, the other families from the village, and the Indios from the ranchitos," San Juanita folded her hands in her lap and took a deep breath.

"Juanito watched his grandfather and suddenly realized that he always leaned to the left. He walked firm, he looked strong, but something was odd about his posture. And then he saw the big scar on his abuelo's shoulder. The scar was at least as wide as Juanito's hand and as long as his arm. The scar was on his chest and on his back. Juanito started trembling and then touched his Grandfather's hand. "Who did that?" he asked, "Who hurt you?" "Los hombres con los escudos y lanzas llaneantes" and Juanito's abuelo continued, "I was twelve years old when it happened. I was the youngest of the sons, so I was put in charge of the sheep and the goats. I already had my own pony when we all moved with the soldiers to the river. There were at least ten families and maybe twenty soldiers. They all helped to build the ranch and fences for the sheep and the cattle. The soldiers stayed for several months and when everything was peaceful, they left."

Juanito touched the scar. It was hard and it felt like grandfather's calloused hands. Juanito wondered whether the scar still hurt. But he did not dare ask. Grandfather slowly put on his shirt. He had a problem with his left arm, but that must have been the scar. Juanito's grandfather continued, "One morning, I was driving the sheep to the river when I saw them. They moved like Indians, slowly and carefully, but they were different, they were dark, and they had nothing on their bodies. I had never see anyone like that. Taller than my father or any of my tios and servants...they carried long slender shields and spears. The shields looked like the hide of cattle and a man could hide behind such a shield. The tips of the spears looked like flames. First I froze..and then I started running. I had left my horse,

so I was on foot. I remember that I fell, and my shoulder was burning like fire." Juanito had tears in his eyes, he adored his grandfather, and he wished he could have been there because he would have defended him and killed the dark Indians. "They must have taken our sheep," Juanito's grandfather said, "because when the servants found me, they thought that I was dead. The Indians had taken all of our sheep, but they had left the flaming iron spear in my shoulder. My mother said later, that I had a fever for many weeks, and when I woke up and told them about the tall dark Indians they didn't want to believe me. Who had ever heard of dark Indians?"

Abuelito watched his grandfather tie a bow under the collar of his shirt. Then he opened the drawer of the chest beside the window, and pulled out a sword that looked like a flame. It did not have a grip. Grandfather handed it to me. It was cold and almost as long as my arm. It was the rusted tip of a spear. "They pulled this from my shoulder." Juanito, mi Abuelito was horrified, but then kissed the spear tip. He was so glad that it had not killed his abuelo."

San Juanita stood up and walked slowly to her old dresser. She opened the top drawer and pulled out a brownish package and went back to her chair. She placed the package into her lap. The package looked like dirty rags wrapped around a long thin object. She loosened the strings and carefully unwrapped the rags while talking. "That's what is left of the white shirt of Abuelito's grandfather. I have kept the package the same way how Abuelito wrapped it and gave it to me on my communion day." San Juanita had pulled the last piece of cloth from what was left of the flaming spear. Its shape was still recognizable but it looked like big brittle pieces of rust. She just left it in her lap and seemed to guard it with her hands. When I walked to her for a closer look, she just said, "My great-great-grandfather must have had strong blood because it makes the iron disappear. Abuelito once told me that his grandfather had lived to see ninety." I would have liked to touch the remnants but I respected her unexpressed wish. When she wrapped the spear again, San Juanita had tears in her eyes.

For a while we just sat quietly, then San Juanita added that there had always been talk about Africanos close to the river or on some small islands in the river. She said that she remembers some of the old people talking about survivors of a slave ship that had sunk off the mouth of the Rio del Norte and others believed that they were escaped slaves from the Islands who tried to remain in hiding. People feared them because the oscuros or negritos survived by pillaging and castle rustling. She also believed that as time passed they either mixed with the kidnapped Indians or maybe they just died out. Her Abuelito said that his grandfather never again left the ranch without his horse and that until he died he insisted that he and some of the other ranchers had encountered the tall people carrying leather shields. He admired them because they looked proud and defiant. When he was twelve or fourteen years old, the Spanish soldiers returned to look for these people and try to capture them. Many soldiers did not return after the expedition, nor did the survivors bring any

captives back. For at least twenty more years, the villagers had to fend off the marauding oscuros or dark ones. Then the family moved to a different location.

If San Juanita's account was correct, then her ancestor had encountered the dark, tall people from around 1740 to almost 1770. This account seems reasonable, as there are other reports such as by Santa María, who had travelled extensively during the mid-1700s in Nuevo España (Relación Histórica I). San Juanita died in the early seventies, and I was told that her household was "cleaned" after her funeral.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

by

Graciela P. Rosenberg

En este trabajo vamos a tratar sobre las leyendas en México y en la frontera. Primero trataremos de dar una definición del folklore. Después veremos la subdivisión de leyendas utilizada por Elaine K. Miller, tratando de ver algunos ejemplos de ellas, para terminar con "La llorona".

El folklore abarca muchos aspectos del saber popular. Estos aspectos son en gran medida distintos de lo técnico o científico. Aurelio M. Espinosa define el folklore como "The direct expression of the psychology of mankind from its primitive origins to the present day, transmitted across the ages without the help of technical science."¹ Estos elementos tradicionales o factores de la civilización son una parte importante del espíritu de la gente que se transmite de generación en generación espontáneamente. En estos elementos del comportamiento humano que constituyen la tradición, el carácter, los sentimientos, las costumbres, las creencias religiosas y los poderes artísticos, las ideas de la gente quedan documentadas.

Según Espinosa, la ciencia folklórica es una rama del conocimiento humano que investiga, colecciona, clasifica, y estudia con método científico los materiales del saber popular en su sentido más amplio para interpretar hasta lo posible la vida y el espíritu de la gente a través de los siglos.² La presencia de la tradición folklórica española en gran parte de América es notable. Espinosa menciona que el alcance de la tradición española en América es de tan grande magnitud que los primeros intentos de retratarla pueden ser perplejos.³ Sin embargo ya existen estudios serios sobre el respecto con materiales comparativos publicados en España e Hispano América. Pero todavía hay una necesidad obvia de más estudios teóricos sobre el folklore, especialmente sobre las leyendas.

Miller divide las leyendas en dos grandes categorías: leyendas narrativas y cuentos tradicionales. Las leyendas narrativas las subdivide en: narrativas religiosas; narrativas acerca del diablo; tesoros enterrados; duendes; y el regreso de los muertos. Los cuentos tradicionales los subdivide en: cuentos de animales; cuentos de magia; cuentos religiosos; cuentos románticos; y cuentos de monstruos atontados. Este trabajo tratará sólo de la primera categoría: leyendas narrativas.

Según Miller, la narración folklórica de naturaleza religiosa está representada en gran parte por leyendas tradicionales acerca de vírgenes y santos con los cuales una gran parte de los mexicanos están familiarizados.⁴ Según Loomis, el conocimiento de dichas leyendas, si no son oficialmente propagadas por la iglesia, deben ser inevitablemente el producto del papel real que la región tiene en la vida del mexicano, ya sea como producto sincero personal de sus convenciones o como producto del inevitable impacto cultural⁵

Algunas de las leyendas de vírgenes y santos mencionadas por Miller tienen que ver con su milagroso origen, apariciones y la manera especial en que han hecho saber su deseo, las cualidades de vida que se cree que poseen y los milagros que se le atribuyen.

Un ejemplo de este tipo de narraciones es "El Señor del Encino," contada en Texas. Cuenta la leyenda de un borracho que una rama de un árbol le tumbaba el sombrero cada vez que pasaba. Un día, el borracho con coraje cortó el árbol y apareció el Cristo. El novelista mexicano Agustín Yañez, en su libro Yahualica, publicado en México en 1946, hace mención al Señor del Encino en forma paralela a la leyenda contada en Texas. Así nos dice: "Quiere la leyenda sacra otorgarle milagrosos orígenes: el haberse aparecido a un leñador borracho que daba malos tratos a su mujer y convirtió su vida el día que tratando de hacer leña de un encino, descubrió al señor."⁶

El elemento didáctico, de central importancia en la narración de Yañez, no está espresado en la leyenda en Texas, aunque el detalle del leñador borracho habitual lo implica.

Según Miller, la misma leyenda aparece en la clasificación hecha por Efraín Moroto Best de leyendas religiosas peruanas. Un hombre se pone a cortar leña, ve que el árbol sangra, y decide que un imagen religiosa debe hacerse de la madera.⁷ Hay una diferencia básica en que la imagen no fue encontrada intacta en la madera, como el Señor de Encino, sino fue tallada. Otra versión popular mexicana más cercana al Señor de Encino, es el Señor de Misericordia de Marcabalito en que se encuentra ya formado el Cristo en la madera del árbol.

Otros ejemplos serían las versiones de la Virgen de Talpa. Se cuenta que la imagen aparecía en Talpa después de que la recogían de Mascota, municipio de Talpa, y se regresaba sola; que sudaba; que visitaba a su hermana la Virgen de San Juan; o los varios milagros que hacía. El escritor mexicano, Juan Rulfo, incluye un cuento sobre la visita a la Virgen de Talpa en su libro El llano en llamas.

Narrativas acerca del diablo, Miller indica que estas varían entre leyendas locales bien estructuradas y anécdotas acerca de encuentros personales y comentarios como expresiones de creencias más que de leyendas. Sydow, citado por Miller, recomienda que se haga una distinción entre creencias folklóricas y supersticiones.⁸

A veces estas leyendas tienen un tono didáctico, o se añade una moraleja a la narración. Con frecuencia en estas leyendas el diablo hace un pacto con un mortal quien trata de engañarlo de su recompensa a través de un háil ardid. En algunas leyendas, el diablo se presenta como un caballero a caballo con sus poderes sobrenaturales. A veces es un jinete sin cabeza, otras tiene la forma de mujer. Como por ejemplo, un hombre enamorado, par-randero, siguiendo a una mujer en la noche que no la puede alcanzar y cuando voltea se da cuenta de que es el diablo. Esta versión aparece muy similar en Texas y en México.

Tesoros enterrados, algunas leyendas están relacionadas con las creencias folklóricas, y algunas se cuentan con la intención de probar que la creencia es verdadera en la que se basa la

historia. A veces, las leyendas se basan en un sólo incidente. Otras veces, tienen la tendencia de considerar un fenómeno como indicación de la presencia de un tesoro escondido. Ilustran la creencia de fantasmas sobrenaturales guardianes de tesoros. Quizá se pueda entender esta creencia de tesoros enterrados en un país como México, donde le es difícil sobrevivir a la clase económica baja, la cual a veces cree que la única manera de conseguir la seguridad deseada es encontrando un tesoro.

A veces el tesoro esta enterrado con lo que llaman "azoros", cosas espantosas, y el que escarba tiene que contar con eso, especialmente víboras. Por ejemplo, en una leyenda citada por Miller, se dice: "En Michoacán rodean los tesoros escondidos con zumuruta enrollada, y cuando se descubre, ésta se convierte en víboras."⁹ A veces el que saca un tesoro puede ser atacado por un esqueleto y encontrar su muerte.

Parece claro que una parte del peligro asociado con tesoros enterrados tiene que ver con el miedo a los muertos y las consecuencias de entremeterse en sus asuntos y posesiones. Hay varias leyendas similares en Texas y en México, entre ellas se encuentran: "El tesoro encantado", "El tesoro desaparecido", "El jinete y el tesoro", "El tesoro y el esqueleto", y varias otras.

Duendes, aunque en el regreso de los muertos, las ánimas, espíritus y duendes pueden ser discutidos juntos, pues comparten algunas características. También pueden discutirse en una categoría aparte en base a las diferencias en identidad y función que la tradición folklórica les atribuye. A la diferencia de las ánimas y los espíritus, los duendes, sienten los informantes de las leyendas, que no se pueden trazar sus huellas a los de un ser humano vivo una vez. Mientras el ánima puede aventar cosas para atraer la atención con el propósito de solicitar ayuda para pagar su "manda" o deuda. Y los espíritus son antagonistas a los seres vivientes. Los duendes no piden ayuda al ser humano y su malicioso antagonismo parece arbitrario, pero en contraste con el espíritu, el duende puede ayudar.

Existe la creencia de que los duendes son responsables de tirar piedras y quebrar los cántaros de las mujeres que iban a las fuentes por agua. Otras veces, los duendes jalan las sábanas de las camas o tiran a la gente de la cama. Hacen ruidos misteriosos y espantosos. Sacuden las ramas de los árboles. Interfieren en la cocina con la preparación de la comida o en las relaciones conyugales. Por ejemplo en la leyenda "Los duendes en el rancho", citada por Miller, se menciona: "Luego a veces cacheteaban a mi marido y el volteaba y pensaba que era yo. Dice: Volteaba enojado conmigo. Dice: haste que nos desengañamos que eran los duendes y que...los vimos. Dice: Ahora no les tenemos miedo."¹⁰

Las leyendas sobre el regreso de los muertos según Miller se pueden categorizar de acuerdo a la naturaleza de la aparición, o de la misión implicada. En relación con la naturaleza de la aparición, hay dos categorías. Primera categoría, el ánimo o el alma, la cual por lo regular no aparece con sus atributos físicos de una persona viva, y cuya misión es generalmente obtener la ayuda de un ser humano para cumplir una obligación, "manda", incurrida pero no cumplida durante la vida de la persona muerta.

La pregunta: "En parte de Dios te pido, Eres de este mundo o eres del otro?", es muy común en leyendas, tanto en México, como en California y en Texas, según Jovita González.¹¹ Las "mandas: no cumplidas, pueden ser de pago de algún robo; de un pecado cometido durante la vida; de una penitencia que debe cumplirse; o revelan el lugar de dinero escondido, dinero que debe pagar sus deudas, y lo que quede se lo debe dejar la persona que ayuda a pagar dicha "manda". En estas leyendas el encuentro con las ánimas o espíritus puede causar una enfermedad permanente o hasta la muerte.

Segunda categoría, los espíritus, podrán considerarse fantasmas, cuyo papel objetivo es predominantemente antagonístico hacia los humanos. Hacen sentir su presencia por medio de ruidos misteriosos y actos fastidiosos que pueden incluir abusos físicos menores.

Tercera categoría, el cadáver viviente, es una aparición descriptible natural que actúa con los vivos de una manera perfectamente normal. Desaparece generalmente de una manera misteriosa. Luego se descubre que ya ha estado muerto por algún tiempo; y cuya misión se explica mejor por la vaga compulsión de aparecer periódicamente en lugares y tiempos específicos, como en el aniversario o lugar del accidente en que murió.

Hay varias leyendas de cadáveres vivientes tanto en México como en Texas. Juan Sauvageau en su colección de leyendas de Texas, Stories That Must Not Die, incluye "Bailando con un fantasma", y "La muerta y el chofer del taxi". En la primera, un joven en un baile, se pasa la noche bailando con una chica. El quiere acompañarla a su casa, pero ella no lo permite aunque si le da su dirección. Unos días después, el joven va a buscarla a su casa, sólo para enterarse de que la chica ha estado muerta por algún tiempo. En la segunda, un chofer de un taxi lleva a una joven señora a cierto lugar. Esta no tiene dinero y le da un cheque para que lo cobre en la tienda de su madre al día siguiente. Al cobrar el cheque, el chofer se entera que su pasajera de la noche anterior fue una muerta.

Cuarta categoría, la llorona, puede incluir varias de las características de las categorías, o tipos, ya mencionados, en su papel como sirena, madre afligida buscando a sus hijos que ella misma mató, o simplemente una aparición espantosa.

Hay varios estudios sobre la llorona. Betty Leddy en Arizona en su estudio de cuarenta y dos versiones, sugiere tres tipos: la sirena; la mujer afligida; y la mujer peligrosa para los niños.¹² Fernando Horcasitas Pimentel en México en su estudio de cuarenta y ocho versiones, distingue tres tipos: la mujer condenada por Dios por matar a sus hijos; la Malinche, amante interpretador de Cortés; y la Matlacihuatl, seductora de hombres.

Bernice Goodspeed en Mexican Tales, presenta a la Malinche como la sirena o seductora de hombres. Según Miller, aunque aparezcan ciertos rasgos históricos de Malinche, o mitológicos de Matlacihuatl en La Llorona, los informantes de La Llorona no distinguen los tres diferentes aspectos que los nombres sugieren.¹³

El origen de La Llorona no ha sido establecido

satisfactoriamente. Unos ven algunos orígenes indígenas, otros ven conexiones europeas. Virginia R.R. de Mendoza en un artículo sobre La Llorona, ofrece material que podía relacionarse con la leyenda que aparece en Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España de Fray Bernadino de Sahagún.¹⁴

Ray John de Aragón indica que en la mitología indígena americana, uno puede encontrar rastros de una mujer llorando y buscando a sus hijos. Los aztecas en sus mitos antiguos relataron la historia de Ciuacoatl, una diosa llorando. Ella capturaba niños de sus cunas y los mataba, rondaba las calles de Tenochtitlán en la noche con sus lamentosos gemidos, prediciendo guerras y miseria. La diosa azteca aparecía de blanco con su cara siniestra pintada mitad roja y mitad negra. Usaba un tocado en la cabeza de plumas.¹⁵

Otros escritores se ajustan a la creencia de que La Llorona se deriva de la vida de la Malinche, princesa indígena que ayudó a Cortez en la conquista del Imperio Azteca, traicionando a su gente. En realidad, la Malinche pertenecía al grupo de indios coatzacoalcos. Y este grupo nunca fue subyugado por los aztecas.

Otros escritores dicen que proviene del siglo XVI de los colonistas españoles que llamaban a los espíritus "almas que andan penando". Se decía que esas almas habían sufrido una muerte terrible. Entonces La Llorona sería un espíritu atormentado vagando por la tierra en busca de paz. La gente rezaría para redimir su alma.

De cualquier forma, según Aragón, la Llorona ha sobrevivido más de cuatro siglos y permanece tan popular ahora como antes cuando los eventos se llevaron a cabo. La leyenda ha tomado cambios dramáticos a través de los siglos y muchas comunidades hispánicas orgullosamente la reclama como parte de su folclore. Pero la leyenda vive tanto en Texas como en México y en otras partes de habla hispana.

La leyenda cuenta los amores de un joven campesino, rústico con un hombre rico que rehúsa casarse con ella. Ella tiene hijos ilegítimos y luego los mata. En México se dice que los ahoga en un pozo. En Texas a veces los ahoga en un arroyo, a veces, se dice que los mata con una daga. Otras veces se dice que sus hijos están habrientos y él los mata para salvarlos de la miseria, o los mata para quitárselos al padre. De cualquier manera los busca gimiendo lamentablemente tanto en México como en Texas.

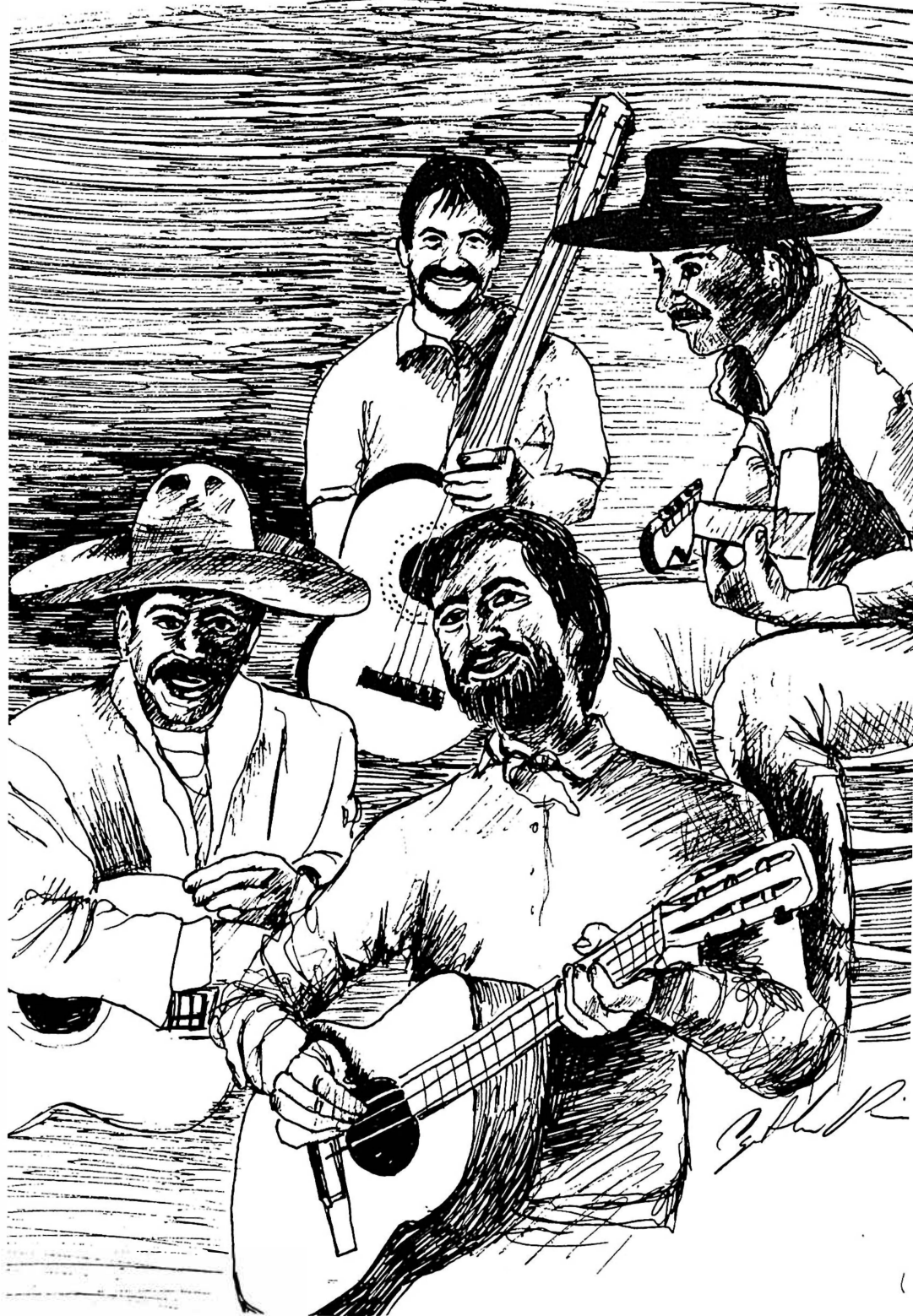
The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Aurelio M. Espinosa, The Folklore of Spain in the American Southwest, (Oklahoma, The University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), p.67.
2. Espinosa, p.67.
3. Espinosa, p.68.
4. Elaine K. Miller, Mexican Folk Narrative from the Los Angeles Area, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), p.3.

5. C.G. Loomis, "Legend and Folklore", California Folklore Quarterly, 2 (1948), p.279.
6. Miller, pp.3-4.
7. Miller, p.4.
8. Miller, pp.33-34.
9. Miller, p.116.
10. Miller, p.153.
11. Jovita Gonzalez, "Folklore of the Texas-Mexican Vaquero", Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, 6 (1927), p. 19.
12. Betty Leddy, "La Llorona in Southern Arizona", Western Folklore, p.7 (1948) p.277.
13. Miller, p.64.
14. Virginia R.R. Mendoza, "La llorona", Previsión y Seguiridad, 14 (1950), p.225.
15. Ray John de Aragón, Legend of La Llorona, (Las Vegas, New Mexico: The Pan American Publishing Co., 1980), p.4.





by

Jorge Green Huie

Nuestro corrido representa una forma métrica netamente tradicional y de origen indudablemente medieval. En su esencia, consiste de versos de arte menor, generalmente octosilabos, con rima asonante en los pares. Esta poesia se encuentra en todas partes del mundo hispánico--España, Hispanoamérica, Filipinas, las comunidades sefardies de la Cuenca del Mediterráneo y también en Cataluña y Portugal. (Por consiguiente, debe considerarse una tradición no hispánica sino ibérica.) Suele llamarse "romance", su nombre medieval, pero en México y Chile se conoce como "corrido", un nombre que tuvo su origen en Andalucía, según Menéndez Pidal, el gran folklorista español.¹ Hablando estrictamente, el corrido se diferencia levemente del romance por estar dividido en cuartetos y por cambiar la rima, generalmente asonante, con cada estrofa nueva, mientras que el romance consiste de una larga tirada de octosilabos con monorrima asonante en los versos pares y de una extensión variable que depende del tema.

El corrido y el romance también se parecen mucho a ciertas formas métricas harto conocidas en la historia literaria de la España medieval; pero este hecho se confunde por ciertas diferencias superficiales respecto a la manera de representar tales versos: mientras que nuestra edad moderna prefiere la convención de octosilabos con rima en cada segundo verso, épocas anteriores publicaban esta poesia en versos hexadecasílabos con marcada cesura después de la octava sílaba de cada verso y con rima en todos los versos. Siguiendo esta convención que es la del manuscrito del Siglo XIV, el Poema de Mio Cid suele representarse en versos largos no totalmente regulares que tienden a ser de dieciséis sílabas claramente divididas en dos hemistiquios octosilábicos y con rima en cada verso. Si cambiamos su forma y escribimos cada hemistiquio octosilábico como verso aparte se convierte del texto del Poema de Mio Cid en romance. De la misma manera, los alejandrinos de la cuaderna vía en obras como Los milagros de Nuestra Señora de Gonzalo de Berceo también manifiestan una marcada cesura. Representados hemistiquio por hemistiquio, nos presentarían octavillas de heptasílabos con rima en los versos pares, una forma no tan diferente de la del corrido o romance, y de hecho las sextillas y octavillas con rima en los versos pares son relativamente comunes en los corridos mexicanos.

Esta forma métrica de octosilabos con rima en los versos pares también se encuentra en algunas de las jarchas del siglo X. Por consiguiente, el corrido o romance representa una de las formas poéticas más antiguas en existencia, siendo literalmente milenaria.

Sin embargo, lo más notable del corrido seguramente no son sus formas métricas sino los valores culturales que encierra: aquí también encontramos algo que tampoco ha cambiado mucho en mil años. Uno de los grandes temas del corrido o romance es el

individuo que lucha por enderezar o vengar lo que considera una injusticia. Un sinfín de protagonistas de romance y corridos corresponden exactamente a este arquetipo: el conde Dirlos,² Bernardo del Carpio,³ Fernán González,⁴ el Cid,⁵ Hernán Cortés,⁶ Gregorio Cortez,⁷ y Jacinto Treviño.⁸ En cada caso, el hombre que se sabe macho está dispuesto a morir, si es necesario, por hacer valer sus derechos. En cada caso, el protagonista del poema no es un personaje ficticioso sino alguien de carne y hueso que realmente vivió" y sufrió" en este valle de lágrimas. No solamente esto: el protagonista de estas poesías es muy humano y muy real también en el sentido de no ser todo un paladín, todo un hombrón ejemplar. Mas bien suele tener sus tachas, que a veces son muy notables: suele ser terco, inflexible, impráctico y orgulloso hasta el extremo. Quizás en esto, justamente, estriba su grandeza.

Uno de los valores culturales implícitos en el corrido y el romance es una actitud muy especial y muy hispánica o ibérica hacia la autoridad: la autoridad constituida no se respeta por ley sino al nivel personal y solo en cuanto se considere justa. Vez tras vez tras vez el protagonista del romance o corrido se rebela, o amenaza hacerlo, contra un rey o hasta contra un emperador. El conde Dirlos, que regresa de una cruzada para encontrar que Carlomagno ha autorizado que se case la bella esposa del conde con un infante le dice al emperador que se calle. Bernardo del Carpio se presenta armado de manera amenazante ante el rey de León exigiéndole que ponga en libertad a su padre. Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, el Cid, se independiza del rey Alfonso VI de Castilla para convertirse en príncipe de Valencia. Hernán Cortés, una de las pocas figuras históricas de época colonial que han entrado en los corridos y romances, nos presenta este arquetipo por antonomasia: se rebela contra el gobernador de Cuba, contra su anfitrión Moctezuma, contra Pánfilo Narváez, el representante del gobernador de Cuba, y, según el folklore, contra el mismo Carlos V asiéndole el brazo y llamándole la atención a las muchas tierras que le ha ganado en América:

Asíole del brazo al rey;
puesta la mano invencible
en el puño de su espada,
aquestas razones dice:

"Vuestra Majestad, señor,
escuche a Cortés, y mire
que con la capa que cubre
y con la espada que ciñe

"le ha ganado mas provincias
(que por mí gobierna y rige)
que le dejaron ciudades
su padre y abuelo insignes.⁹

Gregorio Cortez, Jorge Treviño y otros protagonistas de corridos sudtejanos, quienes matan a cherifes y rinchos para hacer valer sus derechos, también corresponden exactamente a este arquetipo, indudablemente una herencia hispánica.

El segundo valor hispánico que encierra nuestro corrido es

la familia unida, lo que se muestra en varios contextos: (1) la constancia matrimonial o su ausencia que se considera una traición imperdonable, especialmente en la mujer y (2) las relaciones entre hermanos, entre padres e hijos, entre tíos y sobrinos, entre compadres o entre padrinos y ahijados. Por ejemplo, la constancia matrimonial del conde Dirlos y su esposa, aun después de quince años de ausencia del marido, es legendaria. Las relaciones entre Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, el Cid, y Ximena, su esposa, son también ejemplares. El caso contrario de la traición de la esposa figura entre los temas comunes del romance y del corrido. "Martina", la esposa infiel matada por su marido mexicano, es solo uno de muchos ejemplos posibles.

Hincadita de rodillas
nomás seis tiros le dio,
y el amigo del caballo
ni por la silla volvió.¹⁰

No menos comunes son las relaciones ejemplares entre padres e hijos. Entre los casos obvios citamos el amor del Cid por sus hijas. Las aparentemente extrañas relaciones entre del Cid y el rey de Castilla se entienden mejor tomando en cuenta que Alfonso VI era padrino de su boda y tío de su esposa Ximena.

Huelga notar que en el caso de Gregorio Cortez lo que le causa rebelarse es ver a su hermano Román herido por el cherife. La bravura que muestra a partir de este momento se deriva muy directamente de la injusticia hecha a su hermano por el cherife. Jacinto Treviño, quien también se hace enemigo mortal de los odiados rinchés por la muerte de su hermano, representa un caso perfectamente análogo. Y los dos protagonistas de corridos fronterizos en esto guardan cierta analogía con la figura legendaria de Mudarra, el moro expósito, quien el los romances medievales llega a tierras de Castilla con el fin de vengar a sus hermanos traicionados por el tío.

Entre otros muchos valores culturales figura el terruño, el amor por la patria chica. Hay corridos en alabanza de prácticamente todos los estados de México. Y en la tradición antigua uno se acuerda de la gran afición que guardaba el Cid por Castilla. En el Sur de Texas algunos corridos cantan las alabanzas de la frontera y se refieren a la frontera entre Texas y Tamaulipas, y no la de entre México y los Estados Unidos. Entre los corridos recientemente coleccionados en Brownsville encontramos las dos siguientes estrofas:

Fronteras de Tamaulipas,
¿quién no las conoce bien?,
donde los hombres se burlan
de la muerte y de la ley.

...

Matamoros, Tamaulipas,
nunca dejás de ser
la ciudad más bullanguera,
el puerto de mi querer.¹¹

Además de los aspectos netamente tradicionales del corrido, estos versos de arte menor son también muy notables por su versatilidad. Son a la vez antiguos y modernos: cantan indistintamente o las hazañas de un héroe de la Edad Media o los últimos acontecimientos de nuestros días. Combinan todos los tres géneros literarios de los antiguos: la epopeya, la lírica y el drama; se narra con emoción presentando los acontecimientos importantes de manera dramática dejando que hablen los personajes. Si son populares en su origen, no pocos poetas cultos han escrito romances o corridos desde el Siglo de Oro hasta nuestra época contemporánea: Lope de Vega, Góngora, Sor Juana, Teralla y Landa, Rubén Darío, Antonio Machado, Alfonso Reyes. Una larga sección de Martín Fierro tiene la forma de un corrido. Lo mismo se emplean estos versos para una epístola en el caso de Sor Juana o Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda o para narrar en tercera persona.

El corrido representa una tradición de gran valor, una tradición literalmente milenaria.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Notas

1. Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Los romances tradicionales. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958 pág. 22.
2. Antonio G. Solalinde. Cien romances escogidos. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958, págs. 25-49.
3. Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Flor nueva de romances viejos. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958, págs. 67-84.
4. Luis Santullana. Romancero español. Madrid: Aguilar, 1968, págs. 361-383.
5. Menéndez Pidal. Flor nueva. págs. 131-199.
6. Winston A. Reynolds. Romancero de Hernán Cortés. Madrid: Alcalá, 1967.
7. y 8. Américo Paredes. "With His Pistol in His Hand", A Border Ballad and Its Hero. Austin y Londres: University of Texas Press, 1975.
9. Reynolds. Obra citada, pág. 63.
10. Gilberto Vélez. Corridos mexicanos. México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, S.A., 1982. pág. 86.
11. George K. Green. "The Corridos of Mexico and South Texas: Modern Variations on Medieval Themes," en More Studies in Brownsville History, ed. Milo Kearney. Brownsville. Universidad Panamericana de Brownsville, 1989, pág. 78.

Retablos for Patron Saints' Images

by

Brian Robertson

One of the richest traditions in South Texas and northern Mexico is found in the retablos that decorate a number of homes and churches.

Retablos depict the patron saints of families or individuals. Out of economic need, these paintings were quite often done on tin, which took the oil paint and yet was a very inexpensive material. More expensive retablos appear on copper, especially those from the 18th century. Those on the sheet tin were more often than not used in household altars.

Mexico has long been known for the craft of decorative tin work and the beginning of this talent can be traced to the retablos.

This rich tradition has combined with yet another aspect common to Texas history. Towns and locations in Texas often took their names from saints which might have been favored by early settlers. Often a river, settlement or mission would receive its name from the saint whose feast day was being observed when Spanish explorers reached the spot.

The Roman Catholic calendar, for example, lists the various saints and assigns them a specific day. It is important to note, however, that not all saints' names were taken from the Spanish tradition. An example might be the Polish settlement which was named for St. Hedwig.

The retablos contain a number of saints and spiritual figures whose names have been associated with Texas locations. Many related to the Brownsville area, such as "Dolores," known by various names that include Santa Maria, the namesake of the Cameron County town. She is pictured with a dagger in her breast, as Simeon predicted in Luke 2:35, "And thy heart a sword of sorrow shall pierce." The name Dolores also shows up in south Texas in the mid-1700s as the first Spanish colony and settlement on the north side of the Rio Grande River.

The town of San Diego is represented. The Duval County town was made famous by the so-called "Plan of San Diego" in the South Texas Border Wars of 1915-1916. The name is the Spanish version of Saint Didacus, who lived in Alcalá, Spain, in the mid-15th century. His name is sometimes confused with Santiago (St. James), but the two names are not interchangeable.

San Juan is not the namesake of the Rio Grande Valley town. That honor goes to John Closner, sheriff and businessman, whose plantation was named the San Juan Plantation by his wife.

San Ignacio was the 15th century founder of the Society of Jesus or Jesuits, who played an important role as missionaries in New Spain. The town of San Ignacio in Zapata County bears his name.

Perhaps one of the most interesting figures associated with South Texas is Santiago, remembered here in the Brazos Santiago

name associated with Padre Island and the Boca Chica area. Santiago was a contraction of Santo Iago, the ancient Spanish rendering of Saint James the Greater, one of the twelve apostles. Santiago is supposed to have appeared on horseback to lead the Spanish armies to victory against the Moors. From that, then, comes the name of our neighboring city in Mexico as well as that name connected with the coast of South Texas.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 17 January, 1990.

by

Jean L. Epperson

Thomas M. Thompson, a native of England, lived in Matamoros while sailing for the Mexican Navy. He was a thorn in the side of Texans prior to and during the Texas revolution. Reversing his loyalties after the battle of San Jacinto, he aided influential Texans in escaping from a Mexican prison and then he settled for a time in Texas.

Quarrelsome, boastful, meddlesome, unprepossessing of appearance and always in trouble were some of the derogatory remarks used by Thompson's contemporaries to describe him. It was also said he was striving to make a fortune by fair means or foul.¹ Time and circumstances were to prove that he certainly had an aggressive disposition but that he was literate, expressed himself well and was an able seaman.

While sailing out of New Orleans as a mate on the J.W. Zacharie ships, Thompson became an American citizen. He next owned a tavern on the New Orleans levee, then he joined the Mexican Navy and was commissioned a second lieutenant. He later explained that being poor and having a family to support, Mexico had offered more profitable employment.²

A number of Anglos sailed with the Mexican Navy when Admiral David Porter, an ex-United States Naval Officer, commanded it between 1826 and 1829.³ A few of these ex-Mexican marines came to Texas later but never encountered the animosities that Thompson did, not being quite so aggressive.

During the summer of 1830, Captain Thompson confiscated a cargo of contraband tobacco from Captain Nathaniel Lewis, on the schooner Hetta in Santiago Bay.³

In the summer of 1835, Captain Thompson commanded the schooner of war Correo de Mexicano as an escort for Mexican supply vessels to Copano Bay. The 31-ton Correo was formerly the Henrietta which had been a coastwise trader between New Orleans, Aransas and Matamoros. From Copano Bay, Thompson was sent to Galveston Bay to support Captain Antonio Tenorio at Fort Anahuac and to act in liaison with the local customs collector to enforce revenue laws. In his spare time he was to make an accurate chart of the coast.⁵

When Thompson arrived at Anahuac he found that Tenorio had abandoned the Fort, after a skirmish with a group of men led by William B. Travis, and was on his way to San Antonio. On July 25, Thompson wrote to Tenorio to return to Anahuac as the people were friendly, certainly a far cry from the truth. The next day he issued a proclamation to the people, telling them not to maintain a militia company and not to attend public meetings, thus alienating them further. He finally threatened to burn the town.⁶

In July, while cruising in Galveston Bay, Captain Thompson fell in with a sloop chartered out of Anahuac by A.C. Allen, A.J.

Yates and I.N. Moreland. Over the next few days Thompson confiscated the sloop as a tender for the Correo. He also made statements to Allen, Yates, Moreland and to Captain Pettit of the schooner Bravo, which antagonized them. Thompson said that he was the master of the coast from Matamoros to the Sabine; that he had declared a blockade of the port of the Brazos and would take all vessels entering there as prizes; that the steam boat Cayuga was also a prize and he intended to take her at the first opportunity; and he offered one thousand dollars reward for the apprehension and delivery of William B. Travis to him. He further boasted that he would hang Travis at his yard arm.⁷

Tenorio never returned, and meetings of discontented citizens were held and resolutions were passed against Captain Thompson and his schooner-of-war.⁸

Captain Thompson remained in the vicinity of Anahuac much of July and all of August waiting for a reply from Tenorio. Finally, he left for the mouth of the Brazos River to carry out his threatened blockade of that estuary. On the morning of September 1, the brig Tremont was outward bound for Pensacola with a load of lumber. When she cleared the bar at Velasco, Thompson seized her. The Tremont's master was unable to present a manifest of his cargo, and Thompson declared the ship a prize, put a crew aboard her and ordered them to take the ship to Vera Cruz. Anticipating the action, a group of armed Texans assembled at the mouth of the river, boarded the Steamer Laura with the intent of retaking the Tremont. Seeing the threat, Thompson recalled his crew, and a skirmish followed between the Laura, aided by the schooner San Felipe, and the Correo. An hour of heavy cannon and rifle fire left the Correo's guns dismantled, most of the crew wounded and Thompson hit twice in the legs by rifle shots. Heading for the open sea, Thompson hoped to make it to Matamoros, but was apprehended the next day. The Texans happily discovered that Thompson did not have on board a copy of his commission in the Mexican Navy. Despite a packet of official orders in his possession, it was decided that Thompson and his crew were pirates, and, because the San Felipe was of American registry, they were transported to New Orleans for trial in an American federal court. The trial, taking on the aspects of a comic opera, was highlighted by the opposing attorneys throwing books, ink wells and insults at one another. The disgusted judge released the men and officers of the Correo and gave the attorneys jail time.⁹

Thompson was subsequently rearrested on charges brought by his creditors. Overcoming these difficulties, he left New Orleans and returned to Matamoros and the Mexican Navy. He was reassigned as second in command to Captain José María Espino of the brig-of-war Bravo, the rechristened Montezuma, stationed at Brazos Santiago.¹⁰

The Texas war ship Invincible under Captain Jeremiah Brown arrived off Brazos Santiago on April 3, 1836. The disabled Bravo was discovered just outside the bar where she had lost her rudder during the crossing. Captain Brown decided on a ruse in order to learn more about his enemy. He raised the flag of the United States and sent Lieutenant William H. Levine, dressed as an American Naval Officer, to the Bravo. In an authoritative manner,

Levine inquired as to why the American consul at Matamoros had been harrassed and why American shipping had been subjected to capricious changes of port regulations.

Lieutenant Thomas M. Thompson was supervising the shipping of a new rudder for the Bravo and Captain Espino sent him aboard the Invincible to make arrangements for the alleged American officer to go ashore. When the Texans recognized their old adversary, Thompson, they knew their masquerade was over. They placed him in confinement and gave the Bravo a broadside. Captain Espino returned the fire and clamped Lieutenant Levine in the brig.

The engagement lasted for about an hour, and neither ship sustained appreciable damage. The battle was broken off when a sizable brig was spotted on the horizon. Captain Brown approached the advancing vessel for a showdown. She was the American brig Pocket, and she was carrying contraband cargo and a false manifest. Brown seized the Pocket and took the vessel, her crew and passengers, along with Lieutenant Thompson to Galveston as prizes of war.¹¹

Thompson was released by the Texans after the battle of San Jacinto and he returned to Matamoros and his family.¹²

The Independence, under Captain George Wheelright, was returning to Texas from New Orleans when she encountered two Mexican blockade vessels on April 17, 1837, off the mouth of the Brazos River. On board the Independence was William H. Wharton, the recently recognized Texas Minister to the United States, and other important passengers. The Mexican ships, the Vencedor del Alamo under Captain D. Blas Godines and the Libertador under Captain D.F.R. Davis, captured the Independence and took her with captain, crew and passengers to Matamoros. The men were confined in an adobe prison.¹³

Captain Thompson decided it was time to improve his circumstances once again and made a deal with the Texans to help them escape. His price was a commission in the Texas Navy and money with which to move his family from Matamoros.¹⁴ Thompson apparently upheld his end of the bargain, but due to a leak of plans to the Mexicans, he had to leave for Texas in July, prior to the prisoners' escape.¹⁵ The prisoners were still successful in gaining their freedom, with the help of Father Michael Muldoon, the ex-Vicar General of Texas. He gave a priest's habit to William Wharton and in this disguise, Wharton walked by the prison guards and made good his escape.¹⁶

Thompson was commissioned a lieutenant in the Texas Navy but was not received by the naval staff with enthusiasm. Commodore Henry L. Thompson hastened to put an advertisement in the Houston Telegraph and Texas Register saying that he was not 'Mexican Thompson,' although he could have been qualified for the sobriquet as he had been in the Mexican Navy.¹⁷ A few weeks later, Thomas had an answering letter to the editor published in the paper, but the nickname, "Mexican Thompson," was ever after appended to his name.¹⁸

On February 28, 1838, the Secretary of the Navy, William M. Shepherd, appointed Thompson Commander of the recently established Navy Yard at Galveston.¹⁹

He was soon to be the center of controversy once again. The 'eye of the storm' seemed the natural position in the scheme of things for Thompson. Complaints and desertions prompted the Navy Department to send John G. Tod, naval advisor to Sam Houston, to the Navy Yard in May to inventory the public stores and to check the books. Tod complained that Thompson was not helpful. He absented himself first to go to Houston, and then to go to Velasco, and did not provide papers or account books for inspection.²⁰ Thompson was instructed to make a detailed report to the Navy Department on the affairs of the Naval Yard since he had taken command of it.

In his written report of May 18, 1838, Thompson described the Yard at the time he took command as an open space of ground which had been staked out but not fenced. The only building was the one known as the "armory," and it was being used as a bedroom for the carpenters. He began fencing the yard and collecting the marine stores which he said were strewn all about the Island by the heavy gale which had just desolated the place. A house for the Commandant was apparently built. He delayed the launching of the schooner Correo until better weather and began the fitting out and equipping of the brig Potomac.²¹

The Potomac was the receiving ship for the Navy Yard and carried a complement of 28 men in early 1838. Approximately 77 men were on the ship's roll for the year 1838, twenty-four of whom deserted during March, April, May and June.²²

Thompson swore that he had never acted without the consent and knowledge of his superiors, had never compromised the credit of the government, had never given government provisions to the pilots and had never used the services of the blacksmith for his private affairs, except for one or two small jobs.²³

The officers and men of the Navy were disbanded in October by orders of Governor Sam Houston. Fifteen marines were detailed to provide protection for the Navy Yard as a large quantity of arms and powder was deposited there.²⁵

A voluntary martial organization called the "Galveston Guards" had been formed for emergency contingencies by the citizens of Galveston. Benjamin L. Cole, described as a bold and dashing fellow, was elected captain of the company. Joshua C. Shaw was elected first lieutenant, N.B. Yard, second lieutenant and J.K. Beaumont, orderly sergeant. Many active and influential citizens of the city were members of the organization.

Thompson was said to have made disparaging remarks about the people of Galveston. He then sent a report to the Secretary of the Navy about an alleged infraction of the law by Cole and his friends, and the government issued an order for their arrest. Enraged, Cole organized a posse and one night extracted Thompson by force from his home. Placed astride a rail, Thompson was carried through the town followed by a jeering and howling mob. Tortured and threatened, Thompson was nonetheless finally released. Sometime after this event, Thompson insulted Patrick C. Jack on a steamboat, while ascending Buffalo Bayou, and was knocked overboard by the indignant Jack. Thompson was universally disliked, and the treatment he received from Cole and his friends, while not approved by the authorities, was not generally

condemned.²⁶

After the mob episode in Galveston, Thompson moved to Quintana where he owned six lots encompassing four acres of land.²⁷ He had also received a land grant of 1280 acres in Brazoria County.²⁸

Thompson was granted a contract to carry the mail between Quintana and Galveston during 1839 and 1840. Complaints were registered with the post office department, alleging irregularities in the weekly transportation of the mail.²⁹ Thompson's antagonists were still active.

Nothing has been learned about Captain Thompson after 1840. It is believed that he left Texas and returned to Mexico, probably discouraged by the persistence of his enemies in Texas. Several rumors have circulated; one that he became a beachcomber in Tabasco, and another that he opened a bar near Vera Cruz and was slain in a pistol duel following an argument with a Texan.³⁰

Liberty County Historical Commission

Endnotes

1. Charles W. Hayes, Galveston-History of the Island and the City (Austin: Jenkins Garrett Press, 1974), I, p.392-393; Alexander Dienst, "The Navy of the Republic of Texas," Texas Historical Association Quarterly (January 1909), p.166.

2. Jim Dan Hill, The Texas Navy (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1962), p. 24-25; Telegraph and Texas Register October 18, 1837.

3. David Porter applied to Stephen F. Austin for a land grant on Galveston Bay, at what today is known as Smith Point in Chamberscounty, and was advised that the land as not available. Some of the ex-Mexican Navy men who came to Texas were; John Grant Tod, Commodore Henry L. Thompson, etc.

4. Contraband confiscated on the schooner Hetta, Goliad, 7-2-1830, 132:0136-55; also Bexar 7-5-1830, 132:0306-17, Bexar Archives, Barker History Library, Austin, Texas.

5. Hill, p.25.

6. John A. Jenkins, Papers of the Texas Revolution (Austin: Presidial Press, 1973G) I, 376-378, Thomas M. Thompson to Antonio Tenorio, July 25, 1835, Port of Anahuac; Proclamation to the Citizens of Anahuac; Proclamation to the Citizens of Anahuac, July 26, 1835, Pinart Collection, Bancroft Library. John Clay translation, Wallisville Heritage Park, Wallisville, Texas.

7. Jenkins, Papers of the Texas Revolution I, 376-378; Deposition of A.C. Allen, Mexican Foreign Office Archives, Seccion 5, Caja 16, Expediente 8732.

8. Eugene C. Barker, ed., The Austin Papers (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1926), III, 100.

9. Hill, p.26-31.

10. Hill, p.50-51.

11. Hill, p.50-52.

12. Hill, p.51.

13. Hill, 75-80.

14. Telegraph and Texas Register, October 18, 1837, p.2, Hill, p.79.
15. Gifford White, 1840 Citizens of Texas, Land Grants, vol.I (Austin: Ingmire Publications, 1983), p.249.
16. Abner J. Strobel, The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County, Texas. Houston: Privately published by T.L. Smith, Jr., 1958; Hill, 79.
17. Telegraph and Texas Register, Houston, October 4, 1837. There had been some confusions between Thomas and Henry L. Thompson. See Ephraim D.Adams, British Diplomatic Correspondence Concerning the Republic of Texas, pp. 245-249, 251, 252, 263-264.
18. Telegraph and Texas Register, Houston, October 18, 1837, p.2.
19. Thomas H. Thompson to J.G. Todd, Galveston, May 18, 1838, John Grant Tod Papers, Resenberg Library, Galveston, Texas. Tod was at this time Naval Agent supervising the purchase and equipment of naval vessels; Linda Ericson Devereaux, The Texas Navy (Nacogdoches: Ericson Brooks, 1983), p. 2,11,39,50.
20. John G.Tod to Sec of the Navy, May 7, 1838, John Grant Tod Papers, Rosenberg Library, Galveston; Sam Houston to J.G. Tod, 1st and 3rd of May, 1838, John Grant Tod Papers, Rosenberg Library, Galveston.
21. Thompson to Todd, Galveston, May 18, 1838. The Correo mentioned. Probably was the Correo de Tobasco, a 65-ton Mexican mail schooner taken as a prize August 12, 1837 near Tobasco.
22. Devereau, 4a, p.86-89.
23. Thompson to Todd, Galveston, May 18, 1838.
24. Service Records of Francis B.Wright and Thomas M. Thompson, Navy Records of the Republic, State ARchives, Austin, Texas.
25. Secretary of the Navy to Sam Houston, Telegraph and Texas Register, November 21, 1838.
26. Charles W. Hayes, Galveston (Austin: Jenkins Garrett Press, 1974), p. 392, 393.
27. Brazoria County Tax Rolls, 1839, 1840, microfilm, Clayton Genealogical Library, Houston. A William Thompson was taxed for the property in 1841, perhaps a son of Thomas.
28. Gifford White, 1840 Land Grants, vol.I (Austin: Ingmire Publications, 1983), p.249.
29. James M. Day, ed., Texas Post Office Papers 1839-1840 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1967), p. 90, 135, 148, 174, 226.
30. Hill, p. 119; Personal communication with Mike Davis, maritime historian, October, 1990, Galveston.

by

Roberto Mario Salmòn

On February 27, 1850, before the U.S. Senate, 31st Congress, Enrique Sánchez and some one hundred residents of the Valley of the Rio Grande respectfully submitted that the Congress establish the Territory of the Rio Grande. The petitioners desired that the present laws of Texas, excepting such as related to real property, "may be provided for said Territory, until others can be enacted, by our own legislature."¹ It proved to be neither the first nor the last call for separate territorial status; before and way after 1850, Valley residents have participated in several calls for a Republic of the Rio Grande. The separatist ideal does not oddly jump out of Valley history. It clearly has its place, its power, and its interpretations in the human affairs of the Brownsville-Matamoros region. That many actors took part in the "jigsaw puzzle" of South Texas separatist movements speaks to the revolutionary spirit of South Texas society and culture. Thus, an examination of one of these actors, Antonio Canales Rosillo, with his interests and predilections, will give us a basis for a deeper understanding.

It is extremely difficult, however, to understand and evaluate the thoughts and values of men like Antonio Canales Rosillo. In the Rio Grande Valley of Texas there were, and are, a bewildering array of customs and values that seem strange and illogical to outsiders. It is not an oversimplification to say that Antonio Canales was a product of his times. Like many *norteños*, he preferred the dispersion of powers inherent in a federal structure of government and fought for such a system through much of his life. He believed in the separation-of-powers cause of the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and the structure of a bicameral legislative process with an upper and lower house. Still, he was not tied up in a political-diplomatic straitjacket. He understood that support for his philosophy could come from many different sources. Thus, he seems to have played the Texas/Mexico game well and complied with the ever changing rules only insofar as they related to his philosophy and his northern homeland. Canales was unwavering in this regard, enabling him to continue his efforts whenever he encountered opposition. He was politically astute about a South Texas/Northern Mexico connection and was "out front" in any movement toward this end.

Yet there remain few areas of Mexican history more misunderstood or sanctified than the Federalist/Centralist struggle in northern Mexico. There have been certain inventions built up around the struggle, but one of most interesting is the ever present idea of secession from Mexico. Indeed, scholarly assumptions and values about separatist movements in South Texas/Northern Mexico, beginning with Herbert Howe Bancroft, carry on much the same thinking. Mexican historian Josefina Zoraida Vásquez writes that it is "wishful thinking" for these feelings to be so

deeply ingrained in the minds of some U.S. historians.² Moreover, when contemporaries like George Fisher, who was writing in 1840, claimed that nothing short of northern Mexican independence "will secure the happiness of citizens in that area," that too is wishful thinking. Fisher declares to his Excellency Jesús Cárdenas on April 25, 1840, "declare yourselves at once absolutely independent from Mexico and then you will not be in want of auxiliaries to sustain you. Our very government will look upon your people in a different view, no longer as a party or faction of Mexico...But as a Nation..."³ Let us tentatively examine how such rhetoric influenced Antonio Canales.

Antonio Canales Rosillo (1802-1854) and his wife María del Refugio Molano moved to Camargo, Mexico in the late 1820s. Natives of Monterrey, confident, with Canales trained as a lawyer, they were at the beginning of a brilliant career. Starting in the militia unit of Camargo, Canales moved up through the ranks and became a general of federal forces in northern Mexico. He later served as the Tamaulipas surveyor-general, and interim governor of his native state. While he never rose to that office on a permanent basis, his sons Servando and Antonio each served several terms as governors of Tamaulipas. A statesperson by profession, Canales was to play a crucial role in Mexican affairs between 1839-1850.

As understood by some U.S. historians, Canales pursued his political career with everything "but talent." Joseph Nance writes that Canales was a small man of brown complexion. His eyes, according to a German businessman who met him in Houston, were as false as those of a mustang. One contemporary described him as being a man with a smile and intelligent expression of bearing, while another observer noted that Canales usually did not strike one favorably at first, but that upon acquaintance with him it was impossible to remain uninterested, especially his liberal ideals.⁴

As a military leader, Nance writes that Canales proved to be "incompetent and fearful."⁵ Moreover, because Canales believed in intuitive perception and sought to foresee future events by reading his horoscope, this points to his lack of leadership skills. For example, in preparation for the December 1839 siege of Matamoros, Canales is said to have ended up playing a little game with himself, since his horoscope was malfunctioning. He took a piece of paper, divided it into four sections, upon which he drew a lion, an eagle a ship, and a dove. Then without looking, he pricked the sheet of paper with a pin. If the eagle or lion were pricked, he would launch a full-scale attack upon Matamoros. If the dove or sheep were pricked, he would consider his options. Apparently, the latter was pricked for on December 16 Canales lifted his siege of Matamoros and led his forces to Monterrey. Thus, his "timorousness proved disgusting to more than one Texan..."⁶

Some scholars believe that Canales was always suspicious and, as the Texans eventually believed, a coward. Joseph Nance goes on to tell the story of Canales' undue suspicions of treachery. While once camped outside Matamoros, a baker appeared in the Federal camp with a wheelbarrow of bread for sale. Thinking

the bread might be poisoned, Canales ordered the baker to eat three of the loaves before he would allow it to be sold to his men. The baker did not object to tasting some of the bread, but three loaves was a bit much. Still, he was forced to meet Canales' orders, and after he had eaten the three loaves of bread, Canales refused to let his troops buy the bread anyways. He thought the poison might be slow acting, reported Anson G. Neal, "and time did not allow him to make a fair test of it."

The fact that Canales is considered by American historiographers to have been incompetent as a general says something decidedly peculiar about the respective histories of Mexico and the United States. This particular emphasis on the workings of Canales' mind does injustice to the sophistication and intricacy of his major decisions. The essential point is that to truly understand Antonio Canales, even the use of his horoscope, we have to uncover a working model which helps to explain the texture of beliefs, customs, and values within Valley culture. We also have to pay close attention to the primary materials in holdings like the Carmargo or Matamoros Archives, or even the historical literature available in Monterrey. Put another way, we need to put ourselves in the shoes of this so-called suspicious man of little talent. Moreover, we have yet to look more in depth into what drove Anglo-Texans in their values and opinions.

But let me return to Canales the enigma and separatist. On November 6, 1839 the Austin City Gazette reproduced an article from the Lousianan, out of New Orleans, that Texans might, at little costs to themselves, raise an impassable barrier between Texas and Mexico. The newspaper saw this barrier as the republic of the Rio Grande.⁸ Then on December 1, 1839, the Gaceta del Gobierno de Zacatecas announced that Antonio Canales, Antonio Zapata, and Juan Pablo Anaya were formulating a separatist plan. Moreover, El Censor of Veracruz reproduced a notice where Anaya had plans to establish "Una republica norte-Americana federal."⁹

This "plan projectado por los federalistas mexicanas para el restablecimiento de las instituciones de 1824," published in both Mexico and the United States, was a ten-article defense of Mexican Federalism against allegations of the Centralists in Mexico.¹⁰ However, both to Mexicans and Texans, Anaya stressed that the fight against the Centralist government was not for the purpose of dividing the Mexican nation, but for a return to the principles of the 1824 Constitution.¹¹ When Anaya or Canales spoke of provincial government, their Federalist leanings became intertwined with the ideals of separatism, and there were many similar ideals floating around. But like Anaya, Canales at times became entrapped by his own rhetoric. Canales wanted a return to the Constitution of 1824, but he continually pulled together with a group of like-minded individuals to discuss the possibility of a separate republic. As events unfolded, on January 18, 1840, a Canales-led kitchen cabinet met at the Orevaña ranch, near Guerrero and organized a provisional federal government based on the Constitution of 1824. They selected Jesús Cárdenas, former Jefe Politico of the northern district of Tamaulipas, as president; Canales, commander in chief of the army. Also selected were: Manuel Nina, quartermaster general; Francisco Vidaurri y

Villaseñor, former governor of Coahuila y Texas, Vice President; and Juan Francisco Farias; secretary ad interim. A council of five regular and three supplementary members was established. They selected Laredo as the seat of government, but determined that the government would remain at Guerrero, since a printing press was available at that town.¹²

Acting like the kitchen cabinet that it was, this group of actors in the historical drama outlined the boundaries of the new republic as including all of Tamaulipas and Coahuila as far north as the Nueces and Medina Rivers, respectively, and extending south to the Sierra Madre Occidental, including Nuevo León, Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, and New Mexico. On January 23, 1840, the cabinet issued a decree known as the Organic Law of the Republic, declaring it did not represent any legitimate authority belonging to the present Mexican government against which it intended to resist militarily. The decree also called for the convening of a convention of delegates of the states in the new republic on May 28, or sooner, to provide for a permanent government. The cabinet finished its work in late January and proceeded to the city of Guerrero where a celebration was held the next day.¹³

The Republic of the Rio Bravo, as then called, created an official newspaper, the Correo del Rio Bravo del Norte, and its plan of action was issued at Guerrero in February of 1840. José María Gonzales Cuellar was appointed editor. In recruiting troops, the cabinet agreed to promise land grants and bounties for enlistments. Many Anglo-Texans were recruited in this manner. But contemporaries such as Samuel Jordan or George Fisher were perplexed by these events. The legitimacy of any such republic, after all, was not in their minds, but in the minds of men like Canales and Anaya. An indication of this feeling is expressed by Canales in February of 1840 in an address before his troops:

Soldiers of the people, today you have entered into the solemn obligation of sustaining at hazards the Provisional Government of these States, and I doubt not but you will be willing to sacrifice yourself to do so. Our enemies are filled with dismay at seeing it established in the midst of all their forces, and will use all their endeavors to destroy it. But they can have no success when in our favor the opinions of the age march in our vanguard and the sympathies of all the world in our rearguard. The march of time cannot be impeded, and tyranny shall remain far behind.¹⁴

Canales then proceeded to denounce the class system fostered by the Centralists of Mexico as a detriment to liberty and equality. He criticized their neglect of frontier defense and Centralists efforts to divide northern people by seeking to provoke war against strangers, to excite animosities among them. "Citi-

zens!" he said, "the hour is come . . . the liberty and felicity of this Republic are high at hand. Let one part be organized quickly and the others will follow its example"¹⁵

Antonio Canales is a precursor to the separatist feelings of Valley culture. If he did make statements such as this, and Texan observation are plentiful to this effect, should they be taken at face value? In his public format, General Canales took his separatist norteño feelings seriously. As to a republic, he may have been stimulated by its ideal, but people can have more than one ideal at a time. Canales seems to have fostered separatist feelings and manipulated the movement of events. As a Federalist, he preferred the division of powers inherent in such a political system. A "revolutionary" in that he readily borrowed ideas from the French Revolution, he just as candidly did not separate himself from the perceived power of his south Texas/Northern Mexican homeland. Canales seems to have held both emergent ideas of reform and inclinations to maintain the existing order of things in the border region.

Canales was first and foremost a Mexican, shaped by the character of his northern homeland, a land long neglected by the central government. He was dedicated to the principles of the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and to the reestablishment of a federal system of government, for he believed this form of government would provide the necessities of life for the inhabitants of frontier areas.

Later in his life, some contemporaries thought Canales was a revolutionist of some repute. John Salmon "Rip" Ford went so far as to exonerate him of "the treachery attempted on the Texans under Colonel Jordan during the Federation War in 1840. "It is now known that Colonel Molano played the role of Judas on this occasion."¹⁶ Although Canales continued his resistance, he was defeated by Centralist forces and retreated to the Rio Grande. At Santa Rita de Morelos, Coahuila, he lost his best friend and second in command, Colonel Antonio Zapata. Canales eventually surrendered to Centralist forces. Later, as a brigadier general, he led military campaigns against Anglo-Texans at Corpus Christi and Lipantitlán. Canales later fought at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. At Buena Vista, he commanded a battalion against U.S. forces.¹⁷

All that has been said leads to a crucial question--what can one say about the validity of our historical interpretations? The talk of a separate republic led by Canales is a puzzle. The evidence is neither complete nor representative. There seems to be a shaky quality to it all. Perhaps it is because scholars approach the past with different interests and goals that they differ so greatly in their historical interpretations. The Republic of the Rio Grande seems to have been staged as an event with great ideological implications. In reality, it is an event needing further analysis. To this end, the broad context of the Federalist/Centralist struggle itself is presently being reconsidered.

The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg

Endnotes

1. "Memorial of Enrique Sanchez and other, Citizens and Residents of the Territory and Valley of the Rio Grande," February 27-28, 1850. 31st Congress, 1st session, Misc. No. 61.
2. Josephina Zoraida Vàsquez, "La supesta Repùblica del Rio Grande, Historia Mexicana 36 (Julio-Septiembre, 1986): 49.
3. Ibid., 69.
4. Joseph Milton Nance, After San Jacinto, The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841 (Austin, 1963), 214.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 235.
7. Ibid.
8. Vàsquez, 60-61.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Nance, 193.
12. Hobart Huson, Iron Men (Austin, 1940), 108-9.
13. Ibid.
14. Nance, 256-57.
15. Ibid.
16. Stephen B. Oates (ed.), Rip Ford's Texas, by John Salmon Ford (Austin, 1963), 203.
17. See Juan Fidel Zorrilla and Carlos Gonzalez Salas, Diccionario Biogràfico de Tamaulipas (Ciudad Victoria, 1984), 74-77.





HUNTING,
DREAM OF EVERY YOUNG GERMAN IMMIGRANT

The Rio Grande Valley and Southern Texas
in Handbooks for German Emigrants of the 19th Century
(What Happened To Paradise?)

by

Peter Gawenda

Two hundred years ago, the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations, the first German empire, ceased to exist. The last Emperor Leopold the Second had died and a successor was not elected. Although its neighbor Austria remained a multinational empire, Germany fell apart into different states, dukedoms, principalities, bishoprics, independent cities and a multitude of small earldoms or counties. The majority of these states had their own currencies, required passports and did not permit free movement of the farmers and serfs. Even a business taking his wares from Hamburg to Munich had to cross more borders and pay more customs than a traveller going from Lisbon, Portugal to Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The total number of these independent German states had climbed to over 270 by the time the French Revolution had ended and Napoleon I. had become Emperor of France. This dismemberment of the German Empire ultimately contributed to Napoleon's success in conquering Europe.

Preceding the Napoleonic era, members of the upper middle classes, especially members of the patriciate from Nürnberg, and many members of noble families had visited Italy and Spain, some had even ventured to Africa or Central and South America. When returning with descriptions of the beautiful climates, the sun and the tropical plant life, the fruit and the animals, the first travel reports and maps were published in journals and books.^{1,2,3,4,5} Martin Waldseemüller, a German topographer designed a large world map based on descriptions by Pedro Alvarez Cabral, Amérigo Vespucci's book, Mundus Novus, maps of Juan de la Cosa, maps of Sebastian Cabot, and others. He placed portraits of Ptolemy on the left and of Vespucci on the right of the world map, and across what today is South America he put the word America in bold letters. Thus, at least for the Germans, America became a household expression for exotic and faraway beautiful worlds. Starting with the Baroque period, churches, monasteries and castles were decorated with paintings and frescos showing scenes of tropical lands. As time progressed these scenes became the dream for many suppressed and deprived Germans.

During the colonization of the Americas, and especially during the American Revolution, many young Germans of the lower classes who had been conned into military services, to fight or work for Spain, for the American States, or on the side of British forces succeeded in returning home to their families. They confirmed stories that were published in journals and books, or told by their landlords and the nobility.⁴ Somewhere across the ocean there was a world with land in abundance, with unlimited opportunities for hunting and fishing, and without the restrictions and limitations experienced in the German States.⁶

Mexico attracted Saxon miners as early as 1777 under the Ordenanzas de minera. These German surveyed the northern Spanish American lands, including Texas and New Mexico, speculating on exploitation of minerals. Through letters and reports to Germany, these surveys increased awareness of land possibilities in Texas and the recognition that Mexico's frontier would be difficult to defend. Germans already living in Mexico recognized their government's intention to somehow curb or control the American immigration to Texas by designing schemes of colonization in 1824. Some of these Germans, such as Joseph Vehlein or Baron von Bastrop became Mexican land agents or empresarios helping to set up an organized immigration into the Mexican provinces of Texas.

When the Napoleonic Wars devastated Germany, and when again the young and strong sons of the farmers, bondsmen or serfs were drafted into the French army (but this time not to return home), the mood of lower and middle classes turned against the ruling nobility.⁵ Many well-known disenchanting German intellectuals left for the United States or Mexico in the eighteen-twenties. They included engineers like Friedrich von Gerolt, Wilhelm Steins and Karl Sartorius who went to Mexico to reopen the old mines. Others left one or two decades later when dissatisfaction of the intellectuals finally turned into revolutions. By this time, literacy had increased. Many communities had their youths attending school. Many households, especially those of teachers and clerics, had assembled libraries with books that fascinated the young. The most favorite and most distributed books seemed to be those with large editions, those containing materials that allowed minds to forget daily hardships, and those that were financially affordable.^{6,7,9} Naturally religious books (like the Bible and prayer books) and schoolbooks led the lists, but travel reports and dictionaries followed in a close second place.

When reviewing correspondence of nineteenth-century immigrants to Texas of Germans who served as soldiers in such sites as Fort Texas or Fort Brown, it is obvious that literature played an important part in their decision making.^{8,10} The time period was dominated by Romanticism, but the reality of all German States was inhuman, antidemocratic and oppressive. The old descriptions of the age of discovery, the travel reports and immigrants books were written in styles that met the average reader's desire to submerge himself in an ideal world.¹² Many of the earlier travel reports that were published in the different German States, Switzerland or Austria favored northeastern Mexico and regions west of Louisiana. Texas and Mexico received more attention than any other region on the North American continent. One of the earlier German dictionaries of 1836 for example dedicates three full pages to the Republic of Texas, "...a North American landscape, that is connected with Coahuila, a particular state, the most Northeastern coastal state of the Estados Unidos Mexicanos..."¹¹

The German Christian's Paradise - A Tropical, Coastal Garden?

For the average citizen, Central Europe does not lend itself

to a leisurely and enjoyable life. Four distinct seasons force man into a cycle of hard work. During spring, the fields have to be prepared for sowing and planting; in the summer the crops and animals have to be cared for, and preparations for winter such as collecting heating materials, spinning wool for winter clothing or preservation of foods have to be started in early fall. In addition, during fall the harvesting requires the full attention of young and old alike; and by the time winter comes around, it is cold, rain turns into snow and ice, and whatever time might be available has to be spent indoors.

How different were the descriptions of life in tropical coastal areas. The sun is shining throughout the year. Fruit that only the rich have access to in Europe can be picked from the trees. Clothing is almost non-existent. Care for the fields and the crops is provided by nature. Stables are not needed for the animals, and houses do not require heating. All year round you can enjoy fresh salty air, which is considered a cure for so many diseases in Europe.^{12,13} Churches and monasteries in Bavaria and Württemberg, like Ottobeuren, Wies, Munich, and estates in Southern Germany, advocate these tropical scenes as the paradise which will be the celestial reward for a pious life.

The palm tree, symbol of this paradise, became a favorite plant. Oranges and other tropical fruit were made attractions of tropical gardens, so-called Orangeries, of the high society and nobility. The small island of Mainau, situated in the Lake of Constance, was transformed into a miniature tropical paradise by its owners, relatives of a royal family. Libraries of monasteries such as Buxheim or Ettal, or of rich burghers or nobility, such as the Hermannshaus of Memmingen, the von Castells or the Fugger estates at Glott or Babenhausen had whole sections on seventeenth and eighteenth century volumes of maps, prints, and reports on the Spanish possessions in the Americas.²²

Reports by Germans who were actual eyewitnesses to the existence of the paradise in the Americas increased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Publications included such names as Heinz, member of the La Salle expedition in 1685 to 1687; Father Kappus 1694, participant Mange's expedition; all the Fathers of the Mission to Primera 1731 to 1737, like Grasshoffer, Keller, Pfefferkorn, Steiger, Sedelmair, Segesser and many more; Rengel, the Commandante General Ad. Int. de Provincias Internas 1784 to 1785; Baron von Ripperda, Governor of Texas from 1767 to 1778; Dr. August Wilhelm von Spagenberg, physician in San Antonio in 1794; Philipp Heinrich Neri Baron von Bastrop, Alcalde in San Antonio in 1820 and Land Commissioner and Representative in the state of Coahuila, Mexico, 1824 to 1827; or Rueg, the last Mexican Jefe Politico at Nacogdoches and Woll, General and negotiator in Mexican services under Santa Ana. Thus the names of Mexico, Coahuila and Texas became part of the German vocabulary.

Southwest Texas - The German's Substitute Paradise

By the 1840's several handbooks for immigrants and travel reports became specific, advocating Texas as that part of the globe that best matched the German's dreams of a paradise on

earth. Friedrich Ernst wrote in letters to his home in Westphalia as early as 1829 that Texas was a beautiful country with enchanting scenery and delightful climate, similar to that of Italy. It boasted the most fruitful soil and a republican government with unbounded personal and political freedom. These letters were published in several local newspapers in Oldenburg and Münsterland, two German provinces.⁸ In 1841, G. A. Scherpf described Texas as "...one of the most beautiful points of the new world, which in the last 15 years has become a country larger than all the German States including Bohemia and Switzerland, with a climate like Italy, not comparable to any part of Europe as far as the general fertility and beauty are concerned..." He also adds that when one of the chiefs of today's Plains Indians (the Comanches) saw these beautiful lands he exclaimed in his language with astonishment and admiration, "...Tejas..." which means in English as much as paradise...¹³ Viktor Pracht writes in 1849, "...Among all countries of North America the state of Texas occupies one of the most important positions. It is its climate, its fertility, its constitution and some other circumstances, which make especially that country the most fitting goal for German immigrants..."¹⁸

Pracht (1849) says that "...the climate of Texas has always been described as one of the most pleasant and healthful of the world." In fact he adds that "...the farther one moves to the southwest or west the cleaner and healthier the air becomes," and that "...most sicknesses of Europe rarely appear or do not at all appear in Texas," and referring to the most southern part of Texas he says, "...between the mouth of the Guadalupe and the Del Norte river the regions adjacent to the coast are most important concerning health." When speaking about the Western part of Texas, he says, "...the climate of the magical West, although more moderate than hot, forms the distinct transition from the climate of the tropics to that of the moderate zones. It is the real subtropical climate, the most fortunate of them all for the strong, undisturbed development of animal and vegetation life. Winter in the European sense does not exist...while Central Europe might have only 50 truly beautiful days, the paradisiac Texan West can brag that under a continuous blue sky there are less than 15 rainy days and at the most 50 to 60 somewhat unpleasant days."¹⁸

Although not all books glorify the southern regions of the North American continent like Texas or Mexico it seems obvious that authors who warn the immigrant not to go south have not been there. Francis I. Grund (1843) is one of the authors who feels that Southern and Mexican customs, way of thinking and culture are contrary to those of Germans, preventing the immigrant from feeling at home.¹⁴

Highly Fertile, Virgin Lands

The gravest problems of the majority of free German farmers was their slow transformation into a field labor force who had increasingly smaller numbers of fields that were less and less productive. Still they had to continue to support large fami-

lies. A major portion of the farmers' time belonged to the land owners or nobility who used labor according to their own needs. Fields had been divided so many times among generations of large families that profitability and effectiveness of land use, of crop planting and harvesting methods were non-existent. Usually, only the oldest son of the family could look forward to an inheritance while all the younger ones would have to either hire out as laborers or look for alternatives. Large families were necessary, however, to help the little farmer survive by using this young and cheap labor. This over-abundance of youth was also used by the nobility to increase their own income through the sale of military services.

The cheap lands in Texas and the ability to cope with chores on your own without having to hire laborers must have been highly attractive to any lower-class German. Prinz Carl zu Solms-Braunfels writes, "Undisputedly, the soil of Texas belongs to the world's most fertile. It is of different constitution, and is made up partially of light soil, partially of yellow clay, at times one finds even very heavy black dirt. The sumptuous growth of grass on all prairies is proof of the soil's productivity. In some areas in the West, a particular fine part of grass grows that is called mesquite-grass (Meskit=Gras) by the Mexicans and which is said to have almost the same nutritive value as oats and replaces oats for horses. There is no part of Texas, not even in the lowest coastal prairies where the soil is not advantageous."¹⁵ Prinz Carl continues by pointing out that even the just broken virgin prairie will carry a rich harvest of wheat, rye, and oats.

Carl Postl under the pseudonym of Sealsfield (1837) chose Texas as the background for his novels. He indulges in the beauty of the scenery and exclaims, "If the French, the Spanish and the German, with far less means, had succeeded in this country, and placed themselves on an equality with the wealthiest in the land, surely I could do the same."¹²

South Texans, an Ideal People - Living In The Sun, Healthy, No Inbreeding

The Central European climate was not considered healthy, especially by those who did not have sufficient food, heating materials and clothing. Any geographical area therefore that would provide food in abundance, whether through agriculture or grown wild, that did not require heating and only light clothing was therefore desirable. Reports about the climate and the people of Texas seemed to be especially attractive. "The area belongs to the healthiest of the world; the summer is never pressing hot, and even in winter, although it rains often, the sky is clear and pure, and before the war (Texas Revolution) there supposedly were Mexicans here who at perfect health had reached ages way above one hundred years."⁸

Several of the emigration handbooks provide comparisons of the population groups living in Coahuila-Texas, southwestern Texas and the southern states. Some authors criticize work attitudes of the Mexican population or their living conditions,

but many praise their health, their attractiveness and their beauty. In fact, several suggest that the unmarried newcomer would prefer the Hispanic beauty to the skinny and sometimes sickly females that immigrated from other Southern States. The single male is doomed to failure if he wants to cultivate land or to settle on a farm. Dirks (1832) encourages immigrants to get married because, "...he who is married knows that many children belong to wealth."¹⁰

Germans The Ideal Innkeepers

Almost all travellers in Texas criticize the absence of guesthouses or relay stations. Although it is possible to find supper, bed and breakfast on farms or ranches between towns or settlements, neither treatment, nor quality of food, nor quality of sleeping accommodations are comparable to those in Europe. Prince Carl zu Solms-Braunfels, who was used to the fanciest places in Europe, writes, "The American serves warm cornbread, a piece of salted pork baked in bacon, coffee (without sugar) and, if the meal is really special also a glass of milk. Surly and serious, the woman of the house serves, but when it comes to paying, one dollar does not cover man and horse," and in the small city of Washington, Texas, he had to pay 25 Dollars for two nights and one day for three men and three horses.¹⁵

American travellers like Olmsted, or Edward King who published his reports in Scribner's Monthly (Vol. VII, Nos. 3 & 4 in 1874) praise the Germans who have opened guesthouses, beer gardens or restaurants. Postcards that were sent to New York in the 1860's by visitors of San Antonio and Galveston recommend to immigrants in New York to pack their bags and move to South Texas. The writers believed that a German Wirtshaus would be quite profitable on the Rio Grande and could be the beginning of a new town.²³

The German's Love For Gardens

Whoever has travelled in Germany knows about the care for and pride of gardens by its population. While the English regard their home as their castle the Germans design it as their haven for rest and relaxation. During free times, such as evenings and weekends, the home provides what work and outside world do not have. The most ideal home, which includes house and the surrounding lot, is the materialization of the family's dreams of a little heaven on earth. There have to be flowers, trees and bushes around the house. It is preferred to distance the house from the street or sidewalk, and usually this space is especially cared for as it serves as the display of what the family is able to do. There should be a steady supply of fresh vegetables, and most importantly there should be a place to sit and relax. Yet nature must also be visible from inside the house; therefore the Germans like flower boxes in front of their windows. This German trait seems to be catered to in all travel reports and immigrant handbook and the Rio Grande Valley fares especially well due to its year round warm climate, the local flora and fauna, and the

available land. When walking past some of the older Brownsville homes that used to belong to Germans or people of German descent, the love for gardens seems to be confirmed.

The eighty-mile-long Padre Island or Isla del Padre is described by several authors as rising only a few feet above the water without trees or bushes. Being a mixture of sand and shell dust, it is considered productive and favorable for gardening. Pracht (1849) uses very poetic language when he describes nature. He seems to echo travellers to Italy when insinuating that Greek and Roman gods participated in the creation of Texas. Concerning gardens that would be considered the pride of any German household he states that even in autumn "...the vegetable garden supplies its most beautiful fruit...and I have eaten watermelons in late November, which could have competed with the best of their kind. I still had sugarmelons that were grown on the fields in January."¹⁸

Scherpf believes that "...the flora of Texas in the flower-rich meadows undoubtedly is one of the richest..." Flowers grow wild in Texas that have to be cared for in European greenhouses and are not affordable to the average German. To start and keep up a garden is described as something done by nature. Man only lends a helping hand when transplanting geraniums, lilies, lobelias, jasmine, violets, or other flowers from the wilderness to the garden.¹³

The average American is referred to as a lazy gardener who misses his chance for healthy living although many vegetables are growing wild. Pracht (1949) lists over thirty vegetables, the same number of different pumpkins, sweet potatoes, pineapple, melons, different peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, artichokes and many more that, in Europe, would only be found in delicatessen stores for the upper classes. He also describes such tropical plants as rice, cotton, sugarcane and tobacco. The German vegetable lover could be in garden-heaven if he came to Southwest Texas.¹⁸

An unknown traveller through Texas writes in his diary under January 2, 1841 about the beauty of the territory, "...that it will become the most beautiful and richest regions of the world. The soil is mostly a black, light garden soil of great depth, the tremendous and lasting fertility of which is obvious."¹³

Skill Determines Status of Handwerke - Not Licenses or Guilds

The German States had a well-established, century-old guild system that ensured highly skilled specialists, the so-called journeymen, but limited the numbers of those who could become independent, owning their own shops. Although these craftsmen (HandwerkerGesellen) were skilled and well trained, only a few eventually managed to push through to the top reaching a master's level (Meister) of their trades. The majority of young people in Germany remained servants, farm hands, or wage earners (Tagelöhner) never receiving a chance for a vocational training. Texas seemed desirable for both groups. Scherpf (1841) writes, "...servants of all types are as difficult to find, as it is shameful for white individuals to live in this situation in the

South of the U.S., and then, who would subdue to that for long, if the wages of a few months (10 to 30 Dollars monthly) would suffice to buy land that would secure complete independence and future prosperity."¹³

In 1850, von Herff further elaborates on southwestern parts of Texas when he says, "No part of the Union, maybe with the exception of the mountain areas of western Pennsylvania, eastern Tennessee, and eastern Kentucky, can come close to the western part of Texas, which constitutes the largest section. The purity of the air and the moderate average annual temperatures place Texas in all respects ahead of northern favorites such as Wisconsin and Iowa." He continues, "Even though Texas lies farther south than these states (Rome and Naples), the sun's heat does not increase, and 30 degrees on the Reaumur scale (99.5 degrees F) is the highest temperature which I and several other observers have recorded over a period of several years."¹⁹ By referring to areas which Germans at one time used to favor as less desirable, von Herff managed to divert the attention to Texas. Von Herff was known to have traveled extensively. As he actually lived in Texas and was a friend of the common people, the proletariat, his words were accepted.

Grund (1843) confirms that when he writes, "...in America only the farmer advances who works himself. The one who wants to hire other people must pay much more than in Old Europe, and it is possible that all the profit of farming is lost because of that... Would the hired fieldhand not able to earn so much money in a short time that he could buy his own land and cultivate it, he would have to hire out with his neighbor; but in this way he can buy a couple of acres with a day's wages, and he has to save for only a year to buy his own estate."¹⁴ According to Grund, many Germans, especially from the State of Württemberg, came to Texas under farm labor contracts or bondage. Thus they could establish a homestead, accumulate knowledge about the soil, the laws of the land, the moral characteristics of neighbors, save money and then buy their own estate.

In reference to skilled labor, Grund states, "The Americans are, as far as cabinetry, shoemaking, blacksmithing, toolmaking and similar activities are concerned, at least as handy as the English, the French or Germans, only the latter are much cheaper and thus outbid the Americans." Grund warns the potential immigrant, however, not to discount the American competition.¹⁴ Bromme (1848) confirms the competitiveness of the European craftsmen. He believes that only skills, diligence, kept promises and thrift count. In his book he provides a long list of occupations in which workers will find work and those in which they will not, locations where certain trades are needed, and the wages they might get.¹⁷

Prinz Carl (1848) states that Texas needs workers, "Abundance of work and lack of workers; cheapness of real estate; therefore the aspiration to work for oneself instead of serving others for wages." He adds, "...this circumstance causes that in Texas no farm-hand can be held on a farm for long."¹⁵

South Texas, Land of Water, Rivers, Wells

Water is critical for survival and agriculture. Although rain provides water in Europe, irrigation is almost unknown. Not everybody is able to have his own well, and most important, not everybody has access to rivers or creeks for fishing. This is different in the most southern part of Texas. "Texas is run through by many large and smaller rivers, so that you can call the land well watered...The Rio Grande, also called Rio Bravo, originates on the Sierra Verde, which forms the divide between the Mexican Gulf and the Pacific Ocean. The length is said to be 1800 to 2000 miles. Furthermore, you find water wherever you dig, so that, although a settlement might exist only a short time, good well water will be available. Even on some areas at the coast, you find good water after digging a few feet..."¹⁵

Pracht (1849) describes the water situation of western Texas, "...one circumstance of the highest importance should not be forgotten, that only in the East in almost every direction is healthy, clear drinking water to be found in thousands of clear wells, creeks, and rivers, while it is an exception to find water in Western Texas."¹⁸

Daily Hunting - The Dream Of Common Man

The profession of hunter and forester was well established, but also well guarded in the German States. Very few young men ever had a chance to go hunting or fishing in Europe due to the many required licenses and formalities. Hunting and fishing had become the privilege of a few upper-class and noble families. Illegal hunting and fishing (Wildern) was severely punished and some men had to flee the country after coming under suspicion of or being reported for poaching. In Texas, reports stated, hunting only depended upon the access to a rifle. Hecke was one of the first who wrote in a travel report in 1821 that wild prey such as deer, bears, raccoons, wild turkeys, geese, and partridges were encountered in large quantities, and that hunting and fishing were free.⁶

According to Scherpf (1841), "Hunting and fishing are free in Texas, and game is found in abundance during all seasons even close to the cities. Settlers in the countryside have it even better, and the game that is killed in Texas without being used could feed thousands of people."¹³

A travel companion of Scherpf writes in his diary under January 3, 1841, "In these woods and bushes sang and flew birds of all kinds that you will see in our Northern regions only in Spring and Summer, and the weather was like our weather in May. We met a hunter with five strong dogs, who on the tip of his rifle carried a fresh skin of a wildcat, the body of which had just been eaten by the dogs. We admired the beauty of the fur, and to our great surprise and happiness Nimrod (hunter) presented us with his catch." The following day shows an entry of a different experience. "During breakfast with the family of the very friendly host a beautiful female deer honored us with a visit; it received a corn patty and then disappeared again into the thick bushes..."¹³

Achievement: Success Based On Personal Engagement

"The advantages which America promises and offers to immigrants are that the family tree really does not determine status and success. Bromme (1848) believes that personal qualities determine the success of immigrants."¹⁷

Von Herff states in his Leitfaden für Auswanderer (guidebook for immigrants), "...if necessary, the Texas can survive through winter without a shelter...thus (the immigrant) can concentrate all his efforts in the field in order to become independent the following year. He can work in the fields throughout the winter, he does not have to collect feed for his cattle, and provided he arrives at his destination by the end of November, he will have sufficient time for an early first crop." Von Herff continues that a family of five can live very well on the produce of ten acres and could possibly achieve a limited degree of affluence through cultivation of more valuable products. He believes that a five-member family could easily cope with a multiple of ten acres considering the customary work loads in Germany. Von Herff, an avid anti-slave advocate, prefers the western and southern regions of Texas because of the absence of influence of the Southern slave-holders and the presence of the Hispanic anti-slave attitude.¹⁹

Free Wood, Free Materials for Construction

Not every farmer, and definitely not the serfs of most of the German States, had access to forests. Woods are controlled by the gentry and the nobility. Construction materials have to be paid for, and, quite often, prices are prohibitive. What a different picture is presented in some of the immigrant handbooks! Prinz Carl (1846) brags in his book about the Texas coast: "...I must mention the massing of tree trunks along the whole coast of Texas, that are thrown by the sea onto the low dunes. At the beach of Galveston Island this wood is picked up by inhabitants as building material and as firewood. Along the whole coast from the Pass of San Luis to Dreckrows Point you find for miles these colossal tree trunks piled 6-feet high (mannshoch). While riding on a trip along the coast from Galveston to the above named location I convinced myself of this continuous, strange wooden embarkment while riding."¹⁵

Scherpf (1841) writes, "While Texas has all kinds of wood for construction in abundance it is imported from the United States on a daily basis, and the saw mills close to the ports have a hard time competing because of high wages, causing the mills to close periodically. However, these circumstances will improve with every year where nature offers materials in such abundance..."¹³

In his book on regulated emigration of German workers to Texas, published in 1851, von Herff insists that it is possible for a family to erect a home within two to five weeks while cultivating their land. Materials such as wood, stone or adobe are available in abundance, and the weather does not require

Strategic Location Of The Rio Grande Valley

Already in 1821, J. V. Hecke (a German traveller to Texas and former Prussian army lieutenant) recognized that the southern part of the Mexican province of Coahuila-Texas could become an important focal point for the American and European trade. He suggested to the Prussian State that it buy that part from Mexico and establish something like an autonomous Prussian colony. Hecke believed that all trade with the Indians would end in Prussian hands and commerce might be carried along the Rio del Norte into Mexico and beyond. A canal system could be built connecting the Rio Grande with the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio River and all the way into the United States of that time,⁶ suggesting a project that was finally submitted to the 60th Congress in 1908-1909.²¹ Hecke, who also knew Baron von Bastrop's colonization plans, considered South Texas fertile enough to provide the Islands and parts of Central and South America with grain, meat, butter and other products. Immigrants have no need for money, and find the best markets for all products at the Mexican harbors. Through Hecke's travel report, the Rio Grande or Rio del Norte and the adjacent valley became well known in many of the German States.⁶

In 1849, Pracht also recognized the importance of the Texan coast, and especially the most southern part, for future trade. He states that, "...one could justly describe the geographic location of Texas as especially advantageous for world trade, if the lack of good ports for large vessels would not push the long and relatively safe coast into the background." He also describes the entry through the Laguna Madre at the Brazos Santiago that leads to Point Isabel which "...until now is the general unloading point for goods designated to Matamoros and the interior of Mexico...".¹⁸

By 1849, the Rio Grande or Rio Bravo del Norte was navigable by flatbottom steamboats to Camargo, but it was hoped that the river could be dredged allowing steamboats to reach Laredo.

Herff, who became a well-known citizen of San Antonio, strongly advocated the country between the Colorado and the Rio Grande as the most suitable for colonization purposes. He believed that a German proletariat colony would find ideal prerequisites in this area. He also emphasized the possibilities of setting up trade initially with Northern Mexico, and later with Central America as additional sources of income. Herff believed that Texas had the potential to establish industries that would provide products of greater value than usual field crops needed in Mexico and other parts of Central America and even the world market. He was convinced that the trade routes such as the old Santa Fe Trail would become obsolete very quickly.¹⁹

The population reports of Texas are contradictory. According to a census report in the Houston Telegraph of June 14, 1857, one-fifth of the population of Texas was composed of Germans. The population of the Rio Grande counties was close to 21,700. It consisted primarily of Spaniards and Mexicans, but included

1,100 (5%) Germans. One reason why Germans started to move toward the Rio Grande in the mid 1800's was their opposition to slavery, their tolerance, and their good relations with Spaniards and Mexicans. Southerners were not interested in the region along the border as it was too convenient for runaway slaves to escape to Mexico. Thus it became easier for Germans to acquire land and establish businesses in the Valley.

Franz Löhner, author of the most complete summary of German immigration to the Americas reports in 1847 on the success of Germans in the United States and especially Mexico where almost 20,000 Germans had arrived since the times of Columbus. He stresses their importance in port cities such as Vera Cruz, Tampico, and Matamoros. Merchants were usually followed by German artisans, farmers, miners and industrialists. He adds that during the early phases of immigration in 1776 almost six thousand were brought from Bavaria and neighboring States to the Spanish possessions and distributed throughout Central America and the northern sections of South America. Between 1824 and 1827, a second wave of immigration occurred. If records are correct, then Germans had settled in Mexico as early as before the 30-Year War (1618 to 1648). Löhner also believed that Texas would have been an ideal country for democratic Germans had it remained independent from Mexico and the United States. A majority of Germans among the population might have changed the history of the Republic of Texas by giving it a German-Mexican ethnic background rather than letting it become an American state.¹⁶

According to reports on education, Matamoros and what later became Brownsville had advanced school systems that caused an astounding multilingualism among the middle and upper class. Dominant languages were Spanish and English followed by French, German and Yiddish. The Germans never hesitated to marry into the local population on both sides of the border, and according to some of the travel reports in semiannual-official publications, large groups in the Spanish speaking population also spoke German. Naturally this was more obvious in such cities as San Antonio.²⁰

The Rio Grande Valley - Still A Paradise?

The Rio Grande Valley was, and still is, part of the Germans' dream world. Favorite readings of young Germans still include books of Karl May, adventure stories of early immigrants, and heroes of the wild west. The majority of Germans will be able to respond correctly to the question of where the Rio Grande is located. When buying citrus fruit, Germans often prefer those coming from Texas to those from other areas. In political science classes in German schools, Texas is still treated as an early example of a modern republic. German churches and castles still depict the tropical scenes that could have been painted right here in the Valley, and many libraries still have large book collections on this part of the world. Texas has become a vacation land for many Germans, and high school students hope to find exchange programs that will bring them to Texas...and when looking through the Valley's telephone book, whether in the

Mexican or the American pages, one still finds large numbers of German names.

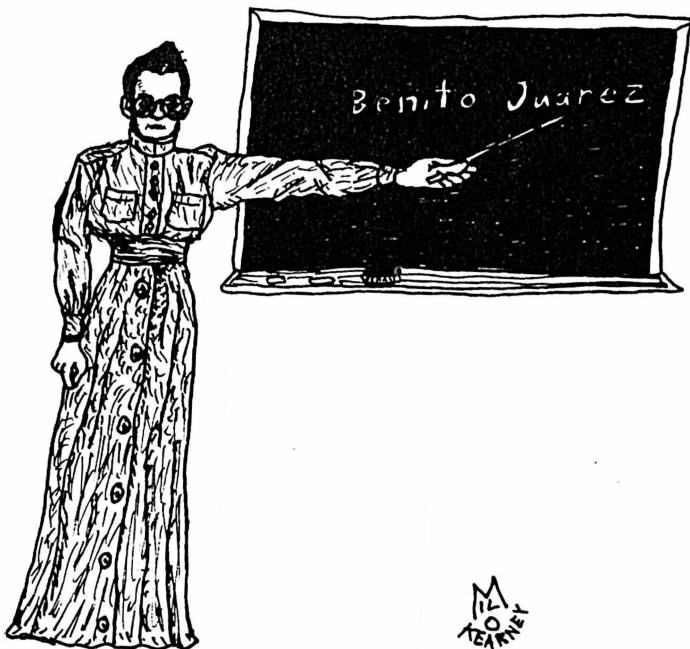
The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Johann von Staden, Wahrhaftige Historia und beschreibung eyner Landschaft der Wilden Nacketen Grimmigen Menschenfresser Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelegen vor und nach Christi Geburt im Land zu Hessen unbekannt bis uff diese nechst vergangene jahr Da sie Hans Staden von Domberg auB Hessen durch seyn eygene erfahrung erkant und jetzo durch den truck an tag gibt. Marburg 1557.
2. Ulrich Schmidel, Wahrhaftige Historien einer wunderbaren Schiffahrt. Noribergae, 1602.
3. Georgius Marius, Noriberga Urbs Imperialis...Elegiaco Carmine celebratum. Ulm, 1615.
4. Theodore von Bry, Wunderbarliche, doch wahrhaftige Erkla- rung von den Begebenheiten und Sitten der Wilden in Virginia. Frankfurt am Main, 1590.
5. Alexander von Humboldt, Atlas géographique du royaume de la Nouvelle Espagne. Paris 1812.
6. J. V. Hecke, Reise durch die Vereinigten Staaten, 1818-1819. Berlin, 1821.
7. H.G. Ward, Esqu., Mexico in 1827. London, 1828.
8. Fritz Ernst, Letter to Robert Justus Kleberg. 1829.
9. Otto von Kotzebue, Neue Reise um die Welt in Jahren 1823-1826. Weimar, 1830.
10. Fritz Dierks, Letter quoted in Hermann Achenbach, Tagebuch meiner Reise in die Nordamerikanischen Freistaaten oder das neue Kanaan. Dusseldorf, 1835.
11. F. A. Brockhaus, Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyklopadie fur die gebildeten Stande. Conversations=Lexikon. Leipzig, 1836.
12. Sealsfield (Carl Postl), Nathan der Squatter Regulator, oder der erste Amerikaner in Texas. Zurich, 1837.
13. G. A. Scherpf, Entstehungsgeschichte und gegenwartiger Zustand des neuen, unabgangigen, amerikanischen Staates Texas. Augsburg 1841.
14. Francis I. Grund, Handbuch und Wegweiser fur Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika. Stuttgart und Tubingen, 1843.
15. Carl, Prinz zu Solms-Brownfels, Texas. Geschildert in Beziehung auf seine geographischen, socialen und ubrigen Verhaeltnisse mit besonderer Ruchsicht auf die deutsche Colonisation. Frankfurt am Main, 1846.
16. Franz Loher, Geschichte und Zustande der Deutschen in Amerika. Cincinatti und Leipzig, 1847.
17. Traugott Bromme, Hand- und Reisebuch fur Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord=amerika. Bayreuth, 1848.
18. Viktor Pracht, Texas im Jahre 1848. Nach mehrjahrigen Beobachtugen dargestellt. Elberfeld u. Iserlohn, 1849.

19. Dr. von Herff, Die geregelte Auswanderung des Deutschen Proletariats mit besonderer Beziehung auf Texas. Zugleich fur deutsche Auswanderer. Frankfurt a/M., 1850.
20. Handbuch des Deutschtums im Auslande. Berlin, 1904.
21. Congressional Record Index, Vol. 43, Parts 1-4, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Dec 7, 1908. March 4, 1909.
22. Visits in South Germany by writer in the 1950's to 1970's.
23. Personal collections.

THE LATE 19TH CENTURY



"The Great Western": The Heroine of Fort Brown
in Fact and Fiction

by

Joseph E. Chance

On just about every visit to Brownsville, when time permits, I find myself drawn by some unexplainable urge to the original site of Fort Brown, on the banks of the Rio Grande near the municipal golf course. From the only remaining earthen wall of this once huge fort, I peer into Mexico, shading my eyes against the glare of the sun, and try to picture in my mind where the Mexican guns were placed on the south side of the river that sighted in on Fort Brown. The defenders of Fort Brown, then known as Fort Texas, had been placed in a cross-fire by Mexican artillery and endured a terrific bombardment of shot and shell during the week from May 3 to May 9, 1846. The heroic defense of this fort and the death of its commander, Major Jacob Brown, is a well-known story to every Texan.

But an aspect of this story that is not so well-known is that several women endured the bombardment and siege of Fort Brown. In fact, one of these women served the defenders with such heroic distinction that she became a famous celebrity to her contemporaries. These women came to be in Fort Brown because they were army volunteers, serving in their official capacity as laundresses. Each company of soldiers, by act of Congress, was allotted one laundress to be paid at the rate of \$7 per month. The ladies had followed Zachary Taylor's army from camps on the Rio Grande, partaking in the hardships of the march and the perils of war as well or better than some of the men of the army.

As you might well imagine, the job of laundress for a company of American soldiers stationed on the frontiers of this country in 1846 did not attract the weak and faint-hearted. Besides the grueling work and long hours, the women had to hold their own against the soldiers, which meant that they probably were fairly proficient with all the many forms of profanity and could on occasion use their fists, knives and small caliber firearms to protect themselves against both enemies and friends. These women usually came from the lower classes of society, and as a result were often illiterate, leaving no written records to posterity of their adventures in the army. One could well imagine the stories they could have told of the campaign in northern Mexico from a woman's perspective.

My good friend Jim McKone, of McAllen, Texas, made an interesting observation to me recently about the vast volume of written records and observations made by the common American soldier of the Mexican and Civil Wars. He noted that the privates and the men in the ranks of other 19th century armies left virtually no records of their army experiences, due to the fact that these men were for the most part illiterate. The records and reminiscences of these armies were kept, as a rule by the more educated men of the officer corp. But officers, for the most part, viewed the battles from horseback and were isolated from the common

soldier who did most of the suffering and dying. Officers tended to write about other officers and generally had neither understanding nor sympathy for the rank-and-file soldier. The American public educational system had been true to its democratic principles and by the mid-nineteenth century a large segment of the upper and middle class citizens could write, and often write very well. However, our nineteenth century educational system often could not keep pace with the highly mobile segment of our society on the American frontier, and often failed to stress the education of females.

These words of explanation about illiteracy are needed to understand why there exists such a small amount of factual data about the subject of this essay. The life and times of a regimental laundress was simply not a subject of great interest to writers of diaries and letters of that time. Therefore, there is little documentation for the biography of the woman recorded here, and many somewhat fanciful accounts have been used, you might even say fictional accounts. But these accounts are the things that legends are made of, and this woman was literally bigger than life, both in stature and attainment¹ Did all of the events described in this essay actually occur exactly as I will relate them to you? ?Quien sabe?

Sarah Bourginis, or Bourgett, or Bourdette, depending on the source, was a woman described by George Washington (Wash) Traherne as "...an immense woman who would whip almost anyone in a rough and tumble fight...you can imagine how tall she was, she could stand flat-footed and drop these little sugar plums right into my mouth."² She was reported to have been six foot two inches in height, weighing over two hundred pounds, and to have been a red-head.³

Sarah first joined the army at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1841, and was enrolled for duty as a laundress by Capt. George Lincoln. Lincoln was the son of Levi Lincoln, a previous governor of Massachusetts, and a member of one of the old Patrician Backbay families. Capt. Lincoln was a bachelor and soon employed Sarah separately to fix his meals and mend and wash his clothing. The two became friends and Sarah developed a sincere respect and admiration for the popular young Lincoln, who was probably one of the first educated gentlemen she had ever met. This feeling was reciprocated, as Lincoln supervised a mock enlistment ceremony for Sarah, and "officially" enrolled her in the United States Army.⁴ Sarah followed the American Army to Florida, and was with Zacharcy Taylor's Army of Observation at Fort Jessup in Louisiana in 1845 when it received orders to move to Texas. There is indirect evidence to suggest that she spent the winter of 1845 and the early spring of 1846 with Taylor's army on the Nueces River near the small settlement destined to become Corpus Christi. An issue of the Gazette, published in this settlement lists an establishment known as the "Great Western Eating Saloon"⁵ which may represent her first attempt at being the proprietress of a private restaurant and bar. In early 1846, she followed the American Army to the Rio Grande as an officer's cook and drove an army wagon which was loaded with pots and pans and a supply of food.

The American Army was delayed at the Arroyo Colorado by threats from the Mexican Army that the Americans would be attacked if they crossed this ancient channel of the Rio Grande. Sarah reportedly responded to this challenge by announcing her own battle plan to the officers in her mess. She would personally "whip the first person who showed his face on the other side".⁶ The officers and men were surprised by this kind of talk from a representative of the 'weaker sex,' but most had known her long enough to be sure that her statements were not idle boasts.

Sarah did not have long to wait before she was able to prove her courage to anyone naive enough to doubt it. The laundresses and other camp followers were ordered to stay behind at the earthen fort that would become known as Fort Brown when on May 3rd, 1846, Taylor's army broke camp to march to Point Isabel. The defenders of the fort, led by Major Jacob Brown, were quickly put to the test by Mexican artillery south of the river. Mexican cannonballs began to strike the fort on May 3rd, and several mortar shells actually fell within the walls. American defenders quickly fled to bombproofs and other shelters in the fort to escape the winged death, but Sarah Bourginis refused to abandon her post at the camp kettle, preparing steaming kettles of coffee and food. While many of the men she served were flinching at the sounds of Mexican cannons from across the river, she stood her ground in defiance of the bombardment and never deserted her post as cook.

The siege of Fort Brown was relieved on May 9, 1846, by the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, and Sarah emerged from behind the earthen walls of the fort to find that her services as a nurse and surgeon's assistant were needed. She treated sick and injured men, and was "...mother and sister to the dying men and those that survived." From that day forward, she had "won her spurs" with the American Army, and grateful soldiers and officers would honor her as "one of their own." She was saluted by the men of her mess shortly after the occupation of Matamoros when young Lieutenant Braxton Bragg rose from the table to propose the toast, "To the Heroine of Fort Brown--The Great Western." She had been named in honor of the largest steamship that had ever been built to that date, the SS Great Western. It is doubtful that Bragg was the originator of that unique cognomen, but he certainly popularized it, and afterwards she became universally known as the Great Western, a name that pleased her.⁷

She followed the army from Matamoros and was transported along with her wagon up the river to Camargo by one of the many steamboats that then plied the river. She had a brief assignment at Guardado Abajo, cooked for the officer's school of instruction being held at Mier, and then moved on to Monterrey to cook briefly at the American camp at Santo Domingo.

She again relocated by late December, 1846, and was observed in transit from Monterrey to Saltillo by a young American soldier from the Second Indiana Regiment. Sarah had now become such a celebrity with the Americans that many of the soldiers' diaries of this period record seeing her. Private Benjamin Franklin Scribner was no exception, and on December 30, 1846, while camped in the little village of Rinconada near the pass through the

mountains, he wrote in his diary:

Quite an excitement! Arrival of the Great Western, or the heroine of Fort Brown. She has every appearance of an Amazon, being tall, muscular, and majestic in her expression. She won laurels at the bombardment from Matamoros. She issued out coffee to the men while the bombs were falling all around her.⁸

Sarah continued to cook for the officers and was the proprietress of a famous restaurant and bar in Saltillo, known as "The American House." Her establishment was a great favorite of the American soldiers, and in the words of Wash Trahern, a soldier at Saltillo, "...she was a great nurse and would always get up at any time of night to get one something to eat..."⁹ This restaurant may have been the first one of its type to institute a dress code. The famous Texas Ranger Ben McCulloch stopped to dine at the American House, and was refused service by the Great Western because he was not "properly attired". As most Rangers of that period were usually attired in whatever struck their fancy, from beegum hats and frock coats to greasy buckskins, serapes and sombreros, it would have been very interesting to know what McCulloch was wearing that offended the sensibilities of the hostess. But nevertheless, as McCulloch was exiting the establishment, another customer informed Sarah that she had turned away the famous Ranger. "On learning that he was Major Ben of the Rangers, she ran out and brought him back, gave him supper, charged him nothing, opened a monte bank, and took \$18 off him."¹⁰ Monte was a popular card game in northern Mexico at that time, and Sarah's prowess as a dealer probably at least partially explains why her finances flourished during the latter stages of the campaign in northern Mexico.

Sarah was present in Saltillo during the Battle of Buena Vista, February 22-23, 1847, and witnessed first-hand the most important and closely-fought battle of the Mexican War. Taylor's Army was filled mostly by undisciplined volunteer regiments which were, in many instances, led by unqualified, popularly elected officers that had never seen a battle. Many of the young American volunteers deserted their military posts during the height of the battle on February 23rd and fled the battlefield in terror. It was only by virtue of the excellent defensive position at Angostura Pass and the extreme exertions of the three batteries of American artillery that the day was saved on February 23, 1847. During this day, deserters from the battlefield streamed into Saltillo, and in the words of Captain Albert Pike of the Arkansas Mounted Regiment:

These runaways carried terrible reports to Saltillo. Several times that the left wing was defeated and was retreating--once that the whole army was in full retreat--alarming those left to defend the town. Some seemed mad with terror, and went crying and blaspheming around the streets, creating most extraordinary confusion...¹¹

At the height of this confusing scene, an Indiana soldier burst into the American House in a breathless state, and, according to an apocryphal account by Wash Trahern:

told the Great Western that General Taylor was whipped. The army was all cut to pieces, and the Mexicans under full headway for Saltillo. She just drew off and hit him between the eyes and knocked him sprawling; says, "You damned son of a bitch, there ain't Mexicans enough in Mexico to whip old Taylor." She says, "You just spread that report and I'll beat you to death."¹²

Sarah Bourginis ministered to the sick and wounded of this battle. However, her heart was broken by the news she received during the afternoon of the death of Captain George Lincoln, killed while attempting to rally the Illinois volunteers against a Mexican attack. A contemporary reported that, "...though she is masculine enough in person, she has the true heart of a woman, and...wiped big tears from her bronzed face with her greasy apron" when the death of Capt. Lincoln was reported to her. She had Lincoln's body retrieved from the battlefield after dark, washed it, and laid it out for burial. She was reported to have kept his sword and other personal effects, vowing never to part with them. The milk-white horse that Lincoln was riding when he was killed was purchased by Sarah several weeks after the battle of Buena Vista. She retained ownership of this horse until the time at which the Second Kentucky Regiment was ordered back to the United States to be mustered out of service. The men of the regiment wished to return the horse to Captain Lincoln's father, living in Boston, and she readily assented to their request.¹³

Sarah returned to Monterrey and opened the American House in that city by mid-1847. The only likeness of her known to exist, a watercolor by the American soldier Samuel Chamberlain, shows her tending bar at this establishment.¹⁴

Sarah remained in Monterrey until the end of the war, and then spurred by the rumors of gold in California, decided to accompany an army wagon train west from Monterrey to that territory. However, she had some trouble in joining the train, because she was a single woman, and single women were known to be a potential cause for trouble among the troops, according to "army policy". She was informed that she could accompany the train only if she married one of the troops and was mustered in as a laundress. Her reply, according to Samuel Chamberlain was:

"All right, Major, I'll marry the whole squadron and you thrown in but what I go along." Riding along the front of the line (of troops) she cried out, "Who wants a wife with fifteen thousand dollars and the biggest leg in Mexico! Come, my beauties, don't all speak at once--who is the lucky man?"

An embarrassed silence fell over this band of lusty warriors, which was finally broken by Trooper Davis, who uttered in a subdued voice, "I have no objection to making you my wife if

there is a clergyman here to tie the knot."

With a laugh the heroine replied, "Bring your blanket to my tent tonight and I will learn you to tie a knot that will satisfy you, I reckon!"¹⁵

But alas, such a marriage was not made in Heaven, and Trooper Davis who had been seduced, was about to be abandoned. After several day's march from Sacramento, the site of Doniphan's battle with the Mexicans, the traveling party of American soldiers came upon a caravan of traders from New Mexico gathering goods for the Santa Fe market. Chamberlain tells us that

With the party from New Mexico was a man of remarkable size and strength. Madame Sarah Bourginis-Davis, the "Great Western," saw this Hercules while he was bathing and conceived a violent passion for his gigantic proportions. She sought an interview and with blushes "told her love." The Samson, nothing loth, became the willing captive of this modern Delilah, who straightaway kicked Davis out of her affections and tent, and established her elephantine lover in full possession without further ceremony.¹⁶

Sarah's stay in California, if indeed she reached California at all, failed to have any documentation and the trail of the Great Western becomes dim. John S. "Rip" Ford, the famous Texas Ranger and resident of Brownsville, reported her presence in El Paso, Texas in 1849 where she "operated" a hotel. Her manner and demeanor had not changed and Ford, impressed and humbled by her persona, reported:

She was very tall, large and well made. She had the reputation of being somewhat of the roughest fighter in the Rio Grande; and was approached in a polite, if not humble manner by all of us, the writer in particular.¹⁷

Little is known of the remainder of her life, except that she was reportedly brevetted a colonel for her services during the Mexican War, and received a pension as a Mexican War Veteran by order of General Winfield Scott. She was reported to be operating a saloon in Yuma, Arizona under the name of Mrs. Bowman-Phillips at the time of her death in 1866. Sarah was buried with full military honors in the cemetery in Fort Yuma.¹⁸ According to Colonel Bruce Aiken of Brownsville, Texas, her remains now rest in the cemetery at the Presidio in San Francisco, California, where they were moved after the closing of Fort Yuma.

The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg.

Endnotes

1. For a further discussion of the personal accounts of women on the American frontier, see Teresa G. Viele, Following the Drum, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp.1-12.

2. A. Russell Buchanan, "George Washington Trahern: Texan Cowboy Soldier from Mier to Buena Vista", The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. 28, No.1, pg. 85.
3. Florence Johnson Scott, Old Rough and Ready on the Rio Grande, (Waco: Texian Press, 1969), p.166.
4. Tom Owen the Bee-Hunter (Thomas Bangs Thorpe), Anecdotes of Zachary Taylor and the Mexican War, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1848), p.96.
5. Edward J. Nichols, Zach Taylor's Little Army, (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Company, 1963), p.26.
6. Scott, Old Rough and Ready, p. 167.
7. Ibid., p.167.
8. Benjamin Franklin Scribner, Camp Life of a Volunteer: A Campaign in Mexico or a Glimpse at Life in Camp by "one Who Has Seen the Elephant", (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot and Co., 1847), p. 54.
9. Buchanan, "Trahern", p.85.
10. J. Martin Hunter, "Hack Hays: The Intrepid Texas Ranger", Old West, (Summer, 1965), as found in an unpublished manuscript of Mr. Charles Spurlin, Victoria, Texas.
11. Albert Pike, "Sketch of the Battle of Buena Vista", appearing in the Arkansas State Gazette (Little Rock), April 24, 1847.
12. Buchanan, "Trahern", p.84.
13. Owen, Taylor, pp. 96-97.
14. Samuel Chamberlain, Recollections of a Rogue (London: Museum Press Limited, 1957), p.242.
15. Ibid., pp. 241-242.
16. Ibid., p.256.
17. M.E. Martin, "From Texas to California in 1849: Diary of C.C. Cox", Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol.49, p.132n, 219.
18. Chamberlain, Rogue, p.202.



Memorandum Book of Victor Egly

[Diary kept] from time I commenced steamboating in New Orleans on January the 27th 1855.

New Orleans:

January the 27th 1855. I joined the towboat Yankee as 3rd Assistant Engineer at \$30 dollars per month. June the 7th I struck for \$40 dollars per month and I got it.

March the 7th 1856. I got married to Catherine Mear in New Orleans, La 1856.

October the 7th 1856. Josephine and Margaret were born at 2:00 o'clock a.m.

June the 7th 1856. I was promoted to Second Engineer on the towboat Yankee at \$75 dollars per month.

May the 24th 1858. I resigned from the towboat Yankee on account bad health.

June the 7th 1858. I commenced to work for Captain McLeane as Blacksmith at 2 dollars and 50 cents per day until September the 29th 1858.

September the 30th 1858. I joined the towboat Thomas McDaniel as Second Engineer at 75 dollars per month. The boat laid up on October the 9th 1858 and all hands were paid off.

October the 24th 1858. I joined the towboat Star as Second Engineer at 75 dollars per month, October the 29th 1858. Exchanged boats with August Terry; he went on to the Star and I went on to the Yankee.

June the 4th 1859. The Yankee laid up and all hands were paid off.

June the 6th 1859. I commenced to repair Randolph's ferry boat at 3 dollars per day and finished the boat on June the 15th 1859.

June the 17th 1859. I commenced to work on the towboat Yankee to repair as Second Engineer at 75 dollars per month. Finished on July 3rd 1859.

August the 25th 1859. I joined the towboat Hercules as Second Engineer to repair it at 75 dollars per month. Finished on October the 7th 1859.

October the 7th 1859. I joined the towboat Hercules as Second Engineer at 75 dollars per month. October 12th 1859, I resigned from the Hercules to go as first Engineer on the Yankee.

October the 13th 1859. I joined the towboat Yankee as first

Engineer at 125 dollars per month.
December the 16th 1859. I was removed from the Yankee to the dredge boat Mobile as First Engineer at 125 dollars per month to repair, finished on December 24th 1859 and transferred back to the Yankee.

July the 17th 1860. I bought a property from my parents, and built a new house on it and moved into new house September 27th 1860. Cost of house as it stands at present time: \$800 dollars.

January the 27th 1860. 3:00 clock A.M. Friday Victor Egly Junior was born.

July the 17th 1860. I was removed from the towboat Yankee and transferred on to the job boat Music.

September the 3rd 1860. I was removed from the job boat Music and transferred to the Yankee.

October the 9th. The tow boat Engineers struck for more wages and not being successful they all left their situations. I being one of them, followed suit.

October the 29th 1860. I went to work for Muttel and Goodwin as a Railing Maker at 1 dollar and 75 cents per day. November the 19th I left Muttel and Goodwin to join the towboat Yankee.

November the 19th 1860. I rejoined the towboat Yankee as first Engineer at 125 dollars per month.

February the 2nd 1861. I left the towboat Yankee in order to join the towboat Landis as second Engineer, left the Landis the same night on friendly terms to suit other parties, and the same night I joined the towboat Baltic as second Engineer at 75 dollars per month and my wages going on all the time on the Yankee. March the 23rd 1861 the Baltic laid up and all hands paid off.

April the 7th 1861. I was put on board on the Yankee and Music to give them a little overhauling and have them ready at any time when called upon. They were sailing along side of one another.. as first Engineer.

May the 10th 1861. I was removed from the 2 boats and transferred to the towboat V. H. Ivy as second Engineer at 75 dollars per month.

June the 7th 1861. The V. H. Ivy was called upon to go out as a privateer in the Confederate Service all the old crew that wanted to stay on board could do so. I for one remained on board as first Assistant Engineer. Our wages were to be price money.

June the 18th 1861. We started out well armed with 175 men. We remained out until June the 27th 1861 when the United States ship of war Brookelina drove us in to passage and blockade was getting

very strong. We gave it up. I remained on board until July the 23rd 1861 when all hands were laid off.

August the 16th 1861. I commenced to work for John Cristy as blacksmith at the City Railroad Station at \$2.75.C two dollar and seventy-five cents per day and finished on August the 22nd 1861.

August the 27th 1861. I commenced to work for Mr. Cooke to make swords bayonets at \$2.75 cents per day for the Confederate government. I left Mr. Cooke on the 22nd day of October 1861.

October the 24th 1861. I commenced to work for Henry Kage as blacksmith at \$2.75 per day.

October the 26th 1861. I drew my price money of the privateer V. H. Ivy the sum of on hundred and seventy five dollars \$175.

November the 27th 1861. John Benoit Egly was born Thursday at noon

January the 13th 1862. I finished on the Gross Tate.

January the 17th 1862. I commenced to work on the Confederate gun boat Slidell at \$4.00 four dollars per day. I left her on the 18th the next day in order to receive my appointment as Engineer in the Confederate Navy.

January the 20th 1862. I received my appointment as Second Assistant Engineer in the Confederate States Navy on board the gun boat Slidell.

February the 7th 1862. Commodore Hobins changed the gun boat Slidell's name to satisfy the Secretary of the Navy, and named her the Mouripas.

March the 5th 1862. I started from New Orleans on the gun boat Mouripas for the deed of war. Our destination was up the Mississippi River as far as we can go and fight the enemy.

Tennessee:

March the 12th 1862. We arrived at Tiptonville, Tennessee. There we found our fellow Confederate boats. From March up to May the 20th we fought the enemy at Point Pleasant, Tiptonville and Fort Fellow and we picked up 5 Navy Batteries at Randolph's Landing, Tennessee

Fort Randolph, Tennessee:

May the 20th 1862. The Mouripas was ordered to go up White River, Arkansas and shell the enemy out of Jacksonfort. We stationed after driving them from Jacksonfort at Augusta, and stayed 2 weeks very pleasant, there with laughs and also at the Sark we stayed 3 weeks and spend our time very happy. We were ordered for Saint Charles 6 miles below the sark. On arriving we had orders to move guns and every thing of the Mouripas and sink her in the channel of the river. We did so and built batteries on the bluff by the river in

front of Saint Charles (Saint Charles, Arkansas).

June the 17th 1862. The enemy came up the river with 3 gun boats and gave us battle. We blew up one of there boats, the Mount City, and all hands were either killed or scalded to death by the explosion. There boats turned down the river and left us. But then their land forces of 3,000 men bounced into us and made us get up and leave. We had orders to retreat and gather; we left and left everything behind us. Our Captain, our gallant Captain Frye and our Second Lt. Harry with several of our men where taken prisoners. Some few were killed and wounded and amongst them was our gallant Captain Josef Frye.

For Myself and John Mann, George Jones, Josef Ramsey and doctor of the Mouripas, we started of for Dervit in company with Captain Levi. He lived there with his family of a wife, mother, and 2 sisters. They treated us with the most kindness that I never will forget. We stayed at the house 3 days.

Dervit, Arkansas:

June the 21st 1862. We started for Vicksberg sometimes through woods, swamps and rivers. Sometimes we were on horses and sometimes on wagons and in skifs, and on foot. Our road was through the woods of Arkansas to the Mississippi river to Eg Point on Old River through the woods to Bagofolia and then into Sun Flower River and then into Yazoo River; up to Liverpool. There we found the most part of our old crew of the Mouripas and were very well received. There we replenished our wardrobe, rested a few days, when the Commodore sent us to Jackson, Mississippi.

Liverpool, Mississippi:

June the 27th 1862. We left Liverpool and started for Yazoo City, arrived the same night. On the 28th We started for Vaughan Station. On the 29th we started for Canton, Miss. Arrived the same day and fell in with Lieutenant Harry White. The made his escape from the Yanks at Memphis. On the 30th we started for Jackson and arrived the same day at 2 A.M.

Jackson, Mississippi:

July the 1st 1862. Commodore Linck gave us our discharge from the Navy and arranged transportation to Mobile on the 2nd. We took the cars and started for Meritian and arrived the same day. We started the same night and arrived in Mobile on the 3rd of July 1862.

Mobile, Alabama:

July the 8th, 1862. I went to work in Mobile Bay for the Engineer Department as Engineer on a spike driving machine at \$3 per day for the Confederate government.

September the 14th 1862. I joined the steamer Planter as first Engineer at 90 dollars per month. November the 26th I demanded more wages. I wanted 150 dollars per month and I got it. March the 5th 1863. I joined the blockade run now Steamer Planter as Second Engineer for a run to Havana. Wages 800 for the run and 100 dollars per month. Half of the pay in gold and half in Confederate notes.

June the 11th 1863. We started from Mobile for Havana.

June the 15th 1863. We were captured by the U.S. ship of war Lackarvana in the Gulf of Mexico and on June the 25th I was put on board United States transport steamer Bermuda and put in irons and sent to Philadelphia. There I was transferred to the receiving double ship Princeton.

Philadelphia:

July the 22nd 1863. I was transferred from the Princeton to Fort Lafayette in the Harbor of New York.

Fort Lafayette, New York Harbor:

August the 22nd 1863. I engaged to work my passage to New Orleans on the steamship George Cromwell and sailed the same day.

New Orleans:

September the 6th 1863. I arrived in New Orleans on September the 12th 1863. I joined the stern whale steamer Bayou as first Engineer, wages \$100 per month, to run the blockade into Red River.

Sep. the 20th. We were captured at Morgan River Landing and all hands made prisoners. On October the 10th we were sent to New Orleans as prisoners of war and locked up in the custom house.

October the 14th 1863. I was released from the custom house on parole of honor.

October the 24th 1863. I engaged to work for Captain McLane as Boiler Maker at \$3 per day and finished October the 30th.

November the 4th 1863. I joined the steam ship Sonora, propeller towboat, as Second Engineer at \$75 per month to repair, finished on November the 2nd.

November the 9th 1863. I joined the propeller towboat George E. Tyler as Second Engineer at \$75 per month. December the 13th I resigned the George E. Tyler.

December the 16th 1863. I went to work on the propeller towboat Baltic in place of George Shavinia and finished on the 17th, George

being sick but soon recovered.

December the 21st 1863. I went to work for Captain McLane as boiler maker at \$4 per day and finished on December the 30th 1863.

December the 21st 1863. I joined the propeller towboat Alert as Second Engineer at \$75 per day.

March the 31st 1864. I resigned the Alert in order to go on the Sentinel.

April the 1st 1864. I joined the propeller towboat Sentinel as first Engineer at \$125 per month.

September the 25th 1864. My father died at 20 minutes past 2 o'clock PM on Sunday at the age of 69 years.

November the 11th 1864. 11 AM William Egly was born in New Orleans.

December the 6th 1864. I resigned from the towboat Sentinel.

December the 9th 1864. I bought one half of the schooner Adeline.

December the 23rd 1864. I started with the Adeline for Matamoros, arrived in Bagdad, Mexico January the 7th 1865 and in Matamoros, January the 16th 1865.

Bagdad, Mexico:

January the 16th 1865. I sold my half of the schooner Adeline to John Bietry for \$1000 in gold in Bagdad, Mexico.

Matamoros, Mexico:

February 1865. I commenced to build a blacksmith shop in Matamoros, Mexico, and a house to live in.

July the 15th 1865. My wife and children arrived in Matamoros from New Orleans.

August the 4th 1865. Blacksmithing was getting very dull. I closed the shop and returned to work on board the steamer Antonia. I repaired machinery at \$5 per day.

August the 26th 1865. I joined the steamer Antonia as first Engineer at \$150 per month.

September 1865. The Antonia laid up and all hands paid off.

September the 21st 1865. I engaged to inspect machinery for Benson and Company at \$5 per day.

October the 16th 1865. The steamer Antonia was sold to the

Merchants of Matamoros Benson and Co. being part owners in the boat. The requested me to go on the Antonia as first Engineer at \$150 per month.

October the 19th 1865. The governor of Mexico pressed the Antonia into the service as a gun boat for the Rio Grande River. The crew had the privilege of staying or leaving the boat. I for one remained on board as chief Engineer.

November the 6th 1865. We started for Matamoros with a detachment of French Marines Co. in number. November the 7th the next day we were attacked by 600 Liberals at Ranchita on 7 different times at different places until we got to Matamoros that same evening having 2 Marines badly wounded.

November the 11th 1865. My wages were raised to \$200 per month.

November the 31st. My wages were lowered to \$150 per month.

December the 28th 1865. I demanded \$200 per month as chief Engineer on the gun boat Antonia and I got it.

January the 5th 1866. The Negroes made a raid into Bagdad, Mexico and attempted to capture the Antonia lying at Le Grande Warehouse but failed.

January the 7th 1866. I left the gunboat Antonia.

December the 25th 1865. My wife's mother died Christmas Eve at 2 o'clock PM in New Orleans, La. Catherine _____.

February the 13th 1866. I joined the steamer Antonia as first Engineer at \$150 per month. She is no longer a gun boat. March the 1st the Antonia laid up and all hands were paid of.

Bagdad, Mexico:

March the 9th 1866. I engaged to work for Mr. King and Kennedy as first Engineer for one year at \$125 per month, March the 9th. I commenced to work on the steamer Terry Galvan as first Engineer at \$125 per month.

August the 27th 1866. I was removed from the Galvan to the steamer Alamo.

September the 4th 1866. I was removed from the Alamo to the steamer Antonia.

October the 12th 1866. I was removed from the Antonia to the Terry Galvan.

Matamoros:

November the 20th 1866. I was taken very sick with the Rio Grande fever on board the Terry Galvan on the trip up to Roma.

January the 6th 1867. I started from Matamoros for New Orleans for the good of my health in company with Victorine and arrived in New Orleans on January the 10th on the steamship Austin.

February the 27th 1867. I started from New Orleans on the steamship St. Mary for Matamoros, Mexico in company with Victorine and arrived in Matamoros on March the 9th 1867 in good health.

April the 15th 1867. I commenced to work in Mr. Cooper's shipyard in Bagdad, Mexico as blacksmith, wages \$125 dollars per month and boarded.

June the 23rd 1867. I was transferred to the steamer Antonia as first Engineer at \$125 dollars per month and boarded.

August the 4th 1867. I was sent on board the steamer Rio Grande as first Engineer. The boat was sent out on a trial trip as far as the Borida. With a party of invited guests and a splendid dinner on board the boat returning back the same evening giving good satisfaction and every person satisfied with the trip. I remained on board ___ days to repair a little and then went back on to my old boat Antonia.

October the 7th 1867. The Antonia was blown away from Bagdad in the great storm of that night and landed 5 miles of the river on English George Ranch 300 _____ from the river.

October the 11th 1867. I was sent off the Antonia to go up to Brownsville and work on the Tamaulipas to repair.

October the 12th Saturday 1867. I moved in to Mr. Victor L___s warehouse until such time as I could get a suitable house to live in, our house being blown away in the storm.

October the 15th. We got through with the Tamaulipas.....

Brownsville:

November the 4th 1867. I commenced to work on the steamer Jose San Roman as blacksmith at 125 dollars per month.

November the 30th. I was sent on board the steamer Tamaulipas No. 2 as first Engineer at 125 dollars per month.

Matamoros:

December the 7th 1867. I moved into the house on No. 8 Street in Matamoros.

December the 9th 1867. I was left behind by the steamer Tamauli-

pas No. 2.

December the 10th 1867. I was sent on board the steamer Jose San Román as first Engineer at 125 dollars per month.

January the 27th 1869. I moved from Matamoros, Mexico into Brownsville, Texas in the U.S. Garrison.

Brownsville:

July the 7th 1869. My wages in the _____ reduced to 75 dollars per month in green backs with ratios, housewood.....

Wednesday October the 13th 1869. Victor Egly, Jr. broke his left arm while playing at school in Brownsville, Texas.

Wednesday, November the 3rd 1869. I, Victor Egly, was initiated as an Odd Fellow in Excelsior Lodge No. 10 L. O. of O. F. of the state of Texas in the City of Brownsville.

April the 2nd 1872. My sister Elmine started for France.

September 9th and 10th 1872. Worked on the steamer _____ No. 2 repairing boiler at 6 dollars per day by permission of the Quartermaster.

Saturday May 9th 1880. My daughter Josephine Egly was married to James T. Johnson at 8 o'clock PM in the Presbyterian church by the Rev. Hall in Brownsville, Texas.

.....THE REMAINDER OF PAGE 24 IS UNREADABLE.....

March 1881. I returned back to Brownsville, Texas.....

March 22 1881. I bought the blacksmith shop from Charles for \$75 in Eagle money, repaired shop and commenced

February 16th 1882. I was sent to Point Isabel by Mr. T. Gomille to be Chief Engineer on the bay steamer Santiago, the Engineer being sick. I remained on board until Feb 25 1882. The Engineer became well again and I came back to Brownsville again. My pay was 7 dollars per day and board.

March 7 1882. I was sent to Point Isabel as chief Engineer again on the bay steamer San Diego in place of Henry Broughlan who was sick, and in March 23rd 1882 I came home again to work in my blacksmith shop. The Engineer of the Boar getting well again.

Sep 7th 1887. Went to work at George _____ warehouse on Rio Grande Plantation making molasses tanks at 5 dollars per day and board. Came home again on the 24th.

September 9th 1888. My son-in-law Herman Schrieber died...Born in New Orleans, La, died at age 34 years.

March 27 1888. At 15 minutes to 1 o'clock on Tuesday my grandchild Margie Johnson died in Fort Brown, Texas.

My grandson William Egly was born at 10:00 clock on Tuesday night, son of John B. Egly.

June 27th 1889. Josephine and Lily Johnson started for New York from Point Isabel, Texas.

June 27th 1889. My sister Elmine and my daughter Marion started for San Antonio, Texas from Point Isabel, Texas.

June 27th 1889. My son-in-law Mike Leahy started from Point Isabel, Texas for Galveston, Texas with the Brownsville Riffle.

July 14 1889. Mike Leahy returned from Galveston in good order.

January 31st 1890. My sister Elmine died at 25 minutes past 12:00 clock AM on Friday morning in Brownsville, Texas. Aged 58 years.

July 22nd 1890. My youngest son William Egly got married at Point Isabel, Texas to Miss Frances Brown on Tuesday night.

My grandson John Egly...born son of John B. Egly at....half past 6...Tuesday.

December 5th 1891. Victor Egly, Jr. broke his leg about 4:00 clock in the evening on jackass racing (my son).

November 17th 1891. My grand daughter Honora Leahy was born, daughter of Katy Leahy on Tuesday morning.

Wednesday November 23rd 1892. My grand daughter Viola Egly was born. Daughter of John B. Egly at Fort Ringgold, Texas.

September 5 1892. My daughter-in-law Rita Egly started for Fort Ringgold, Texas.

January 21st 1893. Friday 2:30 o'clock my grandson Allen was born, son of Willy Egly.

January 28 1894. My sister Virginia arrived from New Orleans, La.

February 23 1894. Mama Kate started for Ringgold Barracks, Texas to see her son John Egly.

July 2nd. Mena Egly started for Ringgold Barracks with my grand daughter Katy Egly.

July 14th 1894. Johnny and Mena came down from Ringgold Barracks.

September 3rd 1894. My grandson Victor Egly the 3rd was born at Ringgold Barracks, Texas son of John B. Egly.

November 1894. My daughter-in-law Rita arrived from Ringgold Barracks with Children.

February the 18th 1895. Lillie and Flori Johnson took with the measles.

March 1895. I started for Point Isabel for the steamer San Diego as Engineer in place of Harry _____, he being sick; finished March 18th.

May the 31st 1895. My daughter-in-law Francis arrived from Aransas Pass with her 2 children Ada and Albert Egly, wife of Willy Egly.

April the 1st 1895. I commenced work as blacksmith at Point Isabel, Texas. Finished up on the 7th of same month at _____ Light Station House.

July 31st 1895. My grandson W. R. Egly was born on Wednesday evening 6:00 o'clock, son of Willy Egly at his grandfathers house, Victor Egly Sr.

December the 25th 1895. My grandson _____ Egly was born at 3:20 o'clock at Fort Ringgold, Texas son of John Benoy Egly..

February the 16th 1896. My son John B. Egly died at Fort Ringgold, Texas on Sunday evening. Born November 27th 1861 at noon in New Orleans, La.

April the 6th 1896. My son-in-law James T. Johnson died at Fort Brown, Brownsville, Texas at 8:00 o'clock at the age 52 years. Born in _____ New York. (Page 32)

August the 12th 1902. My grand daughter Melvina Schreiber got married to L. A. Jaqou Tuesday evening August 12th 1902.

July the 18th 1902. My grand daughter Irene Marguerite Egly was born, daughter of William Egly.

August 23rd 1902. I had my left foot badly hurt.

October the 25th. We moved into R. Neal's house. Our old house being torn down.

November the 4th. I went to work in Katie's store in 1902 in Brownsville, Texas.

December the 30th 1902. We moved in to our new house that Katie Leahy built for us across the street from her own house.

Saturday August the 1st 1903. My oldest son Victor Egly died at

3:00 o'clock PM. Was born in New Orleans, La, January 27th 1860.

February the 22nd 1904. My great grandson Adolf Jaqou was born in Brownsville, Texas.

July 1904. Katie Leahy sold the International Store.

August the 10th 1904. My daughter Katie Leahy sold the International Store on Elizabeth Street in Brownsville, Texas.

August the 7th 1904. My great grandson T. Celestine Jaqou was born in Brownsville Texas.

May the 2nd 1906. My great grandson Celestine Jaqou died.

August 26th 1906. My grandson Victor....(Page 35)

.....THE REMAINDER FOR PAGE 35 IS UNREADABLE.....

March the 10th 1909. My wife Catherine Mear died at 11:00 o'clock Wednesday morning after an illness of several months at the ripe old age of 74 years.¹

1. Published with the permission of Joseph Egly.

by

Brian Robertson

Calvin Walker, a well-known area architect and member of the museum's board of directors, supplied me with information about letters written during the Civil War by James Horrocks.

Horrocks was a schoolteacher in London who fled to America to escape a paternity suit. He enlisted in the 5th New Jersey Battery as Andre Ross to escape detection and finally became an officer in the "Colored Regiment," which brought him to Texas. He arrived in Brownsville in 1865.

"The country we passed through had a sameness that was quite wearisome, he noted in one letter. The scenery was broken up by some rather curious and interesting things, including snakes of various kinds. We killed twelve rattlesnakes on the way. There are some millions of lizards, an abundance of mosquitos and creeping things, tarantulas and poisonous spiders and above all the horned frog of Texas, which has six or eight horns on its head and body and a tail like a crocodile."

The tarantula in particular impressed Horrocks. Horrocks and a doctor captured one in the doctor's tent. "It was the most horrible looking spider I ever saw," the soldier explained. "It could not have been less than 3 inches from tip to tip, and both legs and body were covered with hair. They captured it and "sent it to rusticate in the inside of a glass case filled with alcohol. The company it found there was very select, consisting of two scorpions, a lizard of a venemous kind, and an ant an inch and half long."

The soldier was also impressed for completely opposite reasons by the area's birds, especially the mockingbird. "I once heard a nightingale, but I think the mockingbird goes a little ahead of him," he wrote.

Horrock's lack of confidence in the drinking water of South Texas has been echoed by many since then. "The only water we have to drink is the Rio Grande, which is so muddy that if a saucer is filled with it, the bottom cannot be seen, and if a tumbler be filled and allowed to stand for an hour or so a deposit of mud is made at the bottom at least half an inch thick. But after it has settled it is good water, much better than the condensed water we were compelled to use at Brazos.

After staying in Brownsville, Horrocks moved on to Ringgold Barracks, which he stated "is at the tail end of the Universe." By 1866 Horrocks would be out of the Army and he would return to Brownsville. At first, Horrocks stayed at the Miller Hotel, but later moved. "Board is very high here so I sleep in the office and board with a family up town, for which I pay 8 dollars a week."

He also mentions several murders - saying there were 15 cases in a recent court. "About six weeks ago there was a man tried by court-martial and sentenced to be hung. The day was set

and he was visited by his minister and expressed great penitence. The gallows were erected and all was ready. Early in the morning the jailer went into his cell and found it empty. Upon examination it seemed as if he had escaped through the roof."

That was not the end of the story. Three days later the man was discovered hiding in a tunnel beneath the jail. It seems that he had burrowed down, hidden, and was waiting to lead all the remaining prisoners out of the jail to freedom. Instead, he was hanged as planned.

Smuggling was certainly "known to happen." In fact, Horrocks claimed to have known at least six "respectable" ladies who carried items across from Matamoros by way of a double skirt, made up so as to form a large circular bag, which in connection with a hoop skirt did not present any unusual appearance." Not all attempts to cross the river were clothed in secrecy. On June 11, he wrote to his mother about a man named Santoni who crossed the Rio Grande River on a tightrope - "from a republic to an empire."¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville, Museum

Endnotes

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 23 August 1989.

by

Roberto Mario Salmón

Recently, a printed broadside dealing with the January 1866 protest of Matamoros, Mexico, merchants and residents was encountered in the José San Román Papers of the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center in Austin. A search of the papers indicates that it is perhaps the work of José San Román, Spaniard and resident of the Matamoros-Brownsville region. As a paid and circulated advertisement, the protest of the merchants and residents of Matamoros against acts of the government of the United States and its representatives is endorsed by some 150 residents and companies, and certified by the vice-consuls of Spain, France, Prussia, and England.

The document is significant in that it touches upon the Borderlands gamesmanship of Don José San Román, successful merchant, broker, and one of many European businessmen capitalizing on the profit-yielding opportunities of the Matamoros-Brownsville region. Born at Valle de Arcentales, Bilbao, Spain in 1822, San Román came to America in the late 1830s, settling first in New Orleans, where he apprenticed with the English merchandise firm of Thorn M. Grath Company. Then, sponsored by the Grath Company, San Román moved to Matamoros, Mexico and established a general dry-goods firm in 1846. By 1850 his business extended across the Rio Grande River to the newly incorporated townsite of Brownsville. As a powerful broker for the ruling elite on the Mexican side of the river, San Román prospered, expanding his business into commercial credit, trustee holdings, real estate, and cotton brokerage. Exploiting international controversy, San Román played a behind-the-scenes role in United States troop movements in Matamoros (1846-47), José María Carbajal's filibustering expeditions in the South Texas-Tamaulipas area (1851-52), Juan Cortina's revolt (1859) and European intervention in the northern Mexico-South Texas region. His role in these affairs makes him somewhat of an enigma in South Texas history.¹

The broadside and history which follows contributes significantly to information indication a fierce competition between European, Mexican and U.S. merchants along the Borderlands and also suggest that the struggle for capital gain became a major battleground between international gamesmen.²

Obviously, the early history of the Matamoros-Brownsville community conceals fierce conflicts of interest between different economic groups within the population, trade patterns, government policies, competitive pressures, and the region's discernible state of the economic cycle (depression, recovery, boom, recession). One must ask, if history is to be creative, what role did José San Román, Francisco Yturria, Manuel Alonso, Simón Celaya, Manuel Treviño, J. H. Fernández, Samuel and Jeremiah Galvan, and other European or Mexican visionaries played in the formulation of protests such as this one. Moreover, one must also ask, why do

historians avoid emphasis on some facts and not others. This is not to make a moral judgment. This type of judgment historians should avoid at all costs. But perhaps it is time to give visionaries like José San Román the same attention which some historians give to the visionaries in the most respectable of settings. In fact, José San Román's story can deepen our awareness of the variety of factors that enter into South Texas history.

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, many European merchandise firms focused with great expectations on the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Speculation circulated that the city of Matamoros could possibly make a greater connection with Mexico's mining industry, and open the South Texas Tamaulipas region to foreign investment. Spain, France, Prussia, England, and other European powers considered this a feasible project, and to capitalize on the shifting balances in international trade, young men such as José San Román were apprenticed to international firms operating out of New Orleans and Havana. Thus, at sixteen, San Román learned the dry-goods business under the direction of Thorn M. Grath & Company. As his mentor, Thorn Grath took a liking to San Román and taught him the ins-and-outs of the retail and wholesale trade. Under his direction, San Román's natural talent for business quickly developed. One aspect of his training that is particularly fascinating is the man's obvious talent for bookkeeping. He developed a capacity for managing volume, costs, efficiency, and responsiveness--so much so, that he had little time for social activities. He joined La Compania de Cazadores de Orleans, la legion de la Louisiana in 1843, one of the few social organizations he would eventually join. San Román maintained a low profile. Business appears to have claimed his heart and his soul.³

In regard to existing trade patterns, the overall plan of European countries like Spain, Britain, and France was to capitalize on the problems and economic tensions within the United States and Mexico. America's transition to a market economy stimulated public and private investment, especially in the international exploitation of Mexico. Thus, while still in New Orleans, men like José San Román learned the functions of retailer, wholesaler, importer, exporter, shipper, and banker.⁴ In an age before the typewriter, Xerox, and fax machines, he learned the laborious skill of business forms and correspondence. He also handled such mundane assignments as arranging customhouse clearances and duties, processing shipping papers and other documents. While in Brownsville, San Román handled all aspects of his business interests.⁵

With most of his commerce based on credit, San Román constantly remained susceptible to boom-and-bust cycles which characterized the commercialized segment of the modern state. Still, he survived the bank credit investment panics of 1843 and 1857. While representing Grath & Company in Matamoros, San Román learned to evaluate his customers carefully before offering them any goods on credit. His books show that he kept confidential credit statements on poor risks, thereby minimizing risks with his South Texas customers.⁶ Also, he protected himself by legally

becoming the trustee of many of his clients. Concerning his virtues, San Román, according to John Salmon "Rip" Ford, amassed a large fortune "and was never accused of having wronged anyone in its acquisition."⁷ His relationship to other key South Texas figures focused around this type of influence. He lived off of his reputation for honesty and became a good friend of men like Mifflin Kenedy.

In the 1840s, when San Román arrived in Matamoros, silver, gold, lead, wool, hides, and beef tallow from San Luis Potosí, Saltillo, and Monterrey were passing through that thriving city, with silver making up the greater percent of exports. By the time José San Román had introduced the techniques of mass selling which transformed retailing in Matamoros, that city, with a population of 9,000 was the largest town on the northeastern Mexican frontier and was third in trade among Mexican ports on the Gulf.⁸ A short distance from the Gulf, Matamoros seemed destined to be a port of entry for various foreign interests. San Román made it clear that the natural advantage of Matamoros gave it control of the lucrative San Luis Potosí trade. On the U.S. side of the river, trade passing through American customs at Brazos Santiago alone was valued between ten and fourteen million dollars annually. Considering Spanish, French, German, and British designs on the commerce of northern Mexico, one gets a wider view of late nineteenth-century South Texas affairs. More directly, historical understanding involves more than, say, an appreciation of Mifflin Kenedy's river transportation monopoly. It also involves raising questions leading to a recognition that this monopoly can only be understood in the context of such realities as San Román's challenges to this particular monopoly, his friendship with men like Kenedy, and by understanding that commercial credit in many of these Valley ventures was controlled by San Román.

Interestingly, since he was the consular agent for Spain in the 1850s, San Román's papers contain a series of dispatches involving European affairs, vice-consul reports from other areas of northern Mexico, and letters of introduction for new Spanish diplomats and consuls assigned to northern Mexico. With his aid, consuls were established in various cities, ambassadors exchanged, trade relations eased, and commercial interactions regularized.⁹ The point is that with San Román as an agent for Spain, commercial interactions in the Matamoros-Brownsville area were finding their way back to Madrid. Here was an area and a river that linked the rich commerce of northern Mexico to the rest of the world, located in a stretch of land which remained in continual dispute.

American annexation of the Lower Valley region ushered in new laws and a highly self-conscious group of United States' merchants, lawyers, army officers and civil officials. In order to govern, they sought what David Montejano has called "an accommodation" between the many Valley worlds of San Román and his allies. Montejano called it a "peace structure"--a postwar arrangement which allowed United States troops to maintain law and order without the constant use of force.¹⁰ In essence, the United States presence generally represented new interest in

Mexican society, it did not completely transform governance, economies, or society. Men such as Charles Stillman, Richard King, and Mifflin Kenedy merely affixed themselves to the class-conscious society of northern Mexico. In many cases they intermarried and became extensions of the region's established families, a convenient way of increasing their status, authority and position in life. Still, the social and economic basis for post-war governance rested on the goodwill and character of an international elite, an elite that followed the lead of José San Román.¹¹

In the Lower Valley, communities were socially and culturally mobile, composed of landed families, rancheros, vaqueros, and upwardly mobile campesinos. Matamoros in the 1840s was a class conscious society. Yet like many borderland areas, opportunity for mobility existed. The 1850 census report showed an accommodation between old and new elites, but it also displayed many new European and Mexican names not common to the original structure of society. Some 66 percent of the immigrant residents in 1850 came from Mexico. After the Civil War, the arrangement began to change. The loss of land, labor displacement, and commercial recession quickly put Valley culture on the defensive, but the cosmopolitan nature of Matamoros-Brownsville continued. Some 15 percent of the population were of European ethnic origin. Mexican newcomers, most of whom were from the laboring classes still made up the majority.¹²

José San Román, fearful of United States military and civil interests on the Texas side of the Rio Grande, appeared adamant in his response to its presence. But retaining a sense of where he stood in the new order, San Román continued to play a behind-the-scenes role in the conflicting affairs. His loyalties were subjected to a difficult test with the Cortina War, French intervention in Mexico, and filibustering efforts of José María Carbajal. But always the opportunist, San Román seemed to play the game extremely well. This is an admittedly foggy category, but his habitual and consistent patterns of behavior show that he lived beyond the events of the moment and was influenced by the weight of European interests, economics, and the upheaval that characterized Mexico and the United States from 1846-1870. In fact, looking at San Román's involvement in U.S.-Mexico affairs is like peeling an onion. It must be done from the outside, with each layer separately removed. As you get closer to the center, you find that his orderly, conservative class interests prevailed over the liberalism of U.S. or Mexican affairs.¹³

For example, after the U.S. invasion of 1846-48, open fighting broke out in Matamoros between the conservative and liberal elites over the governorship of the state of Tamaulipas. The allied governors of northern Mexico were working hard to keep the conservatives out of power. San Román's involvement in the conflict was to protect the shipments of gold and silver bullion out of Matamoros and, of course, the return shipments of necessary supplies and luxury goods into the mining areas of northern Mexico. He endorsed the conservatives' political motives when necessary or the liberals' motives if they were back in power. In Brownsville, there arose a sharp political division between

the "Reds" and the "Blues," the Reds being the Stillman merchant class and the Blues representing European/Mexican interests. The difference was over who controlled the land and political power, especially the new townsite of Brownsville. San Román played a behind-the-scenes role in a group that came to be called the "antimonopolists," who sought the benefits of free trade, whereby foreign goods could enter Mexico duty free.¹⁴

While intermarriage in several instances strengthened class solidarity between the international newcomers, San Román's way of securing his wealth and maintaining class solidarity was through direct kinship. In Brownsville, he sponsored Simón Celaya, and his relatives Agustín San Román, Feliciano San Román, and Justino San Román. He served as the link to their future, but he made each start at the bottom of the business. He made sure that each family member was given a hands-on education in business and acculturated to the profit-yielding opportunities of South Texas. Also, as a close friend of Santiago Yturria, he kept the contacts open with Mexican commerce, industry, and ranching.

It must be kept in mind that European business interests also provided much of the financial capital and work necessary to exploit the richness of the Matamoros-Brownsville area. Many Europeans who cooperated with certain lawyers, merchants, and ranchers shared in the prosperity of early Brownsville. The international boundary had given the river a strategic commercial importance. Merchants like San Román, with global outlets on both sides of the river, were in an excellent position for managing international trade. That this particular trade consisted of smuggled goods mattered little, for the trade had soon acquired, in the minds of certain merchants of the upper class, a legitimate status. Men like San Román learned to keep two sets of books--one quasi-legal and the other based on the reality of Mexico-United States relations. San Román understood institutional patterns, national policies, profit, and the games people play (i.e., long-standing legal, customary, diplomatic practices and situations).

By the late 1850s José San Román had moved some of his activities to Brownsville and along with Jeremiah Galvan, Santiago Yturria, Mifflin Kenedy, Richard King, Charles Stillman, Humphrey E. Woodhouse, and the Treviño brothers monopolized credit services to smaller merchants, forcing many of them on the U.S. side of the river out of business. A former associate of Stillman, John Young, and San Román also operated several steamboats along the Rio Grande, including the Alamo and the José San Román. Keenly aware of declining fortunes, they sold most of their interests in the Guadalupe and another steamboat, the Swan, to Mifflin Kenedy and Company in 1857.¹⁵

As a result of the federal blockade during the Civil War, San Román became a key power broker in the contraband trade carried on in Matamoros, Brownsville, and Bagdad. His firm served as one of the major brokerage houses for hundreds of cotton farmers west of the Mississippi River. Moving back to the safety of Matamoros in the early 1860s he, wholesaled cotton to textile firms in New York, England, France, and Germany, thereby avoiding

the interference of United States military and government representatives.¹⁶ By 1862, he and other European merchants had turned Matamoros into an international market place, monopolizing trade and playing a game with the formal/informal functions of the Borderlands. San Román knew the players. He knew the rules, and he knew the penalties.

Perhaps the best of San Román's games was "hide and go seek." This informal game, keeping the Union out, consisted largely of transporting Confederate cotton to the international marketplace. Brownsville-Matamoros, as an international outlet represented the Confederacy's only port not blockaded by Union forces. San Román made a fortune in this game. In the 1860 census reports San Román shows up as having personal property valued at \$300,000.¹⁷ Yet his Civil War business records, auditing his debtors and creditors, show a wealth five times that figure.¹⁸

San Román's access to wealth based on cotton, along with a keen business sense, accounted for his manipulation of the cotton trade. In August of 1862, for example, cotton was bringing sixteen cents per pound in gold at Brownsville. By the end of that year San Román was selling it at twenty-five cents, and by April of 1863 the going price was thirty-six cents per pound. What was just as important for San Román was the steady supply of coffee, wines, silks, linens, guns, gunpowder, and lead he shipped back into northern Mexico. With his key connections through New Orleans and Havana, San Román played a key role in United States-Mexico relations.¹⁹ He represented Spanish designs, but did speak for Mexican and Anglo merchants as they transferred their business ventures across the border where they could bury and sell for less—depending upon business circumstances.

Thus, the protest of the merchants and residents of Matamoros immediately following the Civil War is of most importance in understanding the boom-and-bust cycles of Brownsville-Matamoros. The merchants who signed this particular protest considered it their duty, "as friends and supporters of order, law, and justice," to publicly denounce the acts of the United States against the "de-facto" government of Mexico.²⁰ Therefore, in January of 1866, some 159 merchants and residents of Brownsville, Matamoros formally protested against the insecurity of the roads leading to the interior; the interruption of trade; the depreciation and destruction of all kinds of merchandise, values and property; the perpetration of every species of crime; the devastation and pillaging of the smaller towns, villages and farms in the Valley of the Río Grande, and that all these calamities were the results of the underhanded and immoral policy enacted by some representatives of the United States government.²¹

The result of this protest was that the United States provided some mild enforcement of neutrality laws, and acted to check the arbitrary interference of its commanding officers in Mexican affairs. The greater consequences of this protest is that the majority of petitioners were the same people who made up a merchant elite called "antimonopolists," not a conscious conspiracy, but an accumulation of economic/class responses against the interest of liberal reform in Mexico.

With French intervention in Mexico, San Román moved quickly and gained a greater share of banking and commercial credit on the Texas side of the river. He opened a much larger mercantile firm in Brownsville, which was managed by his cousin, Simón Celaya. He again franchised and in the late 1860s, with Celaya as his principal agent and Humphrey Woodhouse as a financial backer, he helped to secure a charter for and built the Rio Grande Railroad from Point Isabel to Brownsville. While the group called the "monopolists," the Stillman elites, was moving in on smaller Mexican merchants, San Román was supportive of a free zone, or Zona Libre, whereby imported goods could be sold along the Mexican side of the border without paying tariff. The "monopolist" resented these trade bills, for they had long enjoyed an economic advantage along the border.²²

The "monopolists" objected to any trade advantages gained by San Román in Mexico and applied political pressure on the U.S. government to intervene and invade Mexico if necessary.²³ The "antimonopolists," which San Román now controlled, rejuvenated trade and transportation by charging small administrative fees to favored Mexican merchants who used his transportation outlet. By 1875, moreover, the San Román side of this economic struggle reinvested in the steamboat monopoly of King and Kenedy. Then, citing health reasons, San Román returned to Spain in the late 1870s. Perhaps if he had stayed, the economic recessions of 1880-1900 would not have been so severe.²⁴ This is to say that San Román impacted events along the Texas-Mexican border, and that Texas merchants had to respond to his international gamesmanship.

In 1878, San Román was succeeded by his nephew Feliciano San Román. First, he gave his nephew power of attorney in 1873 and then he sold the business to him in 1878. Fulgencio López, the son of Tecla San Román and Ignacio López, succeeded his uncle Feliciano in 1899 and ran the business until his death in 1927.²⁵ But the San Román story does not end here. The complex international situation in the Brownsville-Matamoros region, where San Román, Celaya, Yturria, Kenedy, King, Stillman, and others were players in a wily game of cat-and-mouse has to be fully understood. San Román's story, however, invites new insights and additional evidence. We must therefore continue to seek out new causes which carefully describe the patterns of society and culture viewed in isolation for far too long a time, apart from the whole that originally conceived Valley history.

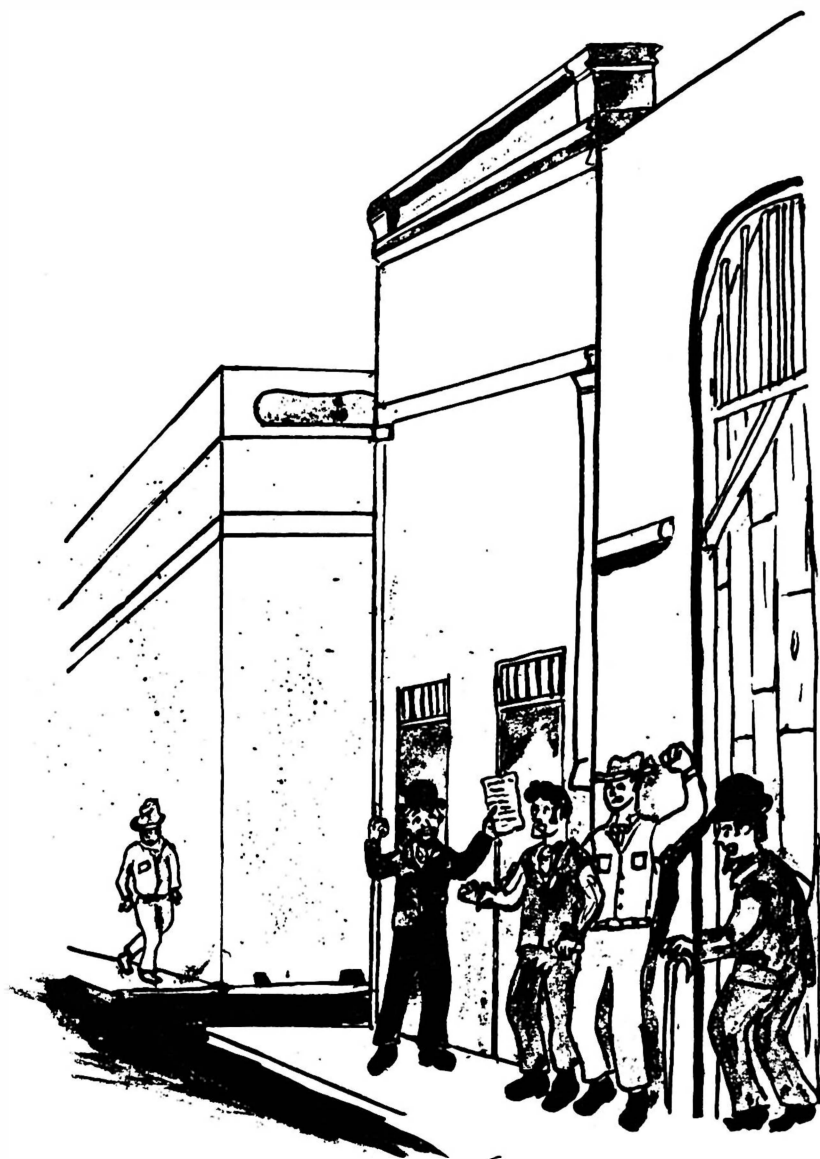
The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg.

Endnotes

1. A modified form of this study was previously published in South Texas Studies, Vol. I (1990): 54-68.

2. The José San Román Papers, 1823-1934, consist of 21 feet of business records, typescript ledgers, consul reports, copies of newspapers, and numerous pamphlets, brochures and other ephemeral material. San Román Papers, 2G 119.

3. Ibid., 2G 41, May 9, 1843.
4. Ibid., 2G 120-146.
5. Ibid.
6. San Román Papers, 2G 119, p. 44-46.
7. "Don José San Román," Vertical File, John Hunter Room, Arnulfo Oliveira Library, Brownsville.
8. See Arnolde de León and Kenneth L. Stewart, "Lost Dreams and Found Fortunes: Mexican and Anglo Immigrants in South Texas," The Western Historical Quarterly (July 1983): 295; Antonio Zavaleta, "The Twin Cities: A Historical Synthesis of the Socio-Economic Interdependence of the Brownsville-Matamoros Border Community," Studies in Brownsville History, ed., Milo Kearney (Pan American University, Brownsville, 1986) p. 162.
9. San Román Papers, 2G 146.
10. David Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 (Austin, 1987), 34-37.
11. Ibid.
12. See de León and Stewart, "Lost Dreams and Found Fortunes," 295; also, Zavaleta provides both Matamoros-Brownsville census figures in "Twin Cities," 162, 168. I disagree with T.R. Fehrenbach in Lone Star (Austin, 1983), when he describes social and cultural contact between Europeans, Mexicans, and Anglos, 289.
13. San Román Papers, 2G 51-53, 2G 119.
14. John H. Hunter, "The Civil War Years in the Valley," (1960), manuscript, Hunter Room, Oliveira Library, Brownsville, 2-3.
15. Chauncey Devereux Stillman, Charles Stillman, 1810-1875 (New York, 1956), 18-20.
16. James A. Irby, Backdoor at Bagdad (El Paso, 1977), 9.
17. Ralph A. Wooster, "Wealth Texans, 1860," Southwestern Historical Quarterly LXXI (Oct., 67): 173.
18. San Román Papers, 2G 119.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. For a Mexican view of this conflict see José Raul Canseco. Historia de Matamoros (Tamaulipas, 1981). Rodolfo Acuña gives a brief summary of La Zona Libre affair in Occupied America (1988), 28-29.
23. Montejano, 96.
24. See Le Roy P. Graf, "The Economic History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820-1875," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1942), 407-408.
25. "San Román" Vertical File, Hunter Room, Arnulfo Oliveira Library, Brownsville.





BRITO AND SCRUFFY

The Dishonest Servant

A Folktale told by

Peter Gawenda

"Buenas tardes, teniente. Como estas?" el Jefe although in his eighties recognized many of Felipe's customers. "Bien, bien,...y Usted?" "Bien gracias!" he said smiling. Whenever Jefe was awake it was storytime. "Did I ever tell you how intelligent the Sheriff was? You know, Brito?" "Yes, lots of times," answered Felipe impatiently, "yes, you did!" "Pero, amigo, did I tell you about how he caught the thieving servant?" Jefe looked at the faces of his listeners, "well, did I?" "No," said Felipe, "no, you sure didn't."

Felipe as usual was all ears, and his two customers, not knowing Jefe, just stared, but they were ready to listen. Felipe explained to them, "el Jefe knows all the old stories, he knows all of them. I tell you, if he would only write them down." "Well, who is Brito?" asked one of the customers. "Well, Brito was a sheriff in Brownsville back in the eighteen seventies. They say, he was a guy who loved to make fun when catching criminals." "Hey it's my story," said the old man, "mi abuelo knew Brito, he knew him very well!" "Ah, 'cause Brito jailed him, didn't he?" joked Felipe. "Si, pero...he was not guilty!" said Jefe. "I was just joking," laughed Felipe, "well tell us what happened!"

"Brito's neighbor had three servants, good, hardworking people. Then he bought the store and hired two more. But that's when it started. A quarter was gone, then flour, then a bottle of whiskey, and then a pair of shoes from the lady of the house, and even two plates and a knife." Jefe held his head for a moment, "I think,...also a nightshirt from the owner was gone,...and it did not disappear from the clothesline,...it was taken from the house. Well, the owner told his friend and he told Brito about it. So, Brito went to his neighbor and asked him about the stolen things. The neighbor had already asked each of the servant, but,...no one knew what happened. Everybody started watching everybody, but...nothing was seen or found, and more things disappeared." Jefe stopped, just shrugged his shoulders and lifted his hands up in the air. He looked like a priest before he gives his blessings in church. "So what do you think Brito did?"..."Well, that shows you how smart Brito was!" said Jefe.

Then he took a deep breath, and he continued, "Well Brito went to the house of the neighbor on Saturday. On Saturday everybody got paid, you know. In the old days, everybody worked on Saturday too, they knew how to work, and they needed to work because they didn't get much money then. They all stood in the kitchen around the big table, where they ate at noontime. ...and then the Sheriff hit the table with the flat hand and everybody jumped. Ay Dios, did they get scared,...even the owner of the house jumped, and the wife and the two daughters came running

into the kitchen."

Jefe started grinning and he showed his teeth or what was left of his teeth. He chuckled trying not to laugh,...and then continued, "Brito hit the table and yelled at them, 'Get on the floor,...get on the floor!'"...and they say, that everybody just scrambled to get down, cause Brito had a voice like thunder. And then he yelled, 'Get under the table,' and everybody got under the table, even the younger daughter crawled under the table. Well, then he hit the table again, 'Is everybody under the table?' and they all said si and yes and the little girl started crying."

Suddenly, Jefe started laughing, he shook all over, he couldn't stop. Even Felipe started laughing, "Hey, what happened, what happened then,...will you stop laughing, ay viejito calle-te!" Jefe stopped laughing and continued, "You know what he did, can you believe that?" "Who did what, will you go on!" Felipe became impatient, he quit cutting the boy's hair and finally yelled, "Well,...go on!"

"Well," Jefe caught his breath, "well,...Brito asked again, 'Is everyone under the table?' and again they all said yes, and Brito hit the table and it almost cracked, 'Well, is the thief, el ladrón abajo también?' and one voice answered almost crying, 'Si, señor!'...and that's how Brito caught the thief," and Jefe started laughing again...and then everybody started laughing. "Yes, Brito must have been a smart man," Felipe said still laughing.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

The Horse Thief

A Folktale told by

Peter Gawenda

"Cuando recuerdo, se llamava Brito, creo que si... Brito. I think he was the Sheriff, en diez-y-ocho setenta. Aye que hombre, ...funny for those who didn't do anything wrong. Pero, La Madre de Dios better help los hombres who broke the law. Los viejitos me dicen que...he liked everybody to see how smart he was, because then los hombres malos don't try anything. Si, ... Brito was a very smart man."

Jefe's eyes started sparkling, "Brito era muy rápido con su pistola, ...so fast that your eyes couldn't look fast enough. They say, he could even outdraw Cortina. Su pistola adornada con plata was in his belt, ...but he had another one, ...muy pequeña, ...hidden in his boot. Y compadre, he sure could ride. He loved his horse and he loved su rancho. He was proud, a proud man, si señores, un hombre muy orgulloso. You know, he was always elegante, ...dressed in fancy vestidura. Los viejitos me dicen, ...he put on a fresh shirt every second day and another one en el Dia Del Dios."

Now, Jefe switched to almost perfect English, "I don't know whether he was a church going man, ...nobody remembers or maybe they forgot, ...but the Lord still watched over him. He must have spent more money for the washwoman and his boots than for tobacco. And you could see yourself in the tips of his boots...es la verdad." Jefe took a deep breath and his eyes got lost in the distance. He seemed to stare across the street to the theater or maybe even through the theater. For a while, all you could hear was the clatter of the scissors and the steady breathing of the five men in the barbershop. Felipe took a sip from his cold coffee and continued cutting hair. The newspaper of that day said something about Oswald and the Communists. Felipe did not like the electric machines, he preferred to cut hair with his scissors or his Solingen razor blade. But suddenly everything stopped, ...even Felipe, and they all stared at Jefe. "Well what happened, what did he do, did he get shot?" The customer next to Jefe grabbed his arm and shook him.

Ever so slowly, Jefe seemed to come back from where his thoughts had been. He suddenly put a touch of a smile on his face. "No," he whispered, "he sure was funny." He stopped suddenly, then sat up straight and asked, "did you hear how he caught the horsethief? Well, let me tell you, Brito was a smart man. ...It was on market day. Brito was standing by the horses. He always stood by the horses, he looked at them as if he was a judge in a horse competition or if he was trying to buy one of them. There were several horse and cattle traders and there were lots of people looking at the horses and all the other animals." Jefe's voice got louder, he suddenly became excited.

"...And here came David, the Jewish peddler. David was not his real name, I think it was Moishe, but everybody called him

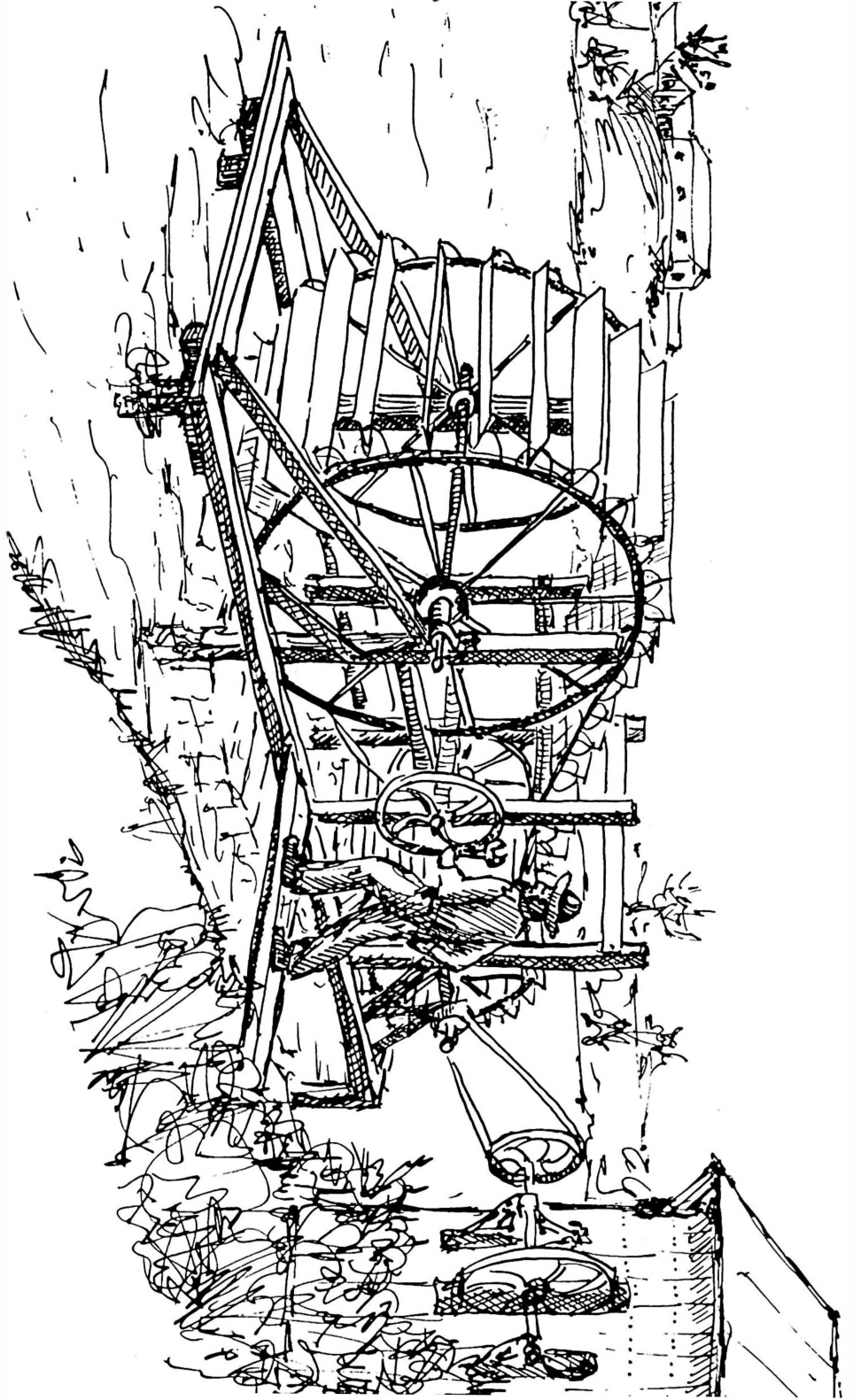
David. He went straight to Brito, took of his hat, and pointed at the brown horse in the back. The horse had a black nose and a small white cloud between his eyes. 'Good morning Sheriff,' David always said good morning, 'this is my horse, he stole it from me in Matamoros, this is my horse.' Brito first looked at the peddler, then at the horsetrader. He had seen the trader before,...he looked like a nice man. And he almost believed the trader, when he said, 'The Jew is lying, this is my horse, I bought it in San Antonio. The Jew is lying.' 'But this is my horse, I call her Shickse. See, see how she throws her head when I call her Shickse,' and the horse really did throw its head toward the little peddler."

"Brito called the peddler and asked him to tell him about any marks the horse might have, that are not obvious. 'No,' said the peddler, but suddenly his eyes lit up and he began grinning all over his face. 'Sheriff,' he said, 'can I tell you something?' Brito bent down to the peddler and listened to what the Jew whispered in his ear. Brito started smiling too, and then he told the peddler to just go ahead." Jefe smiled real big, he was standing now, and walked over to Felipe and Felipe had stopped cutting hair. "You know what he did,...do you know what he did? He covered the eyes of the horse just like this. Then the Sheriff said to the trader, 'The horse is blind in one eye, which one?' The trader took a quick look at the peddler and said quickly, 'The left eye, it's the left eye.' The Jew smiled and removed the hand from the horse's left eye. It looked just fine. 'Gosh, I made a mistake, I should've remembered,...it's the right eye!' yelled the dealer. The peddler still smiled, and now removed the second hand from the right eye of the horse. But that eye looked normal also. Without raising the traders suspicion, Brito had motioned one of his deputies to move behind the trader. And when Brito said to his deputy, 'Take him in,' the deputy quickly grabbed the trader's gun. Brito still smiling added, 'and give the horse back to the Jew. Give him the second horse too!' Well now you know, how smart the Sheriff was?" When talking, Jefe had covered Felipe's eyes and demonstrated what the peddler had done with the horse.

"Hey Felipe, how does it feel to be a horse?" laughed one of the customers. Felipe went back to cutting the hair. He laughed,...everybody laughed. "Si, el Sheriff fue un hombre muy inteligente," said el Jefe, and very slowly he sat back down again.

The University of Texas at Brownsville





The River Machine

A Folktale told by

Peter Gawenda

(Fall, 1963)

Viejito, now in his nineties, was only five years old when he saw the mechanical monster in the river, ...that big thing, for the first time. "It was a strange looking thing, lying or swimming in the water, with two big wheels" he said, "right down there up the river, you know, beyond the railroad bridge. You really could not see it because of all the bushes and trees...and the bend of the river." He paused for a moment and turned his hat in his hands, then he continued, "maybe you would have seen it from the other side, but there were no houses."

He said that his older brother used to take him to the banks of the Rio Grande on a Saturday evening when father had gone with his friends to the cantina. At first, Robert made the mechanical monster his big secret and only after paying him a whole nickel he would take you through the thick brush and mesquite to the bank of the river. "From only one of the higher spots you could look over the bushes right past the little house without windows, ...and there you could get a glimpse of the strange thing. It looked like a sunken steamboat with no chimney and no cabins, but at the same time, ...it was on stilts and had boards running all around it, "Viejito was moving his hands, trying to show what the thing looked like.

"The first time, when Roberto took me, we waited and just looked. It was almost dark. I was afraid because there were so many different noises around us. Nothing moved, only the grass and some of the bushes swayed in the light breeze. I never held my brother's hand because boys didn't do that, but this time it was different. I slowly moved my hand into his and he just grabbed mine and held on and that's when all hell seemed to break loose. The big wheels suddenly started turning and then something started screeching and whistling and flashes came through the cracks of the building," Viejito was standing now.

"I wanted to run, but Roberto held on to me and put his other hand on my mouth. 'Shsh...don't make a noise,' he whispered. The door opened and a man walked to the monster in the river. He banged on the big wheel at the front with a big hammer and then turned the wheel several times. Then he walked along the boards, banged here and there, looked over the river and then bent down and reached into the water. The flashes continued in the building and the rumbling and screeching became even louder. Then the man walked back into the house. Roberto still held me down, but finally let go of my hand. He pulled something out of his pocket, and then picked up a stone. He had a slingshot. Before I could stop him, he pulled the rubber band back and the stone hit the little building. The door flew open and the man came out yelling strange sounds. He raised his fists, jumped back and everything just stopped...the noise and the flashing. I

started crying, Roberto grabbed my hand and we ran back home. My arms were scratched and my knee was bleeding." Viejito looked around; he was a little embarrassed and slowly sat down again.

"For several weeks, Roberto did not take me to that thing in the river. I could not ask father, because I had given the promise of the snake and breaking the promise could have caused a snake to bite me...and in those days, I believed whatever mi hermanito told me. I begged him one evening to please take me. He wanted to go with some of his friends and, as he had promised mother to take care of his little brother, I was allowed to go along with them to the crazy thing that the man had built in the river. This time we went closer and I could see it clearly. It had two big wheels that looked like the paddle wheels of a old cotton steamer that my father had shown me in Brownsville. It looked like boards were mounted on long chains...and the chains with the boards were moving over the big wheels into the water, and under the water to the other big wheels, up over that wheel, and then back to the first large wheel, over that wheel, and back down into the water and so on. On the side of the smaller wheel was an iron wheel with a big belt, and that belt disappeared into the building. To this day I wonder what might have been hidden in the building, but we never dared to go too close.

This time again, the same thing happened. Suddenly there was lots of noise, like scraping and screeching and then all the flashes from the house. Roberto and I stayed. All the others just ran, and how they ran! Roberto just yelled after them like the man had yelled at us when I went the first time to see that big thing. We only left when the man came out with a big dog. 'The dog is new,' Roberto said. The man did not yell or come after us, he did not even look in our direction, but Roberto decided to leave and pulled me with him. We started running home because we had to be home before my father. Mother was helping grandmother make a blanket so she did not know that we had left." Viejito took a deep breath and looked out the window with the big letters...Barbershop written backwards.

"During the following months, we went back several times. We still did not dare to get too close to the house and the big thing. Roberto said that we would not understand the man anyways because he was either crazy or maybe that Dutch mechanic who had come here during the war, and Roberto was already in school, so he must have known. We all started calling that thing the river machine, because it was our big secret. It did not go up and down the river like some of the boats, neither did it move the house, and it did not seem to drive anything," Viejito smiled and shook his head.

"Right after the big storm and the flood, maybe two days later, we tried to get down to the river. There were fallen trees and bushes everywhere and there were dead animals that smelled horrible. The water in the river was still high, almost to the top. Some of the trees were still there, but the river machine must have left. We also could no longer see the house," Viejito paused and put his right index finger on his forehead, "Maybe it was a boat or something that could move in the water. My brother Roberto just said, 'I hope the man did not drown.'

For a long time I wondered what he meant. We all forgot about the river machine, too bad, we should have looked for it after the water had gone down," Again Viejito took a deep breath and just stared out of the window.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Ванька-Ванька



by

Brian Robertson

It is difficult to find the first Cameron County Courthouse. You would have to do some checking, because the first county seat was not Brownsville, but rather the town of Santa Rita on Highway 281 at what is now known as Villanueva. Santa Rita had the claim of being the county seat for only a year, yielding up the honor before the commission's second meeting on January 15, 1849. At that Brownsville meeting, several residents of Santa Rita showed up to protest the move.

Setting aside Santa Rita and the mystery of why the county seat was relocated, we can look for the first courthouse in Brownsville, but this would take some time because between 1848 and 1882 Cameron County conducted its business from various rented locations around the city.

Betty Bay, in her book, Historic Brownsville, states that the county did use Brownsville City Hall on Market Square for offices. She also maintains that in 1852 the county had "purchased an already existing structure at East Levee and 10th streets, which was enlarged by the seller to serve the county's needs."

It wasn't until 1882 that Cameron County saw a real honest to goodness courthouse being constructed in Brownsville. The architect was J.N. Preston and Son from Austin, Texas, and local builder Samuel W. Brooks worked on the construction. The building, located at 1131 East Jefferson Street, was a spectacular piece of work. W.H. Chatfield, in his book Twin Cities of the Border, which was published in 1893, has glowing reports about the structure. He suggests the courthouse was built for the sum of \$60,000, while other sources have given the figure as being quite a bit lower. Betty Bay in her book says that the builder was awarded a contract "on December 19, 1881, for \$24,242 with bonds payable in 15 years at 8 percent interest."

In writing of the courthouse - which was then only 10 years old - Chatfield stated, "It is constructed of brick, is three stories in height, with a handsome cupola towering above every other building in the city and affording a landmark, visible for many miles to travelers by land and river." The fact that the courthouse was visible is evidenced by the photographs which appear in Chatfield's book. He has four views of Brownsville - north, east, south and west - all taken from the vantage point of being atop the courthouse.

Inside the building were a number of offices and most of those on the first floor belonged to county officials. The second floor was the scene of the actual courtroom, and Chatfield called it "a model forensic arena, capable of seating five hundred spectators without crowding the court." In addition, Chatfield noted, "Convenient retiring rooms for judge and jury are located on the same floor." The third floor of the building

was used to house witnesses and provide sleeping rooms for court officers. The few photographs which have survived the years show the rather spectacular steeple style cupola sitting atop the building.

The cornerstone of the building was laid in 1882 and the inscription contains several important names. The county clerk was Adolphus Glaevecke, and the sheriff of the county was Santiago Brito, a man whose detective skills helped solve what came to be known as the Valley's Great Train Robbery. Other names included "Jas. M. Haynes, County Judge." The commissioners were Frederick Froto, Alex Werbinski, José Esparza and Cornelius Stillman.

From then until 1913, the building served as the county courthouse. After that time, the courthouse was located at 1150 East Madison Street. The first courthouse of Brownsville is now in the protective possession of the Masonic Lodge, Masonic Temple of the Rio Grande Lodge No. 81, AF & AM.

It is not immediately recognizable from the old photos because it lost its cupola and roof to the great hurricane of 1933.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus.

by

Brian Robertson

In the earliest days of Brownsville, people who came through this area were unanimous in their verdict--the town was guilty of being wild.

As a matter of fact, Brownsville had quite a reputation as a collecting ground for violent characters, and that Wild West kind of lifestyle was still in effect long after some of the more famous outposts - Dodge City and the like - had calmed down a bit.

On Tuesday, January 2, 1894, Brownsville was the scene of a lurid murder and drowning.

The Brownsville Daily Herald reported that at 3 o'clock in the afternoon two gentlemen got into a bit of an argument. At that time, Miguel Ruiz met up with Antonio Franco, with fireworks to follow. Franco was a porter at Manuel Barreda's store and the accounts of the time don't indicate whether or not these men were friends.

The scene of the murder was, according to the Daily Herald, "a house of ill repute." No location is given, except that it might have been in the western portion of the city. At that time, there were more than a few such houses located around the Fort Brown area. Over the years, as witnessed by older city council minutes, representatives from the fort would periodically request assistance from the city police in clearing out these operations.

In this case, Franco and Ruiz got into a very verbal discussion over a certain woman. The two had apparently been drinking heavily. After a few words were exchanged, there was a gunshot and Ruiz fell to the floor mortally wounded. According to the newspaper account, "Ruiz was shot just under the left eye, the ball penetrating the brain (sic) which caused almost instant death."

Franco followed what seems to have been a time honored tradition following a crime - he made his way at a trot toward Mexico. The reporter noted that Franco, "started on a dead run for the river to make his escape to the land of God and Liberty."

Franco reached the river at a point a hundred yards up from the landing for the steamboat Bessie. The killer was obviously in some hurry and decided not to wait for the next available sailing. Instead, with his pistol in hand, he dove into what must have been the cold waters of the Rio Grande River.

He drowned.

The only other mention that can be found of the incident comes some two days later in the Daily Herald when the editor made a special note, saying, "The funeral of Miguel Ruiz, the man who was killed last Tuesday, did not take place from the Catholic Church, as stated in the Herald."

The paper seems to indicate that Franco's body was never

found. Miguel Ruiz's resting place is a bit easier to determine.

A quick glance through the cemetery records of the old Brownsville Cemetery yielded up a few more facts. Miguel Ruiz was indeed buried in the cemetery and the records indicate he "died of a gun shot" wound. According to the records, Ruiz was born in Mexico and was 50 years old at the time of his death. He is buried in Lot 44, Block 24.

Franco's body may never have been recovered. Ironically, the only Franco from that period resting in the cemetery is Mateo Franco, who died on June 20, 1891 at the age of 26 years. He is buried in what is called the Chano Tomb. Cause of death? Gunshot.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 19 May 1990.

THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY



The St. Peter Motor Chapel

by

Brian Robertson

These days we are accustomed to drive-up windows at banks and drive-through facilities at fast food restaurants. If you're like me, maybe you grew up in a community where bookmobiles brought library services to the neighborhoods. Mobile health care units rolled into shopping centers with an astonishing assortment of equipment used to diagnose blood problems, check cholesterol and more.

But a mobile church, complete with altar?

That's the story behind the St. Peter Motor Chapel. The story began in 1913 when the Catholic Church Extension Society of Chicago donated a Motor Chapel to the Oblates of Texas, the order that did so much in the earliest years of development in this area to form the heritage and culture of the region. Although the Oblates are perhaps better known in the Rio Grande Valley as the people responsible for the historic La Lomita Mission, their story is wide-ranging in time and miles. The purpose of the Motor Chapel was "mission duty and all divine services," and the vehicle arrived by train in Brownsville in March of 1913.

Father Tyman was in charge of the project, and he drove the Motor Chapel through the streets of Brownsville accompanied by Father Constantineau and Father Ledvina. These were the days before 18-wheelers and U-Haul trucks and, according to reports from the time, a good number of residents were frightened by the immense size of the Chapel as it rolled through the streets of Brownsville.

The Motor Chapel was immediately placed on exhibit in the town plaza, opening into a large tent under which 50 folding chairs could be placed.

An unnamed village near Brownsville was the scene of the first services using the St. Peter Motor Chapel. Shortly after that, word came that another service would be held in Mission in Hidalgo County. The Fathers boarded the Chapel with great expectation, but there were more than a few problems along the way brought on by the size of the vehicle. Valley roads, such as they were, were designed for smaller, lighter vehicles. Because of that, power lines were not all that far off the ground. The Motor Chapel ran into one of the lines, but, thankfully, no one was electrocuted.

A bit further down the road another problem developed. At that time the bridges across canals were fragile at best, and quite often they could just be carried away by thieves. The Motor Chapel tried to cross one of these bridges and the bridge collapsed, leaving the Chapel Car "hanging in the air."

The car was what we today might call a gas guzzler. Reports say that if it was able to get five miles per gallon it was considered a miracle. The St. Peter Chapel Car also proved difficult as living quarters while on the road, even though,

theoretically, it was designed to sleep two. In reality, it was simply too narrow and the priests slept outside on folding cots.

The Chapel did overcome most of the problems, however, and visited such towns as Rio Grande City, Roma, Edinburg and Mercedes. In Donna, however, difficulties arose once again, involving a bridge that collapsed. The scene of the accident was near a recent derailment by Southern Pacific train cars, and when equipment was sent to work on the train, that same equipment was used to lift the car from the bridge.

The St. Peter Chapel left the Valley for San Antonio, where it was put into service for a brief time. Mechanical troubles caused it to be abandoned in the town of Hondo, but a priest from Houston had it sent over to his parish. The unpaved roads in the area proved to be too much for the poorly designed vehicle, with wheels too small and load too heavy.

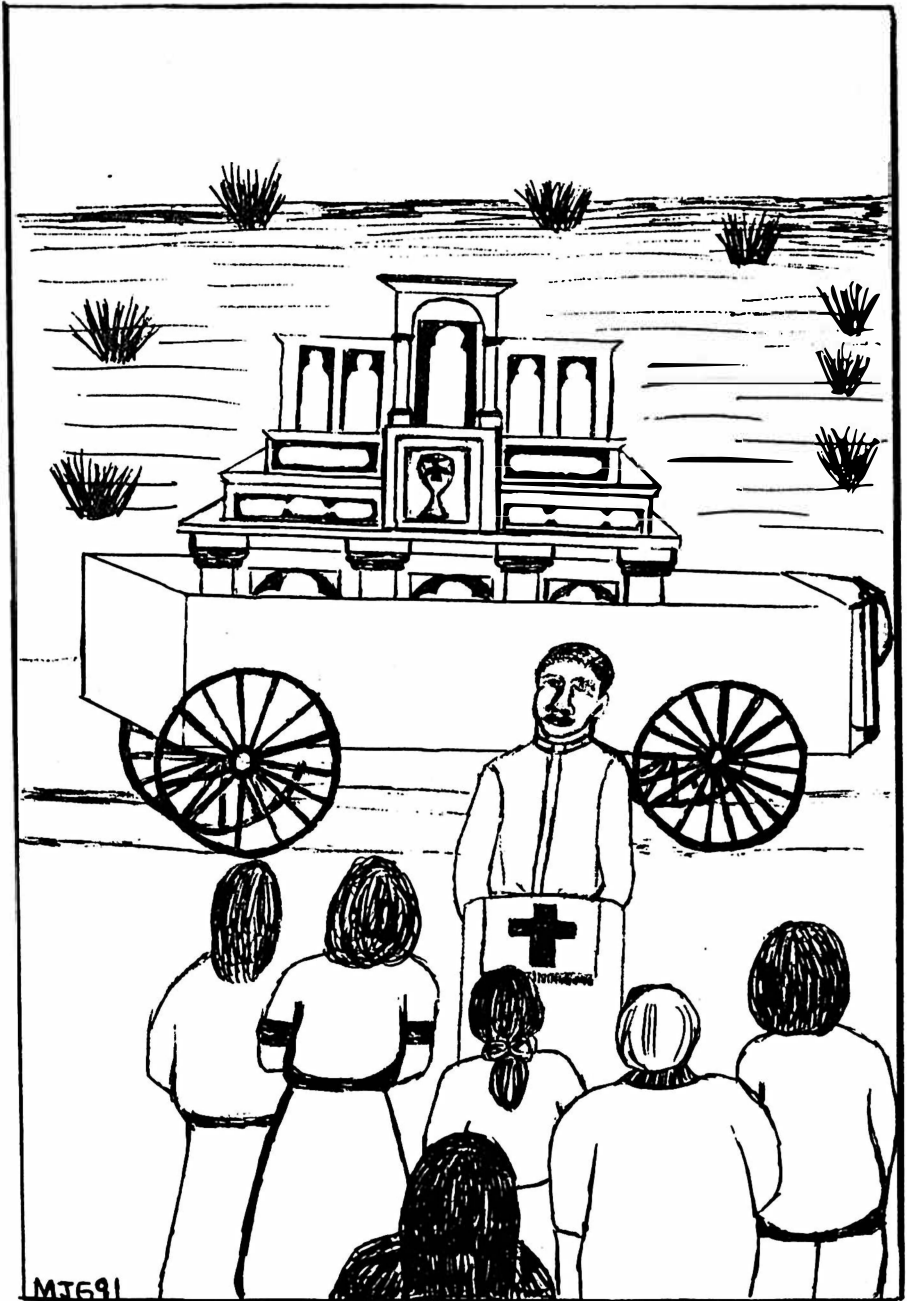
By 1919, the car had once again been put into service, only to end up junked in Austin at the Guadalupe Church. It deteriorated rapidly and in 1922, Bishop Byrne ordered that Father Mongeau "break it up, dismantle it, put it out of its misery."

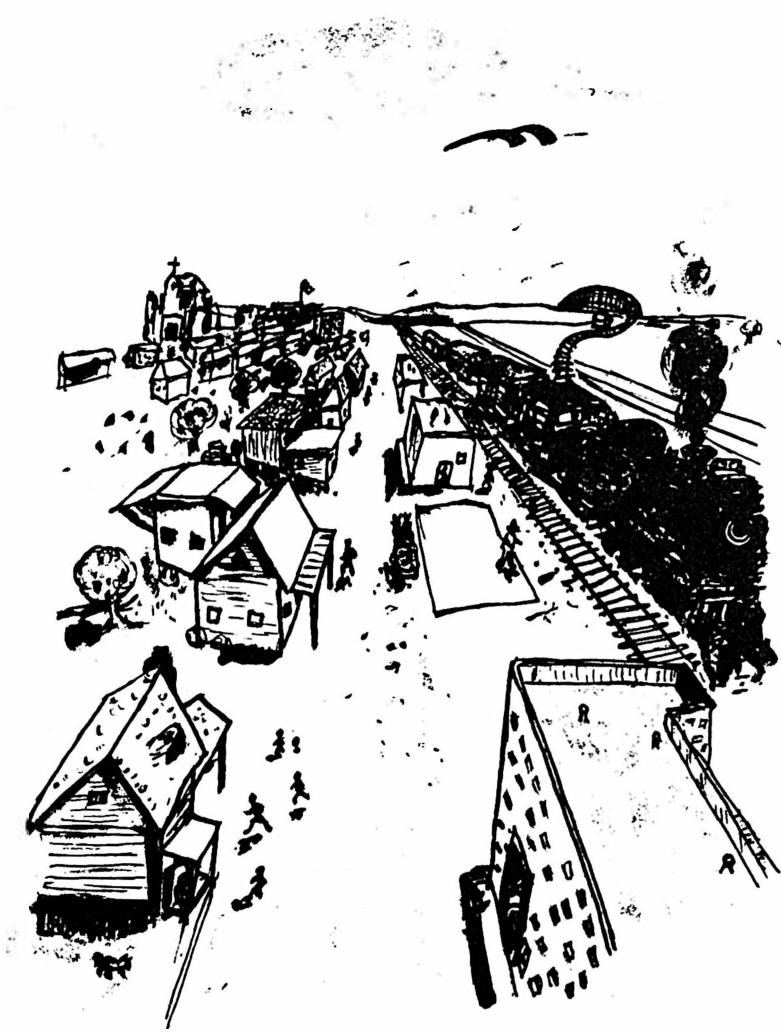
Parts vanished, including the five-gong chime and portable organ. The altar, however, the "heart" of the vehicle, is on display at the Historic Brownsville Museum. It is fitting, in a way. The Museum's former role as the Southern Pacific depot echoes back to that time when the Southern Pacific's crane brought the ailing Chapel Car a little help from on high.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted with the permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 20 October 1990.





Robert Runyon's Historical Photographs

by

Brian Robertson

His name was Robert Runyon, and, perhaps more than any one individual, he captured the flavor and essence of life in the first part of this century.

By the first decade of the 1900s, Brownsville was the elder statesman of Rio Grande Valley towns. In spite of this and a long, rich history of ranching, South Texas was a frontier. Runyon came to this "new world" in 1909, having been born on July 28, 1881, in Catlettsburg, Kentucky. His primary reason for choosing South Texas and Brownsville was, by some accounts, the desire to leave the cool weather of New Jersey for a warmer climate. He found it.

In fact, things were heating up in a big way in Brownsville at the time Runyon arrived. The revolutionary troops were on the prowl in Mexico. As a photographer, Runyon took the chance to photograph the events he saw unfolding around him at the time.

Perhaps the most spectacular event was the attack on Matamoros by General Lucio Blanco's Constitutional Army. On June 3, 1913, Blanco's men captured the Federal Garrison, and the sounds of the day-long battle filtered across the river into Brownsville. Many from the southern side of the river had crossed over seeking shelter, bringing with them tales of death and struggle.

It was precisely those images that Runyon sought to capture. He crossed over the river on the day after the battle and made his way through the streets with his camera. All around him was testimony to what had gone before. Bodies were piled, covered with gasoline, and then set ablaze. Executions were held in various locations, including the Market Square and the old fort, the Casa Mata. Surviving federal soldiers and leaders were put against the wall and shot by firing squads.

The revolution spread, and Runyon was there to see it on the move. General Blanco allowed Runyon a special pass which permitted him to travel into places that would certainly have meant death without such backing. Runyon's journey took him to Monterrey, Saltillo and San Luis Potosí. The landscape was dotted with bodies--Federalists--with some hanging from trees or poles.

As the agitation spread, the United States decided to send troops to the border in an effort to protect the citizens. This was, in part, fueled by the infamous "Plan of San Diego," the terroristic plan to liberate America's southwest states and create a new republic. Indeed, Runyon reportedly was well aware of proclamations being passed about in Mexico which called for the "taking of Texas."

With the arrival of U.S. troops, Runyon's camera was once again active. He spent time moving through the various camps, photographing the training, day-to-day life and facilities of the soldiers.

Runyon's historic and artistic contributions to Brownsville were accompanied by another area of expertise which won him international fame. He became interested in botany and accumulated a very fine library on the subject. His attention turned to the native plants of South Texas, and he was especially knowledgeable concerning cacti, being co-author of Texas Cacti, which was published in 1930 by the Texas Academy of Science.

Indeed, Runyon's work earned him a life membership in the Botanical Society of America, the Torrey Botanical Club, the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, and the Cactus and Succulent Society of America.

Runyon drew attention to endangered species, including the few remaining native palms at the old Rabb Plantation. Much of our basic knowledge concerning these and other now vanished plants can be traced to Runyon's work.

Robert Runyon served the city of Brownsville as city manager from 1937 until 1940 and then as mayor from 1941 to 1943. Runyon died on March 9, 1968, leaving a rich legacy.

Recently, the Runyon family donated Robert Runyon's photographic equipment to the Historic Brownsville Museum. Much of that equipment is on display now in the museum's changing gallery.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 30 August 1989.

The Mexican Revolution and the Bandit Wars:
The Lower Rio Grande Valley in 1915

by

William V. Wilkinson

While banditry along the Texas-Mexico border was a relatively common phenomenon from the mid-1800's until 1920, this banditry reached a peak during the "Bandit War Years" from 1912 to 1920.¹ Historically, the Bandit War era has been attributed to the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and national prohibition.² Recently, Rodolfo Rocha has added lawlessness that existed in the Valley from the turn of the century until 1912 to the list of causal factors leading up to the Bandit Wars.³ This thesis was explored by William Wilkinson in "Lawlessness in Cameron County and the City of Brownsville: 1900 to 1912."⁴ However, lawlessness in isolation seems lacking in explanatory power, and World War I and national prohibition appear to have had only a negligible effect on the rebelliousness of the citizenry of the Texas-Mexico Valley area. This then leaves the impact of Mexican Revolution to be considered in order to be truly appreciative of the events leading up to the Bandit War Years and the violence that occurred during that era. In this paper, the year 1915 will be examined in light of the influence of the Mexican Revolution on the Lower Rio Grande Valley with respect to acts of banditry. This year was selected as this was the most violent year during the 1912 to 1920 era and was the year of the "social bandits."⁵

The Mexican Revolution, 1910 to 1914

Under the regime of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911), the border during the later part of the nineteenth century was relatively calm. Indeed, at the turn of the century, it seemed to Valley residents that peace and prosperity were at hand. This apparent tranquility soon ended with the violent events that led to the revolution of 1910.⁶

In January 1904, the revolutionary Flores Magón brothers Enrique and Ricardo crossed the Texas-Mexico border at Laredo, joined other Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) members, made plans to reestablish the radical newspaper, Regeneración, and plotted revolutionary activities. The paper was published by the end of 1904, but the revolutionaries left Texas after the arrest of Enrique. However, the PLM junta returned to Texas several times from 1905 to 1911 and continued their attacks against the government of Porfirio Diaz. Between the efforts of the Magonistas and the efforts of the Anti-re-electionists, the stage was set for the 1910 Mexican revolution.⁷

On February 7, 1908, Diaz granted an interview with James Creelman of Pearson's Magazine. During this interview, Diaz stated that he had no desire to run for reelection. The Anti-re-election party took this statement as truth and Francisco I.

Madero prepared for the 1910 election with the publication of La Sucesion Presidencial de 1910 (The Presidential Succession of 1910).⁸ At first Diaz supported Madero's participation in order to show that Mexico did have a democratic process, but Madero's popularity led Diaz to have Madero arrested during the campaign. While Madero was incarcerated, Diaz won reelection easily.⁹

Madero escaped and fled to San Antonio, where he followed in the footsteps of the Flores Magón brothers, establishing the headquarters of a revolutionary junta. The Madero revolution began to gain momentum, particularly in the Northern Mexican states. Maderista rebel leader Pascual Orozco attacked Juárez on May 8, 1911; the city fell on May 25, and Diaz resigned a short time later.¹⁰

Madero was sworn in as president on November 6, 1911, but his victory was to last only a little over a year. During that period Madero had to face the challenges of counter-revolutionists such as Emiliano Zapata, Pascual Orozco, Félix Diaz and Bernardo Reyes. On February 9, 1913, a coup by conservatives ended the Madero revolution. General Victoriano Huerta used the existing crisis to assume the presidency, and Madero was killed. The Madero revolution may have ended, but the Mexican Revolution was about to enter a new and often more violent phase.¹¹

Immediately after the Decena Trágica (Ten Tragic Days), Huerta moved to consolidate his power, and by March 1913, all major cities in northern Mexico were under federal control. However, Huerta had two major adversaries in Venustiano Carranza in northern Mexico and Woodrow Wilson in the United States. Wilson attempted to end arms sales to Huerta, but the porous nature of the border and the inability to control foreign sales by sea led to another ploy. Wilson recognized Carranza of Coahuila as the provisional head of the "Constitutionalist" government, which included important northern military leaders Obregón of Sonora and Villa of Chihuahua. Wilson permitted arms sales to the Constitutionalists and sanctioned United States interventions at Tampico and Veracruz in April 1914. As a result of pressure from the Constitutionalists and the United States, Huerta resigned on July 15, 1914.¹²

On August 1, 1914, Carrancista forces entered the city, and two weeks later Carranza entered the National Palace. There was a general feeling that peace at last would come to Mexico, but as Rocha states, "the hope of peace soon became despair when Francisco Villa broke with Carranza two weeks after the Constitutionalists had gained control of the capital."¹³ Not only did Carranza have to deal with the military attacks of the Villistas, he had to gain the recognition of President Wilson and the United States. These two energy depleting tasks left few resources for dealing with an economically and politically fragmented country. The peace that Carranza and Mexico sought would not come until power became consolidated and rivals were eliminated.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this resolution would not come about for several more years.

Banditry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley: 1915

There is little doubt that many Mexican Americans in the Lower Rio Grande Valley wished to benefit from the revolutionary activity in Mexico. Certainly the ideological concept of redressing past grievances and injustices had a tremendous pull for those on either side of the border who had been grieved or who had suffered injustices. "The Mexican revolution was a movement of the campesino for equality and recognition," and this movement was expressed by Mexican Americans in the Valley through support, overt and covert, of those Mexicans and Mexican Americans who stood up to and attacked "the predominant Anglo-American upper class which oppressed them."¹⁵ The concept of the Mexican-American social bandit is analogous to the European social bandit who expressed frustration with social conditions in his community by attacking high status people as well as their symbols of oppression.¹⁶ Rocha points out that

the Mexican American "social bandits" assaulted symbols of modernization, such as railroads and irrigation pumping stations, which upset traditional patterns of life. In the rural Rio Grande Valley where political consciousness was not well developed among most Mexican Americans, young "social bandits" gathered in 1915 to avenge injustice.¹⁷

The seeds of social banditry had been sown in the previous years with the well-known exploits of Juan Cortina, Catarino Garza, Gregorio Cortez and Jacinto Treviño. Corridos written about these and other local heroes were sung in Mexican American homes, cantinas, and bailes, reflecting the idea that the way for a person to achieve dignity is to fight back "with a pistol in his hand."¹⁸

The "social banditry" was confined to the "diamond" of Texas, an area bordered to the north by the Nueces River, to the south by the Rio Grande, to the east by the Gulf of Mexico, and to the west by Starr County. From Starr County to beyond Laredo, there were few Anglo landowners. Instead, the landowners were descendants of the original Spanish settlers, providing little justification for friction with the working class. Beyond this area, there were few targets for raiders, and El Paso had a large military presence that discouraged raids. The Plan de San Diego called for a revolution all along the United States-Mexico border but this did not materialize. Rather, "the Mexicano 'social bandits' in 1915 sought to change conditions only in South Texas."¹⁹

Raids

Bandit raids began in 1914, but little attention was paid to an activity that had been going on for many years before the Mexican Revolution. Raids continued into the first three months of 1915, becoming more frequent by May. On May 30, a raid occurred at Rancho de los Indios. A large band of heavily-armed Mexicans was reported to have instigated this attack. Minor

raids continued through June, and on June 25, another large group of Mexicans crossed the river and killed Carlos Esparza, a Cameron County Deputy Sheriff who had a reputation of mistreating local citizens. During the month of July, eight bandit attacks occurred. These acts included stealing horses, robbery, kidnapping and murder.²⁰

The Valley grew more violent in August when approximately 25 bandit attacks took place. Three raids took place on August 2, but the outcome overshadowed the events themselves. While chasing a band of raiders responsible for one of the raids, a posse and military patrol rode onto the Los Tulitos Rancho the following morning. The Rancho was owned by Aniceto Pizaña, a prosperous, well known rancher in the area. The posse was led by Jeff Scribner, a local farmer who had previously feuded with Pizaña. The posse had information that the raiders were at the Rancho. During a gun battle between the posse and the Rancho, Pizaña's twelve-year-old son was wounded and later lost a leg due to the wound. Pizaña became embittered and formed a group of "social bandits" organized "to drive the Anglos out of the Valley."²¹

The intensity of the conflict did not lessen during September when twenty-three incidents occurred even with the Rio Grande rising. On September 1, raiders, reportedly led by Aniceto Pizaña, killed two Anglo Americans near the Fresno Pumping Station. By mid-September, raiders had killed, robbed, stolen cattle, horses, saddles, rifles and ammunition, burned bridges, and fired on American troops. Officials began to express concern over this constant raiding and began to place more blame on the "revolutionary movement" led by Aniceta Pizaña. The raids continued through the last of September. Attacks on American soldiers increased and a trooper was killed in an attack on the Turner Ranch. On the seventeenth, fifty raiders using covering fire from Carrancista troops attacked an army outpost, leaving at least seventeen raiders dead and many others wounded. On the twenty-fifth, a military patrol was ambushed; one soldier was killed, one wounded, and one taken prisoner. The prisoner was taken to Mexico and executed. After his ears were cut off, he was decapitated and had his head displayed at the river.²²

The river rose again on the twenty-eighth and a respite from the raids followed. Valleyites began to feel more secure. There was a general feeling that the worst was over. In large part this sense of security came from the replacement of General Nafarrate, Carrancista commander in Matamoros. Carranza replaced Nafarrate with Generals Lopez and Ricaut who were seen as more moderate than the anti-American Nafarrate, who had a reputation for being violent and for hating Americans. By September, it had become quite clear that Carrancista soldiers had participated in several raids and that Nafarrate would not or could not control his soldiers. Regardless, it was with great relief on both sides of the river when Nafarrate was relieved.²³

Raids decreased in October when only ten were reported. The first occurred on the fourth and none were reported until the eighteenth. The general consensus of opinion was that the new Mexican commander, unlike Nafarrate, withdrew support for the

raiders, and in fact, actively pursued them. From September 28 to October 18, there was a general feeling that the major effects from the raids were behind. However, one of the most serious raids occurred on the eighteenth when sixty raiders, reportedly led by Luis de la Rosa, derailed the St. Louis, Brownsville and Matamoros train as it was going through Olmito toward Brownsville. The bandits boarded the train and robbed all the Anglo passengers, killing five and wounding two. Two Anglomerchants were spared when they claimed to be Germans. The raiders were reported to have shouted "Viva Carranza," "Viva de la Rosa," and "Viva Pizaña." Three days later, another serious attack came at Ojo de Agua. Approximately one hundred bandits ambushed an eighteen-man patrol, killing three men and wounding eight.²⁴

This raid shattered the calm, causing many rural residents to move into the more urban Brownsville area or leave the area entirely. The land boom that had brought a certain amount of prosperity to the Valley ended, and local politicians called on federal and state authorities to send more support to the Valley through military forces and law enforcement personnel. In fact, the beginning of the end was in sight. De la Rosa was commissioned in the Mexican army, and he and Pizaña were reported to have received \$50,000 from the Mexican government in return for a cessation of raids along the Valley border. Pizaña reportedly refused the pension but accepted some land at El Encino, near Ciudad Victoria.²⁵

The train robbery and the Ojo de Agua raids were the last major incidents in 1915. Five raids occurred in late October, and in November, only isolated cases of firing on army patrols were reported. The last incident reported in 1915 occurred on the twenty-first when an army patrol was fired on near Mercedes. Life began to return to normal with a return to farming and ranching. Mexican Rurales were organized to stop the crossing of Mexican raiders, and "after seventy-three raids, peace came to the Valley."²⁶

Retaliations

While peace may have been restored with respect to many Valley residents, these raids set in motion events that would have lasting effects on the border area. Anglo Americans in the Valley were strongly opposed to these frequent and often terrifying raids. Unfortunately, the reactions to these raids were often overreactions, and generalizations from Mexican raiders to all Latins occurred, causing an unleashing of vengeance against the Mexican American population in the Valley.²⁷

Reactions by the military, local law enforcement officers, and most significantly, the Texas Rangers, brought a great deal of grief to innocent Mexican Americans in the Valley. Kearney and Knopp point out that "only a tiny minority of Mexican-Americans were involved in bandit raids, but the Anglo-American response seemed to condemn all Mexican-Americans."²⁸

In March of 1915, Governor Ferguson asked for federal

assistance in order to increase the number of rangers stationed on the border. Although this request was denied, state legislators provided the funds to increase the number of rangers in the Valley by thirty officers in the early summer and by fifty officers in August. It was also during this time frame that Valley Anglos formed vigilante groups of armed men who rode through the Valley searching for bandits.²⁹

Only scattered incidents of retributive violence were reported through July of 1915, but by August, events had intensified as can be seen by the following account given by Kearney and Knopp:

On August 2, 1915, an army private was killed in a shootout at Tule Ranch, twenty-five miles north of Brownsville. The next day, Rangers and deputy sheriffs attacked a ranch believed to be a bandit hideaway some seven miles farther north, killing Desiderio Flores and his two sons. Yet no evidence was ever produced that the Flores men had any connections with bandits or involvement in criminal activity. Following a shootout outside of Cameron County, at Las Norias, on August 8, 1915, the Texas Rangers embarked on an intensified manhunt in which anywhere from 100 to 300 Mexicans were killed. After a private was killed in a Mexican bandit attack on the Galveston Ranch, twenty-four miles west of Brownsville, on September 13, 1915, the soldiers arrested five suspects and threw them in jail in San Benito. Three of the suspects were taken down the Harlingen road that night, and their corpses were found the next morning.³⁰

This violence escalated and continued through September and October. Yet, while the raids subsided, the violence toward Mexican Americans and Mexicans continued through 1916 and into 1920 when the Texas Rangers were finally removed. The toll of this violent era can never be accurately known. Estimates of the number killed in the Valley have been placed at between five hundred and five thousand. Rocha reports recorded deaths of Mexicans in 1915 at 222.³¹ Another source reports that 200 Hispanics (of whom 90 percent were probably innocent) were killed by Texas Rangers from 1915 to 1919.³² Yet another source reports an estimated three hundred Mexicans executed on the Texas side without benefit of any legal proceedings.³³ Although accurate numbers of Mexican and Mexican American casualties can never be known, there can be no doubt that many innocents suffered merely because of their Latin ancestry.

There was a resurgence of raids in the spring and summer of 1916, though the intensity of these raids did not match that of 1915. Tension in 1916 came from the raids of Villa and the American troops in Mexico under the command of Scott.³⁴ By February of 1917, these tensions had been reduced, and the attention of the United States was focused on the coming war in Europe. In 1919 J.T. Canales pushed for an investigation of the Texas Rangers and the ranger force was reduced to seventy-six men.³⁵ Alvaro Obregón and his Sonoran supporters rose against

Carranza, driving him from power in May 1920, signifying the end of the Mexican Revolution and the year of turmoil and bloodshed in the Rio Grande Valley.

Conclusions

It would appear that the lawlessness that existed in the Rio Grande Valley from 1900 to 1910 was a necessary condition for the Bandit War Years of 1912 to 1920. However, lawlessness by itself could not be a sufficient condition for the years of death and destruction that upset the social fabric of the Valley. In the process of looking for other causes, historians have attributed the bandit era to World War I and Prohibition. Data suggests that these purported causes are neither necessary nor sufficient to be regarded as direct causal factors. But in the analysis of the effect of the Mexican Revolution, a case for sufficient condition can be made.

The Mexican Revolution came about largely because of the suffering of landless peasants who were not sharing in the middle-and upper-class prosperity during the covertly peaceful years of the Porfiriato. Many of these peasants were locked into an endless struggle for survival under conditions of involuntary servitude for wealthy masters. One only had to look at the popularity of the stories and corridos of men such as Gregorio Cortez and Jacinto Treviño to realize that the Rio Grande did not provide a barrier to oppression, prejudice, discrimination and exploitation. While it is unlikely that any planned uprising such as that proposed by the Plan of San Diego could have brought about any substantial change in the United States, the vision of "social bandits" striking back at symbols of oppression was satisfying to many Mexican Americans who had been suffering for years at the hands of the wealthy and the agents of the wealthy--the Texas Rangers.

In the final analysis, the "Bandit War Years" can be understood from a recognition of the lawlessness that existed in the Rio Grande Valley from 1900 to 1912 and from the Mexican Revolution that lasted from 1910 to 1920. While there is no doubt that other factors played an exacerbating role in this tumultuous period the data indicate that an interaction of lawlessness and the Revolution are necessary and sufficient conditions to explain this era of banditry.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Rodolfo Rocha, "Background to Banditry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas: 1900 to 1912", M. A. thesis, Pan American University, 1974, "The Influence of the Mexican Revolution on the Mexican-Texas Border, 1910-1916", Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1981; Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935, reprinted Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965).

2. Rocha, 1974, p.1
3. Ibid, p.6.
4. William V. Wilkinson, "Lawlessness in Cameron County and the City of Brownsville, 1900 to 1912," in More Studies in Brownsville History ed. Milo Kearney (Brownsville, Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989).
5. Rocha, 1981, p.256.
6. Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).
7. W. Dirk Raat. Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981), pp.20-21.
8. Rocha, 1981, pp.55-56.
9. Hall and Coerver, p.19.
10. Ibid., p.21.
11. Rocha, 1981, pp. 135-137.
12. Robert J. Shafer, Neighbors-Mexico and the United States (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), p.37.
13. Rocha, 1981, p.203.
14. Ibid., p.204.
15. Ibid., p.256.
16. Eric J. Hobsbawn, Bandits (London: Delacorte Press, 1969), p. 13-29.
17. Rocha, 1981, pp. 256-257.
18. Americo Paredes, "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez, A Ballad of Border Conflict," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1956.
19. Rocha, 1981, p.319.
20. Ibid., p.262.
21. Ibid., p.264-265.
22. Ibid., pp.274-275.
23. Ibid., pp. 275, 331.
24. Ibid., pp. 275-276; and Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1991), p.217.
25. Ibid., p.217, and Rocha, 1981, p.295.
26. Ibid., p. 278-279.
27. Ibid., p. 301, and Kearney and Knopp, p.218.
28. Ibid., p.218.
29. Rocha, 1981, pp.303-305.
30. Kearney and Knopp, p.218.
31. Rocha, 1981, pp.312-313.
32. Kearney and Knopp, p.220.
33. Hall and Coerver, p.24.
34. Rocha, 1981, pp.325-326.
35. Kearney and Knopp, p.220.





The Bloody War of 1915

by

Chip Dameron

Suppose one day
a traveler swore he saw a brown cat
glide through the chaparral, eyes
like ice in the noonday heat;
suppose the man who owned the land
just chuckled as he cooled his evening
coffee: "Nobody sees jaguarundis
by day. Only my pastores, merging
with their goats in the mesquites,
ever spot them in their moonlit
vanishings."

And so it can be hard
to tell for certain what each shape
might mean, here in this twilight
territory, north of the big river,
part way between one world's ways
and another's: medio Mélico,
Mustang Desert, the old Nueces
Strip.

Like a hurricane that rips
into the lower coast and flings
its fury outwards, twisting life
apart even in the hills of Central
Texas, the shifting revolution
of Madero, Huerta, Villa, Zapata
and Carranza fueled bandido raids
north of the border.

Also: local
men, vagueros and peones, watched
as cattle lands they worked on
were sold off to speculators,
cleared of cactus and mesquite,
cut by canals, and modeled as
the Magic Valley to farm folks
from midwestern states, coming
down on chartered land excursions
by the trainload. And rancheros,
whose roots were deeper than
any ebony's, saw their taxes
raised for county roads and water
lines, their ranches threatened
by those soft bolillos for whom
a Texas Mexican was just another
foreign face.

From these tensions
came the Plan of San Diego,
hatched perhaps by sediciosos

in Duval County, or bandits jailed in Monterrey, or Anglos sympathetic to Carranza, or German agents primed to blind U.S. views toward Europe. Found in early 1915 with Basilio Ramos, arrested in McAllen, it called in part for the certain slaughter of every North American older than sixteen, and proclaimed "the independence and segregation of the states bordering upon the Mexican nations, which are Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and upper California, of which states the Republic of Mexico was robbed in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism." For their support, allied Blacks would earn six other states for their own republic, and Indians would find lost lands restored.

Preposterous or not, raids began a few months later. Bridges were burned, irrigation workers murdered, a train derailed and raiders shot, ranches stormed and peppered with German bullets. On news of another killing, many farm families slept in the rows of their fields. Others sold out and took the next train north.

The U.S. Army struggled to respond, no real match for humid Texas heat and thorny brushland. In September, near Progreso, to revenge a sodier's death, a troop chased bandits to the river; in the skirmish bandits captured Richard Johnson, private, whom they later tortured (ears sliced off) and then beheaded, mounting head upon a pole and marching it along the southern shore.

Capt. Henry Ransom and his ruthless Texas Rangers made the difference. They rode down the ones they could and shot them this side of the river. Los rinches combed the brush, turned suspects out of their jacales, and executed those who were too frightened to respond. When women found their men, bullet

riddled or hunglike game from trees, they had to take their grief to God. Hidalgo County Sheriff A.Y. Baker even issued letters to loyal Texas Mexicans: "[bearer] is worthy to be trusted and can be allowed to pass over the County as he may see proper, and will lend his aid to the supression of any lawlessness that may arrive."

Frontier justice and President Wilson's nod to hot pursuit across the Rio Grande brought this violence to a close (some hundreds of bodies later), other than the steady fare of killing from the smuggling and the thieving that have long been a fact of life along the river, whose impurities still pour into a vast and ever changing sea.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Note: I drew facts and flavor from the following sources: Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, Texas and the Mexican Revolution; Maude T. Gilliland, Rincon; David Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986; John R. Peavey, Echoes from the Rio Grande; Brian Robertson, Wild Horse Desert; William Warren Sterling, Trails and Trials of a Texas Ranger; and Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Rangers.



Horses
"taken" to Mexico

Dr. Dutro's Recollections of the Bandit Era

by

Brian Robertson

Dr. Nicholas Dutro spent nearly forty years with the Bureau of Animal Industry in Brownsville, but some of that time included the so-called "Bandit Era" of 1915-1916 when raids from across the river were rather commonplace occurrences. Far from romantic revolutionaries, the raiders were by and large mercenaries paid by the German government to stage the raids. The idea was to keep the United States distracted by skirmishes along its border and out of the great war brewing in Europe.

Doc Dutro, as he was known by friends, arrived in South Texas on January 24, 1913. He was in Brownsville less than one month when Matamoros had a taste of the revolution which was brewing. The garrison in the city went over from President Francisco Madero to the old president, Porfirio Diaz. Dutro's memories were business related--that is, related to the business of cattle.

"On April 22," Dutro once recalled, "General Lucio Blanco took Reynosa and that was the beginning of our real trouble. There was a rush of cattle to the border. In those days, we didn't have any tick inspection, just a general health inspection. We went mostly on horseback. Those cattle were wild--you didn't walk around amongst them."

Doc Dutro's main job of inspecting cattle was somewhat challenged by an additional duty when he was made deputy sheriff under Sheriff V. T. Vann in 1914. "I was in a number of bandit skirmishes. It wasn't much. I couldn't even name them all now." Actually, Dutro did remember a number of the events of the time. "There was a pretty good fight at Los Fresnos," Dutro said. "Stanley Dodd of San Benito and a couple of other men were kidnapped. Dodd escaped somehow, but the others were killed."

Some years back, a relative of Stanley Dodd spoke with me and told me that the incident had a profound effect on Dodd. From that point on until the end of his life, he would never answer the door at night when alone.

Dutro also recalled that bandits attacked Jim McAllen's ranch on September 24, 1915, but A. Y. Baker gathered a bunch of civilians and chased them across the river. "At Ojo de Agua above Mission, the bandits ambushed some soldiers. We scrapped across the river for some little time. There were a number of bandits killed. Soldiers and civilians took part in the fight. "We couldn't see across the river into the brush on the other side. That's where the bandits were. A. Y. Baker, who headed our bands of civilians, went out on a sand spot on the river and exposed himself to draw fire."

The ploy worked, for the bandits opened up with enough gunfire to expose their hiding place. Baker dropped to the ground as if dead, and the bandits jumped up, celebrating. Those on the north side of the river then began shooting. There are famous

photographs which show the aftermath--bodies of the bandits stacked high. When asked exactly how many had been piled up, Dutro replied, "I don't know if any were. We civilians wee too damn lazy to stack up the bodies of dead bandits. Maybe the soldiers did."

After his years on the border during the Bandit Era, Dutro went off to war and returned after 1919. He continued his work with the Bureau of Animal Industry from Brownsville to the Zapata County line.

In 1952, Dutro talked about his career and said, "I made a rule early in the game to avoid gunfire. I avoid the killing philosophy. In 39 years, I've found that if you play your cards right, you can get along anywhere along the border. My men were instructed, for instance, never to shoot at a running man. Many a time, my men reported instances in which they were shot at. In most cases, investigations on both sides of the river showed the bullet to have come from an innocent hunter's weapon."

In the same 1952 article, Doc Dutro discussed his retirement plans. He said he was going to travel and settle down in the Rio Grande Valley for a little hunting and fishing. From what friends of Doc Dutro have told me, he managed to do just that.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

1. Reprinted with permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus, 13 September 1989.

Dr. McCain and the Smallpox Epidemic

by

Brian Robertson

In March of 1915, Brownsville and Cameron County were painfully aware of a deadly Smallpox epidemic sweeping through Mexico. The disease threatened to spill over into south Texas and take the lives of many of the area's residents. It was imperative that action be taken -- and taken quickly.

Brownsville, it should be noted, had earlier seen the ravages of Yellow Fever, and even today a walk through the city's old cemetery and a glance at the etchings on some of the tombstones will reveal that a number of people suffered from the dreaded illness.

Cameron County Commissioners, holding their meeting in Brownsville, decided that something had to be done at once to halt the spread of smallpox. There were a number of factors working against them, and their search for a solution involved a physician by the name of Dr. E. S. McCain, a man who would ultimately meet a violent and tragic end.

As the number of people infected with Smallpox increased, the County Commissioners decided to call upon the state for assistance. In order to do this they put their concern in the form of a resolution during the March 1915 meeting.

There were a number of problems. The Commissioners noted that there was "constant communication" with Mexico "both through the open ports and by means of boats at many points plying back and forth across the river."

Besides the day to day business activity which would help spread the disease, there were other factors during the troubled times. The year 1915 marked the beginning of the bloody bandit raids which hit south Texas with full force. These attacks coincided with great political unrest in Mexico, and experience had shown the Commissioners that as the revolution heated up in Mexico it meant more people coming across the river looking for safety. With a battle for possession of Matamoros rumored, the Commissioners said, "Whereas it is probable that a battle will soon be fought in the immediate vicinity on the Mexican side of the river....refugees will cross thus spreading the contagion if any exists."

The disease was not limited to Mexico, for Smallpox had been diagnosed and treated throughout south Texas for some time, although the numbers were increasing dramatically. The County Commissioners cited the grave situation in Mercedes, which they said was "in our sister county of Hidalgo." The County reported that Mercedes "has been compelled to close her schools and cease practically every business activity owing to the spread of smallpox from across the river."

In making this resolution, the Commissioner's Court of Cameron County decided to call upon Dr. E.S. McCain, state health officer for the county, to make a complete investigation of the

smallpox situation both in and around Brownsville as well as across the Rio Grande in Tamaulipas. Furthermore, action would be taken "if in his judgment the situation demands or justifies that he call upon the State Board of Health to place in effect a rigid quarantine against whatever states, countries, or counties necessary...."

Dr. McCain wasted little time in meeting the challenge. One month later, on April 17, County Commissioners reported that "It was brought to the attention of the court that the expanse of the county health officer in going out to vaccinate the school children of the county and in removing the smallpox patients to the county detention will be very great for the next few months, an urgent necessity exists for some means of rapid conveyance of the said county health officer to the more distant and inaccessible parts of the county on the business of this department. It is ordered and directed by the county judge that McCain be and be now hereby is authorized to purchase an automobile for the use of the County Health Officer at a price not to exceed \$540 and said sum is hereby appropriated...."

With his \$540 car, Dr. McCain set out to do his job. By May of 1915 he was ready to offer this report, which I found in the old County Commissioners Court minutes:

"Gentlemen...I desire this morning to submit to you gentlemen a brief report of my services covering this period of time and sincerely hope that as your "Watch Dog" in public health matters I have fully measured up to your requirements. Besieged as we were on all sides by that most loathsome disease, smallpox, a task I can assure you was no little one. I am proud to report to you, however, that assisted by providence in the way of continued warm weather of late, aided by the constant, careful vigilance of our quarantine guards on the river, we have at present this expected epidemic of smallpox well under hand.

"I cannot praise too highly the work efforts of our river guards who have turned back at the different points they have labored a total of 33 cases of smallpox broken out all over their bodies and presenting themselves for admission to our country and our state at a period in the course of this disease that would be most dangerous from a standpoint of communicability.

"Our detention camp has proven to be beyond the question of a doubt the proper means of handling such epidemic. Since it has been opened we have handled 45 cases of smallpox at an expense of \$425. This amount included a nurses salary, day and night guard, cook, groceries, market and vegetable bills, in fact the sum total of expenses incurred in its management.

"I do not believe I could come before you with a more eloquent plea than to say to you gentlemen that as much of my time as I could possibly spare from my duties at the detention camp and river has been used up in protecting the health and lives of our school children. and in this connection I beg to submit to you that in the past month I have visited 20 of our county public schools and vaccinated 522 children. I cannot praise too highly the teachers I met and became connected with in this work and my success was in large measure due to their encouragement and their work as well as the pains they had taken to teach the importance

and necessity of this work to a scholastic population that heretofore has been so adverse to the practice of vaccination.

These teachers must be given double credit for this proof positive that they are not only looking into the minds and morals of their pupils, but they are also buying themselves with the preservation of their health and physical development.

I confined my labors to three schools most clearly bordering on the river because I believed they were in more danger than those in the interior and to this end confined my work to the schools along the military road and south to the Brulay school about 12 miles below us.

"...I have been as economical as I could be compatible with the safety of our people and I thank you gentlemen for the confidence you imposed in me and so completely turning over to me the management of the health campaign."

Less than six months later, Dr. McCain would be dead. In October of 1915, bandits derailed a passenger train a few miles south of Olmito, rushed on board, and shot several Americans. Among those wounded were Dr. McCain and deputy Sheriff Harry Wallis who hid in the bathroom in the rear of the first coach. Wallis survived, but McCain died the following day.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus.



Chattering Parrots at the 1916 State Fair

by

Brian Robertson

The 1916 Texas State Fair was an interesting chance for Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley to make themselves known. Less than a dozen years earlier, the World's Fair let it be known that the Valley Sugar Cane was the finest in the world, for John Closner's crop beat out the competition from all other countries to win first place. Of course, it's one thing to do well at a piddly little old World's Fair. A Texas Fair, though - well that's really taking in the territory.

South Texas' contribution to the Magic Valley exhibit at the state fair included a number of palms that would be transplanted to the fair ground as well as a collection of Brownsville papayas. The palms were gathered up by none other than the mayor of Brownsville, Mayor A.A. Browne, from his estate near the city.

The cost of all this was to be \$1500, and various Valley towns contributed to gather the amount and insure the trip would be a success.

W.J. Doyel, general freight and passenger agent for the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad Company, took a large space in the Coliseum for the use of the Gulf Coast Counties. This was to include all counties along the coast from Houston to Brownsville.

The display arrived, prompting one newspaper article to say, "Included are whole orchards of bearing orange, lemon and grapefruit trees and what is undoubtedly the largest and finest collection of palms ever brought to Dallas."

The theme of the exhibit was "In Texas Down by the Rio Grande," and by all accounts it was a major success. The Dallas Morning News carried a photograph of what it termed a "remarkable exhibit from the Rio Grande Valley." According to the paper, the exhibit covered some 35,000 square feet.

"In all, 20 freight cars were used to bring the exhibit to Dallas, including three cars which have come there to replenish any department that has been found lacking. The exhibit is a veritable bank of greenery and is very attractive."

The paper also noted that there were "nine Mexican sabel palms, each from 30 to 40 feet high, weighing about 6,000 pounds each. Twenty-five men worked four days to dig and haul these palms to the cars for shipping. The wagons were broken in transporting one of the larger palms."

A number of towns besides Brownsville were represented, and these included San Benito, Harlingen, Mercedes, Donna, Edinburg, Pharr, McAllen, Sharyland, Mission, Lyford, and Raymondville. Also included were Kingsville and Bay City.

Securing the items for the exhibit was a problem, according to Doyel.

"It is a very hard matter to get people to let you dig up an orange, grapefruit, or lemon tree that is bearing from two to

three boxes of fruit, but I impress the people of the Valley that any sacrifice made in sending a representative exhibit to Dallas would result in untold good for the future."

In total, it is said that there were 2,000 Phoenix canaryensis palm trees, none less than 14 feet high. In addition there were 165 small palm trees five to seven feet high, 100 of which were going to remain on the fair grounds as a lasting tribute and reminder of the power of the South.

As if all this wasn't enough splendor, a full carload of southern or Spanish moss was brought in. This was, it seems, before the natural tree population of South Texas was rather severely depleted.

Animals figured into the display as well, and there were three deer and a burro, the later being called "the only competition the auto has in the Rio Grande Country."

After all was said and done, the most remarkable part of the exhibit had to have been the 50 parrots which were included in the display. These were not your normal parrots, of course, but a special trained variety. How so? Jake Doyel of the Gulf Coast Lines bought the birds and had them transported to Kingsville. There, under who knows what kind of training program, the 50 parrots were taught to scream out a variety of pro-South Texas sayings to anyone walking by the exhibit. They didn't know what they were saying, of course, but they said it loudly, clearly and repeatedly.

It was a technique that some say was later transferred and used successfully in the old time politics of South Texas.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted with the permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Herald Plus.

Cotton and its Impact on Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley

by

Sondra Shands

The farming of cotton and its conversion into useable products dates back some fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ. Greek history makes mention of a cotton tree which grew abundantly in Asia. Greek historians also detailed the methods used for weaving and dying the cotton harvested from the trees grown in India.

Interestingly enough, however, the most ancient materials made of cotton are those of a culture which flourished in the New World. At the time the New World was discovered, only Spain and Italy had a working and usable knowledge of cotton and its products. Italy had been trading with Asia Minor for centuries. The Spanish knew of cotton commodities from the interaction and involvement of a six hundred year war with the Moors. To Columbus, native dressed in cotton clothing were indisputable evidence that he had reached the Indies.

It is believed that early in antiquity, Peru developed the art of weaving and spinning cotton. Archeological findings support the theory that this craft moved northward, long before the birth of Christ. Such goods were of superior talent, far surpassing later efforts of early Europe. Indications further demonstrated that these proficient cultures flourished and vanished long before explorers reached the shores of the New World.

Ironically, this civilization does not appear to have included the deep South where the word cotton would become synonymous with the fertile deltas. Cotton was an unknown commodity east of the Mississippi until the Spanish colonized Florida and planted cotton seeds around the year 1536. Instead, this prehistoric cotton delta of America ranged, according to M.C. Crawford, from the middle of what is now the state of Utah through the Southwest, Mexico, Central and South America, including the southwestern fringe of Texas.(1) Ruins of these primal people give support that cotton was not only used for clothing but perhaps occupied a place in their religious beliefs as well. This speculation stems, in part, from the fact that various modern tribes of the Southwest have religious ceremonies in which cotton is used symbolically.

In Texas, the missions of San Antonio were growing cotton by the year 1745. Records from these missions, later recorded in early Texas Almanacs, report that several thousand pounds of cotton were produced yearly. A census taken in 1849 showed 58,073 bales of cotton produced that year. (Bales at this time were five hundred pounds each). By 1852 Texas was credited with being one of the top ten states in production of cotton, yielding an excess of 430,000 bales. Destruction and/or removal of the Indian tribes which inhabited Texas is given as the chief reason

for the rise in successful cotton crops in the 1850's and early 1860's. The building of railroads and the installation of barbed wire, the cattlemen's worse nightmare, are also listed as influences on cotton production.²

In 1861, the United States Navy placed a blockade along Texas shores. Texas refused to allow this inconvenience to halt the shipping of cotton, its only commercial wealth of the day, to European shores. Throughout the slow, tortuous War Between the States, Texas successfully used Brownsville, which had been formally founded in 1850, and its sister city to the south, Matamoros, Mexico, as a port of departure. Hundreds of vessels waited at the mouth of the river to receive cotton shipments. T. R. Fehrenbach, in his book Lone Star, points out that in order to insure the guaranteed freedom of the seas from Yankee intervention, Texas ships policed the Gulf far to the north of the Rio Grande river.³

The hard beaten trail which ran through the King Ranch down to the mouth of the Rio Grande was often bumper to bumper with trailers pulled by mules and horses, straining in their efforts to transport the heavy bales of cotton. The surrounding scrub brush, covered in blowing cotton, gave the land an appearance of being blanketed with snow which refused to melt in the sweltering South Texas heat.

Aside from patriotism, which Texans possessed in abundance, cotton merchants were paying hard cash. This "white gold" was bringing a dollar a pound in gold coins. Night and day the wagons creaked and groaned as they rolled southward.

Within a decade, following the end of the war, Texas was producing over two million bales of cotton a year. None of it, however, was being grown in the Rio Grande Valley. An early pioneer to the Valley, Edward Dougherty of Brownsville, explained in a letter written on June 9, 1890, now in the Texas History Library as the University of Texas, that the area was rich and abundant. He explained that it was only slightly populated due to its proximity to Mexico. Dougherty described the land as "...being well suited for growing cotton..."⁴ He felt confident that soon the Valley would be flooded with settlers.

In 1870, another pioneer to the Valley, George Brulay, purchased 1,000 acres, located on the river below Brownsville. He dug canals and irrigated his land. He was the first in the Valley to plant cotton. Brulay reaped 75 bales of cotton that first year which he grew on 75 acres. He sold the bales for 20 cents a pound.⁵

During the early years of the twentieth century, cotton was being grown in the Valley, but on a much reduced scale compared to the cultivation of vegetables and fruit. Those bales, tagged for shipment north, were sent by rail. The railroad was the lifeline which connected Brownsville to the outside world. All of that changed, however, with the opening of the Port in 1936. Port chronicles state that during that initial year 75 ships called. 25,724 bales of cotton along with 2,243 tons of citrus, cotton seed meal and cales and various miscellaneous cargo were exported. The Port became a giant magnet which pulled the Valley's marketable items through the city of Brownsville to

ships awaiting to transport the cargo to ports of call around the world.

Prior to 1892, cotton was planted and harvested without concern. Then in 1892, the infamous boll weevil "swam" the Rio Grande River crossing from Mexico into Texas near Brownsville.⁶ By 1920, cotton farmers throughout the state were turning their attention to the seriousness of this nasty little pink worm.

One of a group of beetles called snout beetles, because of the long beaks or snouts with which they feed, the boll weevil is a native of Central America.⁷ The female uses her snout to open the flower bud of the cotton. She lays one egg in each bud. After about four days the eggs hatch into fat grub worms. The grubs feed on the inside of the cotton buds, causing them to fall off the plants. The grubs continue to develop inside the fallen buds. When they are fully matured the beetles, now having wings, gnaw their way through the buds to the outside. Later in the season the female boll weevil lays her eggs in the bolls rather than the buds. The process is repeated on the cotton bolls. Four or five generations of boll weevils may be produced in a single season.

Poisons, pesticides and later herbicides were developed to curtail this destructive insect. Within a short span of time, the boll weevil spread to other states and is now a major concern to all states which grow cotton. Plowing under the cotton stalks at the end of the growing season helps insure that the weevil does not winter in the cotton plant. During the 1960's boll weevils became such a concern that a law was passed requiring each cotton farmer to pay \$25 per bail into an escrow account. When the farmer proved that he had plowed under his fields, the money was returned. In 1967 the law was challenged and declared unconstitutional. However, in 1987 a similar plow down law was put into effect. This law requires the farmer to plow under his cotton fields by September first or be fined up to 150 percent of the cost involved in plowing the fields for him. Mexican officials show promise of implementing a similar program to help control the reproduction of the boll weevil.⁸

After the turn of the century, farmers in the Valley began to irrigate the land to produce a constant water supply to the rich, fertile soil. Within a few short years commercial vegetable farming was a growing business in the Rio Grande Valley. By 1920 farmers were involved in a successful program of citrus production. In an all-time record year 75,000 carloads of vegetables and citrus left the Valley by rail during the 1945-46 season.⁹

In 1946, 1947 and 1948 the Valley produced 205,392, 257,508 and 322,619 bales of cotton consecutively. These figures, though impressive, were not enough to put Brownsville on the map. Within ten years, however, Brownsville would be known as a cotton empire. Weather would be the determining factor.

In January of 1949 a freeze struck the Valley. The temperatures plunged to 18 degrees and remained there long enough to do a great amount of damage to the citrus and vegetables. The Texas Citrus Exchange at Weslaco estimated that there were approximately twelve million citrus trees at the time of the freeze. Two million of these trees were destroyed by the frigid weather.¹⁰

Two years later, on January 29, 1951, what is referred to as the "Big Freeze" destroyed most of the remaining citrus and all of the vegetables growing in the fields. The temperature plummeted far below freezing and remained there for 65 hours. According to information obtained from the Weather Bureau in Brownsville, ice froze over an inch and a half thick. It was one of the worst freezes on record. When the ice melted and the sun came out, produce and citrus trees had to be bulldozed from the fields. The air in the Valley was heavy with the stench of rotting vegetables and the pollution of smoldering citrus trees as they were burned.

Each year the Valley is the first in the nation to plant cotton. The planting begins in February and continues until late March. The old timers will tell you that if you want to be positive there won't be a late norther, plant when the mesquite tree leafs out. In 1951 farmers asked for additional and extended growing allotments. Then, they took a deep breath and waited for the mesquite trees to turn completely green before they planted their fields in cotton. For that one year, the Port of Brownsville was the number one leading port in the nation for exporting cotton. The Valley produced 632 bales of cotton and Matamoros, Mexico exported 300,000 bales. Over 600,000 of those bales were loaded on ships which were docked at the Port.¹¹

Statistics supplied by the Brownsville Weather Bureau show that the decade which followed was one of mild winters and long sunny days. Cotton flourished, and Brownsville prospered through the fifties and the sixties. Jobs were abundant, the town became a city, construction mushroomed.

During those years it was not unusual to see 75 or 100 flatbed trucks lined up at the bridge waiting for permission to cross the river and transport their bales of Mexican cotton to the various compresses. The Mexican government during this period of time subsidized the Mexican farmers 40 percent on their cotton crops. American shippers betting the roll of the dice also offered the farmers 40 percent in order to have first shot at buying the cotton. This was wonderful for the poor Mexican farmer. He couldn't lose. The state of Tamaulipas turned all of its attention to growing cotton.

It was not unusual for the state of Tamaulipas to produce 500,000 bales of dry land cotton in a season. There was not a deep water harbor on the Mexican coast. The cotton was, therefore, sent to the Brownsville compresses, to be held in bond until it was exported through the Port. In 1959 or 1960 the Mexican government issued an order that no more subsidy would be given for cotton; farmers were to plant wheat or sorghum. American shippers retracted their source of money. The farmers stopped growing cotton.

Mexican cotton men moved to Tampico taking with them their businesses, gins and mills. Tampico lies far enough south to extend the planting season from February to January. Rain was a certainty in March and April. This was cotton country! Approximately 29,000 acres of cotton were planted in 1961, 52,000 acres in 1962, 104,000 acres in 1963, 282,000 acres in 1964 and 500,000 in 1965. The escalation of acres planted in cotton and the bales

being harvested and shipped to Brownsville each year was an upward spiral. Then came 1966 and hurricane Inez. The storm struck a West-Southwesterly course through the agricultural area. Cotton docks, gins and warehouses collapsed. There was massive damage to the Altamir/Mante region. However, there was a far more serious problem that resulted following Inez's wrath. The weather patterns changed and cotton has never been grown with any success since 1965.¹²

Meanwhile, back in the Valley, the race was on each year to see who could bring in the first bale. The hand picked cotton was ginned and then taken to Harlingen to be weighed. (The bale must be between 450 and 500 pounds). From Harlingen it was rushed to Houston, where it must arrive first to quality. Trucks were slow during the fifties, and besides, Texans have always enjoyed a good fanfare. The first bale was loaded in the back seat of a fancy convertible. With a police escort and wailing sirens, they raced across the land. Very often a second bale was close behind. The two convertibles chasing each other were exciting to see. Bets would be steep as to which would arrive in Houston at the Cotton Exchange first and receive the \$2,000.00 bonus. Competition was fierce. Later, the Cotton Association ruled that Harlingen could determine the first bale. Much of the excitement was gone. Since 1896 the Valley has had the distinction of producing the first cotton bale in the world.¹³

The cotton farmer of today produces a comparable number of bales to the 60's and 70's, on reduced acreage, due to the advance of technology. However, the cost per pound paid for today's cotton is within 10 to 20 percent of what the farmer received during the 60's. One has to wonder why they continue to plant cotton. Perhaps it is because today's knowledge allows the farmer to produce the same number of bales on much fewer acres.

The quality of cotton fiber grown locally remains extremely high. The color of the cotton is very good and the stapling is uniform. Added to this is the factor that each year the Valley leads the nation in planting first. The cotton crops of the 90's are still the most sought after in the United States. It is raised, primarily, and sent to the mills in the Southeast.

Only a few of the compresses in the Valley actively pursued the regionally cultivated cotton. Most of it was sent to railroad cars directly from the gins to be shipped to the mills, just as it is today. The compresses centered in Brownsville and around the Port were chiefly involved in the exportation of Mexican cotton. When the Mexican government curtailed the amount of land that could be used for growing cotton, and weather patterns in the Tampico area altered, Brownsville industry suffered.

Brownsville compresses were double whammed during this period. The gins pooled their resources and co-operatively developed a bale that did not necessitate compressing. Wrapped in plastic, it went directly to the docks. Also, the invention of containers eliminated the middle man. Cotton bales could be loaded into the containers at the gin and set directly on a flat rail car or into the hold of a waiting ship. The compresses were outmoded and the services of the longshoremen were not needed.

Today there are no compresses in Brownsville that handle

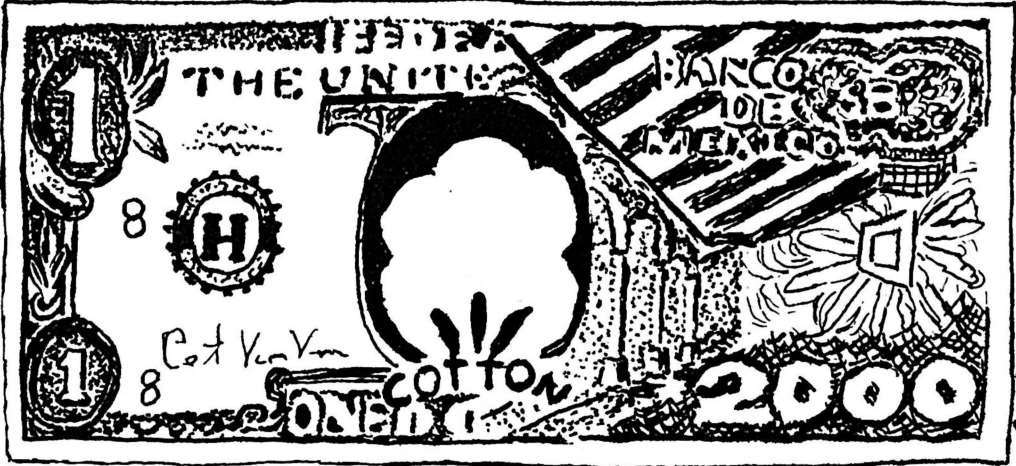
cotton. And, to my knowledge, only two compresses in the Valley still service local cotton. Delta Co-op Compress and Warehouse in Raymondville and the Valley Compress and Warehouse Company, which is located in Harlingen and owned by the Francis family, has offered its services to the Valley for numerous years.

It should be pointed out, however, that the production of Valley cotton still influences our economy. The Union Underwear Company, for example, which manufactures the brand name, Fruit of the Loom, has recently completed a large manufacturing facility in the Industrial Park area of Harlingen. By locating in the Valley, this company has first access to the Valley cotton crop. The cotton is sent directly from the gins to the mill.

There are uses for every part of the cotton plant and new scientific research is being done daily. Cotton fibers can be spun and woven into cloth so coarse that it will sell for a few cents a yard, or so fine and delicate that it is difficult to tell from the finest silk fabric. Cotton seeds provide an oil that contains no cholesterol and makes an excellent salad oil. Cosmetics, candles and soaps are also made from cotton seeds. Once the oil has been pressed from the seeds the remainder is ground into stock feed and fertilizers. Hulls are used to make paper, cellophane, film and paints. The list goes on and on. The complexion of cotton may change but its demand has not diminished. And, so as long as the demand continues, cotton will continue to influence the economy in the Rio Grande Valley.¹⁴

Endnotes

1. M. C. Crawford, The Heritage of Cotton, Fairchild Publishing Company, New York, 1948, p.31.
2. Fred C. Elliott and E. A. Miller, Texas Almanac (1857-1950), The Handbook of Texas, Vol. 1, Republic of Texas, The Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1952, p.420.
3. T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star, A History of Texas and the Texans, Collier Books, New York, 1968, p.359.
4. J. Lee and Lillian Stambaugh, The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, Naylor Company, San Antonio, 1954, p.182,183.
5. Stambaugh, p.183.
6. The Brownsville Herald, May 20, 1990, p.3D.
7. Collier's Encyclopedia, Collier Publishing, new York, 1963, p.290.
8. Texas Ag Journal, May 18, 1990, p.3.
9. The Brownsville Herald, July 5, 1967, 6C
10. Stambaugh, p.243.
11. Personal interview with Jimmy and Aileen Brittain, June 24, 1991.
12. Brittain, June 24, 1991.
13. Texas Ag Journal, July 29, 1990, pg. 4.
14. Special thanks must be given to the following people: Gene Cockrill who allowed me access to old records at the Port, Aileen and Jimmy Brittain for spending an afternoon recalling those years, and my mother, Hazel Shands, who spent hours compiling information for me.



Handwritten signature or mark on the right edge of the illustration.



World War II Era Authorities Urged Brownsville to Stay Vigilant

by

Brian Robertson

Submarines sneaking up the Rio Grande River. Small Japanese airplanes sighted as they made their way up from a secret base in the desert of Mexico. Enemy ships refueling in the dead of night at the Port of Brownsville.

These were some of the rumors which raced around Brownsville during World War II.

Added to that list were rumors about people who, although American citizens, had German names. Of this group, those who enjoyed the hobby of ham radio were especially suspect. Many Brownsville residents were certain that they were intent on providing information to bring in the German planes with pinpoint accuracy!

The city moved with speed to bring the municipal defense program up to snuff. Mayor Robert Runyon ordered some 16 stretchers, 48 folding canvas cots and fire-fighting equipment-pumpers. In addition, he ordered 22,083 gas masks, 1320 arm bands and surgical equipment.

General R.D. Rockenbach was chairman of the local civilian defense board and Mayor Robert Runyon also was active. He wrote various articles for the local papers, including "How to Combat Incendiaries." The Brownsville Herald in an editorial of March 2, 1942, repeated the refrain in "Now the Jap is Next Door."

The excitement grew, and with it the orders for an amazing collection of items - armbands, pamphlets and more. The companies which supplied these items were rock-steady in their sales pitch, saying that it was obvious that Brownsville didn't want to be left out when the time came or defenseless when the enemy struck. What was struck was a chord of fear - as more orders were placed and supplies mounted.

Various air raid tests were conducted, and it was reported in December of 1942 that the sirens and whistles were "inadequate." As it turned out, no one in the residential areas or in the buildings downtown could hear the warning sounds.

The papers reported an exchange between a man from Raymondville and a Brownsville citizen. The Raymondville resident had arrived during the raid and said that the street "look awfully dead tonight." The citizen retorted, "Think nothing of it. Brownsville always looks like this."

In addition to air raid tests, a series of blackouts was ordered until Texas Governor Stevenson decided that all practice blackouts - scheduled or unscheduled - should be cancelled. The reason was simple: "Henceforth when a blackout is called the civilian is warned that it might be a 'real one.'"

Brownsville worked closely with Matamoros to develop a well-coordinated civil defense plan. Throughout the city of Brownsville, there was support for the plan, including the Red Cross first aid course under the direction of Dr. Beatrice

Hawkins.

Defense films were shown regularly at the Brownsville Junior College auditorium, including one called "Goofy Trouble," which is said to have demonstrated the unsafe practices of curious and stubborn people during air raids." Another film, "Mr. Proudfoot Shows a Light" was said to be a ten-minute film "which satirizes a person who thinks he can get by with not following the blackout rules."

As of May 28, 1942, only 29 of 588 members of the Brownsville civilian defense organization had graduated. By June, there were 105 who received their certificates from Mayor Runyon and Judge Bascom Cox, the commander of the local defense corps.

The Brownsville Herald ran a headline in June of 1942 which read, "VALLEY SECOND ONLY TO WEST COAST AS INVASION SPOT." Nothing, however, was included in any of several such articles to indicate just why the enemy considered South Texas such a valuable piece of real estate.

Robert Clarke was quoted as saying, "We pray it won't happen. But we've got to be ready to go to work - in case it becomes the victim of an air raid."

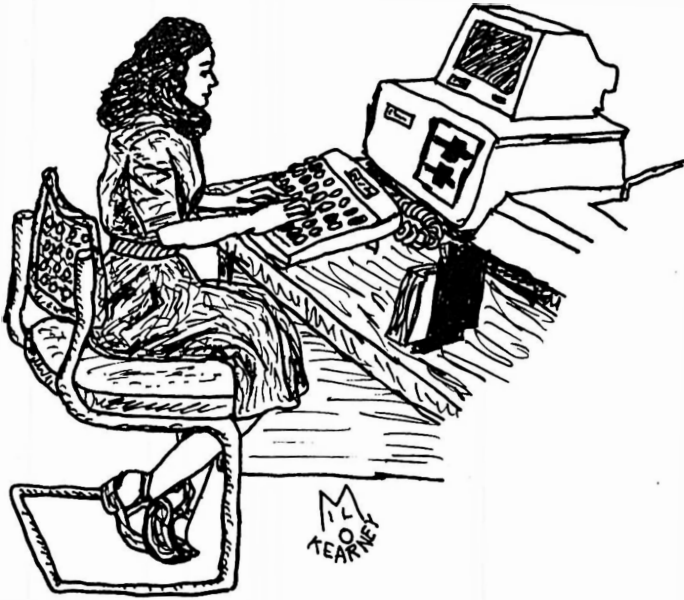
One percent of utility bills - for water as well as light - was to be paid voluntarily into a Civilian Defense Fund. Only 10 percent of the customers contributed, meaning that a total of \$6.15 had been raised for the month of May.¹

Curator, Historic Brownsville Museum

Endnote

1. Reprinted by permission of Brian Robertson from The Brownsville Plus, 31 January 1990.

THE LATE 20TH CENTURY



John Hunter, Local Patron of Learning

by

Milo Kearney

For those who may not know the story behind the naming of the Hunter Archival Room at Brownsville's Arnulfo Oliveira Library, the answer concerns a man who exerted a major influence on local learning--John Hunter, Sr. As imposing in personality and intellect as in frame, John Hunter exuded an optimistic enthusiasm which spread to the people around him.¹ Of the impressive projects which resulted, the Hunter Room and Texas Southmost College's Rancho del Cielo Biological Station were the most notable.

Born on 12 December 1900, Valedictorian of Houston Heights High School in Houston, John Hunter first came to the Valley in 1922 as a young graduate in Physics and Math from The University of Texas at Austin. His father, Clarence Lee Hunter, had just sold a pickle factory in Houston and used the proceeds to purchase a cabbage farm in Brownsville's El Jardin district. Clarence also became the Manager of El Jardin's Water District. John met Caroline Webster, daughter of Judge Ira Webster, at a get-together on the beach, and after her graduation from Denton's College of Industrial Arts (now Texas Women's University) the two were married in 1925. They would have three children: Carolyn (Mrs. Lee Winans of Brownsville), Betty (Mrs. George Godfrey of Austin), and John, Jr (of Brownsville).²

While Caroline began a career of teaching in Home Economics, third grade, and Special Education, John moved into a salesman position with the Frigidaire Company. At first, he rented space to display frigidaires in Batsell's Store. In 1929, when the Frigidaire dealership for the Rio Grande Valley was divided up, he opened a store on Elizabeth Street in partnership with his younger brother, Earl. In 1942, the two brothers bought a building on East Elizabeth between Second and Third Street and transferred their prospering operations to that location. Adding Maytag and Chrysler brands, the company brought the first air-conditioning to Brownsville's Capitol Theater, as well as to theaters in Harlingen and McAllen. The firm did work into Latin America from Mexico through Costa Rica to Patagonia. In 1954, it air conditioned the Fort Brown Memorial Center.³

The refrigeration business could not circumscribe the exuberant energies and Renaissance interests of John Hunter. Civic activities occupied part of his time. Member of the Texas Southmost College Board for more than a dozen years, President of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce (1938), President of the local Rotary Club (1936-1937), and Exalted Ruler of the local Elks Club, Hunter also played a role in helping to launch the Charro Days tradition and served as President of Charro Days in 1941 and 1942. His portrait still stands both in Brownsville's Elks Lodge and (in Charro Days costume) in the Vermillion Restaurant.⁴

A capable, in-charge type of person, he would come up with ideas other people would tell him would never work and then prove them wrong. Once he plugged a leak in a car radiator by breaking an egg into it. Another time, he brought hot water to the Rancho del Cielo by running copper tubing through a wood stove and a storage tank. The water, contaminated with oak tannin, reeked suspiciously like urine, but it proved preferable to the ice-cold water previously used. He also developed a good formula for getting to the downtown section of a Mexican town by following a Transportes del Norte bus.⁵

Feasting and joking also lent a Rabelaisian touch to Hunter's personality. Dr. Al Richardson recalls that Hunter so loved to eat that he would be planning the next meal as soon as the preceding one had been polished off. He also loved to play practical jokes. He once sat guests down to what he announced was an old recipe passed down from his grandmother, which turned out to be a margarine, sugar, and cinnamon-garnished brown paper bag!⁶ And yet, Hunter's humor was kept within the bounds of kindness. He was well loved by family and friends alike. His daughter Carolyn Winans recalls how she would stay up worrying whenever her father, whose health was long delicate, came home late. As his son, John, Jr., put it, Hunter was "as tough as a grizzly and as gentle as a koala."⁷

Hunter's two principal hobbies, however, were history and biology. An avid reader of history books, his special love was for Mexican and Rio Grande Valley history. He loved to conduct tours through Mexico with family and friends, delighting in tracking down sites far off the beaten track and coming home with holes beaten by bumpy roads into his car's muffler. His daughter Carolyn recalls how in 1954 he took his family first to see the progress on the Falcon Dam construction and then on to Mier. Neither stifling heat nor Carolyn's advanced state of pregnancy prevented Hunter from showing his family the spot where Ewen Cameron drew his famous white bean from a pot, where a black bean would have spelled immediate execution. The fact that nothing more notable than a dusty cantina graced the historical site removed not a whit of the excitement for the family patriarch guide.⁸

This eagerness to convey his love of Mexican and Rio Grande Valley history to others inspired Hunter to donate his collection of rare books on these subjects to the Texas Southmost College library. A special archives room was set aside to house the collection, giving the campus a much-needed addition. Hunter was honored at the dedication, which was attended by Representative Kika de la Garza, among others.⁹

Hunter's passion for nature also bore fruit in a major way for local academic development. In his annual summer family trips into the Mexican interior, Hunter had often expressed a curiosity about the wild area on the eastern slope of the Tamaulipan Sierra Madre Oriental Range glimpsed to the west of the highway between Padilla and Gómez Farías. As Hunter also grew gloximia flowers, it was with great interest that he discovered an article dealing with the gloxinia of that very same mountain area, near El Mante. The article was authored by Canadian Frank Harrison, who owned

property in that part of Tamaulipas.¹⁰ Harrison had moved from southern Ontario to Chamal, Municipality of Ocampo, Tamaulipas, in 1926, to teach school and farm. Harrison had bought the mountain property from Don Cameron, son of Murdoch Cameron, who had settled in the area from Canada at the beginning of the 20th century. Harrison's doctor had urged him to move to a higher altitude for his health. The 3,700' elevation of the property had seemed to fit his need, so that he had pioneered a cattle and chicken ranch on the spot, contending with jaguar and bear attacks on his herd and growing amaryllis commercially on the side.¹¹

A chance to investigate the region opened up when Hunter was introduced to Brownsvillite Fred Blesse, who in 1953 had built a cabin on Harrison's property. Having made his first visit to the mountain as Blesse's guest in 1954, Hunter returned so exhilarated that, in his wife's words, it seemed he had found a bit of heaven. The tropical cloud forest setting was beautiful, and there were no telephones, radios, televisions, or even electricity to interrupt communion with nature. Furthermore, its plant and animal life offered an unusual blend, due to the meeting of temperate deciduous with tropical and some western flora and fauna. Made welcome to visit Blesse's cabin at any time, he soon bought a four-wheel-drive truck for his subsequent repeated trips. In 1958, Blesse sold his cabin to Fred Welch, but two years later Hunter purchased it from Welch.¹²

Enthusiasm for the area was conveyed by Hunter to Al Richardson, whose family's sheet metal shop stood next to the Hunter Refrigeration Store. Taken along to "the mountain," as the present Rancho del Cielo was then anonymously dubbed, Richardson was inspired to make a sharp turn in career. After having worked for eighteen years in the sheet metal shop, Richardson in 1965 determined to go to college to study botany. After completing an Associate Degree at Texas Southmost College, Richardson went on to receive a B.A. in biology and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in botany from The University of Texas at Austin. Richardson's master's thesis dealt with his identification of the Louleridium tamaulipense species of the shrimp-plant family--a discovery he had made while at the Rancho del Cielo. In 1976, Richardson returned to Brownsville as an Instructor at TSC.¹³

The acceptance of the gift of Harrison's property by Texas Southmost College for conversion into a biological study station resulted from the combined effort of Hunter, Harrison, and Barbara Warburton. Mrs. Warburton was the Chairperson of the biology department at Texas Southmost College and recipient of the Minnie Stephens Piper Award for outstanding teaching at the college level. It was she who first suggested turning the site into a permanent biological station for ecological studies. Hunter presented the proposal to his fellow members on the Texas Southmost College Board. Despite initial reluctance to invest in Mexico or to spend the money required to organize the Mexican corporation, the Board at length was persuaded, on the suggestion of Fred Rusteberg, to use the Zemit bequest (a recent donation to the college) to make the transaction. Hunter worked out the legal aspects with a Mexican lawyer, oversaw the construction of

the first study center buildings on the site, and for many years kept the financial records for the station as its business manager. Barbara Warburton directed the new study camp.¹⁴

The transaction was not free from tragedy, however. Farmers began to clear the forest near Harrison's property, a development Harrison vigorously opposed for conservationist reasons. Friction between Harrison and the farmers intensified through a couple of years, with the farmers protesting against incursions of Harrison's cattle into their fields. Not realizing that the property had come to be held by a newly-formed non-profit Mexican corporation for educational purposes which included both Texas Southmost College and non-TSC people on its board, extreme Leftist agrarians (as it is believed) murdered Harrison. Seemingly hoping to convert his property into a shared ejido, the murderers caught Harrison outside his cabin on the morning of 29 January 1966 and clubbed and stabbed him to death. The suspects were arrested, but the key witness disappeared from the jail, his removal supposedly facilitated by a mordida bribe. This meant that the suspects were allowed to go free. Shortly afterwards, the same suspects, menacingly fingering the blades of their machetes, approached John Hunter and some people he had brought with him to the Rancho del Cielo. The suspects complained that cattle left untended by the late Frank Harrison had broken into their corn fields. Dr. Richardson tells how, while he and the others almost fainted with fear, the defenceless Hunter boldly shook his finger and shouted, in Spanish, "It's because you murdered Harrison that his cattle are running wild. You get off this property right now and don't you ever come back!" Dr. Richardson adds that Hunter was the only person to get a good sleep in the station dormitory that night.¹⁵

Not even an advanced state of medical deterioration, which would have disheartened many a man into taking permanently to his bed, was able to hold John Hunter from his visits to the Rancho del Cielo. Suffering from diabetes, he lost feeling on the bottom of his feet, but the threat of unfelt glass and tacks did not deter him from walking around barefoot in his tropical mountain retreat.¹⁶ Hunter's affection for his rustic refuge was so strong that he even expressed an interest in being buried beside Frank Harrison at the Rancho del Cielo.¹⁷ Brownsville was to provide his final resting place, but the Sierra pines bade him his last farewell. On 3 April 1976, after having celebrated his fiftieth wedding anniversary the preceding December, John Hunter passed away on his beloved mountain.¹⁸

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
2. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, Mrs. Carolyn Winans, and John Hunter, Jr., 5 July 1991; The Times, Brownsville, 7 April 1976, 1; and Tip-O-Texan: The Official Publication of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Chamber of Commerce, November 1968, 20.

3. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and Tip-O-Texan, November 1968, 20.
4. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and Tip-O-Texan, November 1968, 20.
5. Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
6. Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
7. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.
8. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and The Times, Brownsville, 11 April 1976, C5.
9. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and The Times, Brownsville, 11 April 1976, C5.
10. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and Tip-O-Texan, November 1968, 20.
11. John Hunter, Rancho del Cielo Log Book (Manuscript in the keeping of Mrs. Caroline Hunter), 1-2, 12-15, and 34-35, quoted with permission of Mrs. Caroline Hunter; and Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
12. Hunter, Rancho del Cielo Log Book, 4; and Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.; and Tip-O-Texan, November 1968, 20.
13. Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
14. Hunter, Rancho del Cielo Log Book, 24; Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991; and Tip-O-Texan, November 1968, 20.
15. Hunter, Rancho del Cielo Log Book, 27 and 30; and Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
16. Interview with Dr. Alfred Richardson, 4 July 1991.
17. The Times, Brownsville, 11 April 1976, C5.
18. Interview with Mrs. Caroline Hunter, etc.



by

Anthony Knopp

One of the unfortunate side effects of the astonishing growth of the maquiladora industry in recent years is the impression that business knowledge, skills, and perhaps even ability must be imported from outside the border region. The remarkable impact of the Longoria family on border development, and of Shelby Longoria specifically in the Matamoros area, has demonstrated that entrepreneurial spirit and ability have thrived along the Rio Grande long before the arrival of the maquiladoras.

In 1987, Texas Monthly acknowledged the impact of the Longoria family: "For an entire century, from 1887 to 1986, the Longorias were the most important clan on both sides of the Rio Grande. Their roots were in Mexico, but they grew more and more Texan..."¹ The patriarch of the clan, Octaviano Longoria, Sr., was born in the old town of Mier in 1871, but moved at age sixteen to Nuevo Laredo, a burgeoning center for the import-export trade. After a brief period of employment as a clerk, Don Octaviano opened a grocery store and soon became the local beer distributor for the Cuauhtemoc brewery of Monterrey. The young businessman parlayed this connection to the city's bars into an ice plant and a money exchange house to accommodate gringo tastes and dollars resulting from a tourist influx.²

Don Octaviano would not allow his entrepreneurial vision to be obscured by a tradition which limited border business to trade and service. Recognizing the utility of cottonseed oil for a variety of consumer goods, Longoria established Industrias Unidas, Nuevo Laredo's first modern factory complex, in order to produce cooking oil, laundry soap, and lard. The crowning achievement of Don Octaviano's career was the construction in 1929 of the Banco Longoria, the most impressive structure in Nuevo Laredo.³

During his years as a grocer, Octaviano Longoria came in contact with an Anglo/Creole family headed by Alcide Theriot, who had come to Nuevo Laredo for his health and established the city's first pharmacy. Theriot's son, Shelby, became a U.S. Consul there; his daughter Sarah married Octaviano Longoria in 1900. The Longorias had eight children, five boys and three girls. For many years after the death of Don Octaviano, Doña Sara served as the focal point of family unity. "She spent her days tending to her gardens and clan, mediating quarrels, dispensing matrimonial advice, asking favors of one relative on behalf of another."⁴

Shelby J. Longoria was born in Nuevo Laredo in 1908. Since the Theriots were descended from Confederates on both the Texas and the Louisiana sides of the family, the third Longoria son, like his uncle, was named in honor of the hero of the Trans-Mississippi Confederate cavalry, Major General Joseph Orville Shelby. The Theriots were related to General Shelby, and were

doubtless proud of his reputation as the general who refused to surrender. Of particular interest in view of the Theriot family's later involvement in Mexico is the fact that General Shelby led a large force of his men to Mexico after the collapse of the Confederacy and became involved with the government of the Emperor Maximilian.⁵

Shelby Longoria graduated from Laredo High School in 1925. He then attended Peacock Military Academy briefly and completed his education by studying accounting and banking for two years at Pierce Junior College in Philadelphia. Upon his return to Nuevo Laredo, Shelby joined the family enterprise for which he had previously done some work. "By July 10, 1926, I was already working in banking and industrial enterprises," he recalled.⁶

At about the time that Shelby completed his education the first great shadow appeared over the Longoria family. Despite his great business success, Don Octaviano was subject to melancholy moods. In early 1931, in the grips of personal depression, he took his own life. By this time management of the family businesses had been gradually transferred into the hands of the two eldest sons, Octaviano, Jr. ("Chito"), and Federico.

Under the Mexican tradition of primogeniture, Chito Longoria became business leader of the clan and undertook an ambitious expansion of the family enterprises. "During the next forty years, the Longorias became the royal family of Mexican cotton."⁷ They acquired fifty-two cotton gins in Northern Mexico and brokered the sale of nearly a sixth of the national cotton crop. Financing was often arranged through the Banco Longoria, which established twenty-seven branches across Northern Mexico. Industrias Unidas expanded to eleven plants for refining cottonseed oil and milling flour. In addition, the family established dozens of plants for bottled gas and ice and furniture; it also acquired lumberyards, hotels, theaters, shoe stores and auto dealerships in both Laredos as well as Reynosa and Matamoros. Real estate interests were expanded to include hundreds of listings including ranches covering hundreds of thousands of acres.⁸

The success of the Longoria enterprises for many years depended on the spontaneity and daring of Chito, moderated by the fiscal meetings at the home of Doña Sara. "The assumption that kept the empire together was that stock certificates and deeds were fictions maintained for the convenience of the external world; real ownership rested not in individuals but in the clan."⁹ Two additional factors contributed significantly to the prosperity of the Longorias. First, the family avoided all long-term debt through self-financing, which limited their accountability to outsiders. Second, they recognized the political reality of one-party rule in Mexico and the need to accommodate that power by allying themselves with the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)¹⁰

As the Longoria family's economic interests prospered, so apparently did the brothers' personal lives. All five made enduring marriages, the four eldest to women much like their mother--middle class Anglos raised along the border. Shelby met his future wife, Mildred Hodge, the daughter of a Harlingen fruit and vegetable shipper, in 1931. "I met her in Monterrey," Shelby

remembered. "She and her family were with a friend of mine and we met in a club. I was twenty-three and she was in high school...we were later married in 1935 in a garden wedding at her home."¹¹ In the mid-1940s, the Shelby Longorias adopted two children, Sandra and Thomas. Sandra eventually married Fausto Yturria, scion of a pioneer Brownsville family, who became a real estate developer, founded cable television in the region, and recently established the dog track in Harlingen.

The expansion of the Longoria family enterprises provided the opportunity for Shelby to develop and demonstrate his own managerial and entrepreneurial skills. Shelby was delegated to over-see and expand family interests in the Matamoros area. "We started when a company that owed us money ended up mortgaging two cotton gins installed in Matamoros."¹² At first Shelby would come down to Matamoros only for the cotton harvest, staying at the El Jardin Hotel in Brownsville, but gradually he became a Matamoros resident.¹³ His plans were interrupted by the coming of World War II. The Mexican government had hoped to avoid active participation in the war, but the sinking of two Mexican tankers by German submarines in May of 1942 compelled a declaration of war.¹⁴ Shelby Longoria volunteered to serve his country in the Mexican army and was appointed a second lieutenant. He served as a liaison officer in the infantry from September, 1942, until the conclusion of the war.¹⁵

His military service completed, Shelby returned to Matamoros to supervise the family interests in cotton processing and banking. He established the Hotel Ritz, Matamoros' finest, adjacent to the Banco Longoria branch. By the early fifties he had become a prominent member of the Matamoros business community, serving as president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1952 and president of the Asociacion Algodonera Mexicana de Matamoros from 1952 to 1954.¹⁶

The post-war years were the halcyon days of the entire Longoria family. All of the brothers were known and respected on both sides of the border and their children attended the finest American universities. The families vacationed together in Europe and on Longoria ranches. Shelby was particularly widely traveled, having visited France, Spain, Canada, Belgium, Italy, Lebanon, China, Russia, and Africa. Hunting was Shelby's great passion; safaris in Africa provided the opportunity to hunt elephant, lion, leopard, cape buffalo, hippopotamus, rhinoceros and giraffe. Many of his trophies were on display in his home. "I've killed a few hundred animals, but a lot of them I didn't keep," the hunter recalled. "And yes, I've killed them myself; that's the pleasure of it."¹⁷ Shelby's proudest accomplishment was the record for killing the world's largest polar bear, which he shot on April 11, 1963, at the Bering Strait near Kotzebue, Alaska. The Boone and Crockett Club North American Big Game organization, established by President Theodore Roosevelt in the early 1900s, confirmed Shelby's record, which remains unbroken.¹⁸

Despite the Longoria business prosperity, family unity began to unravel in the late sixties. At the heart of the problem was conflict between Chito and the other brothers. "The brothers believed that Chito was courting ruin, not only in his personal

life, but also in his business dealings."¹⁹ Chito's courtship and marriage to his second wife was deemed unsuitable by the rest of the family. The rift widened when Chito moved to Mexico City, built an incredible mansion which became an international party house, and ordered construction of a giant food-processing mill at a cost of \$10 million. The Longoria agribusiness corporation fell into bankruptcy, Chito lost control to the other brothers, and both sides sued each other. Ultimately Mexican President José López Portillo summoned all the brothers to Mexico City and ordered them to reach a settlement. The settlement involved dividing the family assets and dissolving the Longoria empire.²⁰

Even the settlement did not end the problems of the Longorias. In 1982, just before he left office, President López Portillo delivered a final blow to the Longorias' and, indeed, the nation's financial stability by expropriating all Mexican banks. Shelby responded to the dissolution of the family empire and the expropriation by combining interests with brother Alfredo to purchase control from the remaining brothers of Empresas Longoria, S.A., the foremost private Mexican cotton company in terms of sales to textile mills. Empresas Longoria also sold for export to Europe and Japan and brokered sales of sorghum, wheat, and vegetable oil seeds. Shelby's involvement in banking continued through a directorship at Texas Commerce Bank in Brownsville, as well as directorships at Crédito Mexicano and Nacional Financiera in Matamoros. Shelby even built the building for the government to house Nacional Financiera.²¹

"You produce power with money, not with being idle," Shelby Longoria explained in his later years. "Experience pays and I've learned investments through experience."²² Shelby enjoyed his work--for him it was pleasure. In consequence he worked hard and expected it of others; he made it a point to be at his desk when his employees arrived for work in the morning, thus serving as an example. To son-in-law Fausto Yturria, for whom Shelby was "a very special companion and advisor," Shelby was a man of his word who believed in principles of honesty and dedication. He could be a hard man to deal with, however, in that he expected to make the most favorable deal possible and expected full value in any transaction.²³

In his mid-to-late seventies Shelby was still supervising the Hotel Ritz, a lumberyard, and ice plants in Matamoros, Rio Bravo, and Reynosa as well as his banking and cotton interests. He also controlled farms and other real estate. Shelby even found time to build a new home in 1981 in Colonia Jardín in Matamoros. The new home had a mini fruit grove and a balcony which overlooked the Rio Grande. The Shelby Longorias also possessed homes on South Padre Island, at Fort Brown and the Valley Inn and Country Club in Brownsville, and on a ranch between Reynosa and San Fernando. The various homes were filled with paintings, sculptures and artifacts that Shelby had collected in his world travels.²⁴

Obviously Shelby Longoria was no narrow, compulsive businessman. His recreational interests included tennis, golf, and cars in addition to hunting and traveling. Shelby also was an active but quiet philanthropist who aided children with physi-

impediments and set up a fund to provide assistance for those able to pay for medical treatment.²⁵

Because of the Longoria family, and later despite the dissolution of the family empire, Shelby Longoria had power and stature in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. His supervision and expansion of family interests in the Matamoros area contributed significantly to the economic development of the region. In the words of longtime friend and associate E. H. Corrigan, a Brownsville customs broker, Shelby Longoria was "a person who has given this area its color and its personality. He was always outspoken, was usually accurate and frequently pushed the government and the private sector to change in direction and move forward."²⁶

University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Dick J. Reavis, "The Last of the Border Lords," Texas Monthly XV (February, 1987), p. 89.
2. Ibid., p. 90.
3. Ibid., p. 134.
4. Ibid., p. 135.
5. Fausto Yturria, personal interview, June 2, 1991. Daniel O'Flaherty, General Jo Shelby: Undefeated Rebel (Chapel Hill, N.C.: the University of North Carolina Press, 1954), is the standard biography on Shelby. See also John H. Hunter, "General Joe Shelby's Expedition to Mexico." (Transcript of a lecture) [Brownsville?], 1960).
6. Brenda Alvarado, "Successful Matamoros Investor Likes Authenticity, Seeks it Around the World," The Brownsville Herald 1985), (reprint).
7. Reavis, Border Lords, p. 134.
8. Marvin Brown, personal interview, May 22, 1991; Reavis, Border Lords, p. 134.
9. Reavis, Border Lords, p. 135.
10. Brown, personal interview; Reavis, Border Lords, p. 134.
11. Alvarado, "Matamoros Investor."
12. Ibid.
13. Yturria, personal interview.
14. Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, The Course of Mexican History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 30-631.
15. Shelby J. Longoria, (untitled curriculum vita).
16. Ibid.
17. Alvarado, "Matamoros Investor."
18. Ibid.
19. Reavis, Border Lords, p. 136.
20. Ibid., pp. 136-139.
21. Longoria, (vita); Alvarado, "Matamoros Investor."
22. Alvarado, "Matamoros Investor."
23. Fausto Yturria, personal letter, May 25, 1991; Yturria, personal interview.
24. Ibid.

25. Tony Vindell, "Cotton King Longoria Dies," The Brownsville Herald, January 23, 1990, p. 8B.

26. Ibid., p. 1B.

The Santa Elena Ranch Massacre (April 1989)

by

Vivian Kearney

O dear Lord
where did our prayers go?
what happened here in Brownsville-
Matamoros that a sweet
sun was extinguished for
the purposes of darkness, why
didn't the angels hear him, unbind him?
o how horribly
silent was our valley when we found
out

High school kids were
all a flutter with opening possibilities
of spring break days, would they, should they
join the college crowd revelry, party
also sophisticatedly at the beach to
join the beautiful, excited
happy throng, carpe diem,
who cares if some think
it's wrong.

A murmur of a rumor then
started to make the rounds, one
kid is missing, one spring breaker can't be found
He disappeared at the beach, he got
lost across, who knows, his parents are looking
for him, there are flyers everywhere.
He's so good looking and is studying
to be a doctor, I hope
I hope they find him
soon.

Day upon day upon sunny afternoon
of the limited vacation time
followed more tense, more abuzz.
We formed prayer groups, we
wondered together
and pitied the parents and adopted
Mark for our own
lost son.

Then one
evening the neighborhood
store told me, some sickening
answers had been reported.
The newspapers filled
our waiting to welcome home thoughts

with grisly details and
horrified we counted the victims
together

High school halls
usually exuberant especially
this month certainly
were
so quiet the grief could
be scooped up in our hands
and caught with our hearts
as we realized
that

all that music pounding
inviting to allow
what may, all that escape into
drinking, drugs, violence, lewdness and
gladiatorial horror shows
all those cute halloween
witchcraft posters
all that brave laughter
daring to look ugliness
in the face
had led to
this

We forgive them
said the parents
and a witness of Christ's
amazing mission and message sounded
for a while
in the receptive halls
of suddenly thirsting consciences
O

Father let us not move
far away from this point
where some of our collective
blindness was ripped away

Let us remember the parting
ceremonies
The realization that wrong
is so strongly against
our true desires
for Thee
That evil ever seeks
to devour
that hate is the opposite
of love, that
the ultimate end
of self gratification
is sorcery and

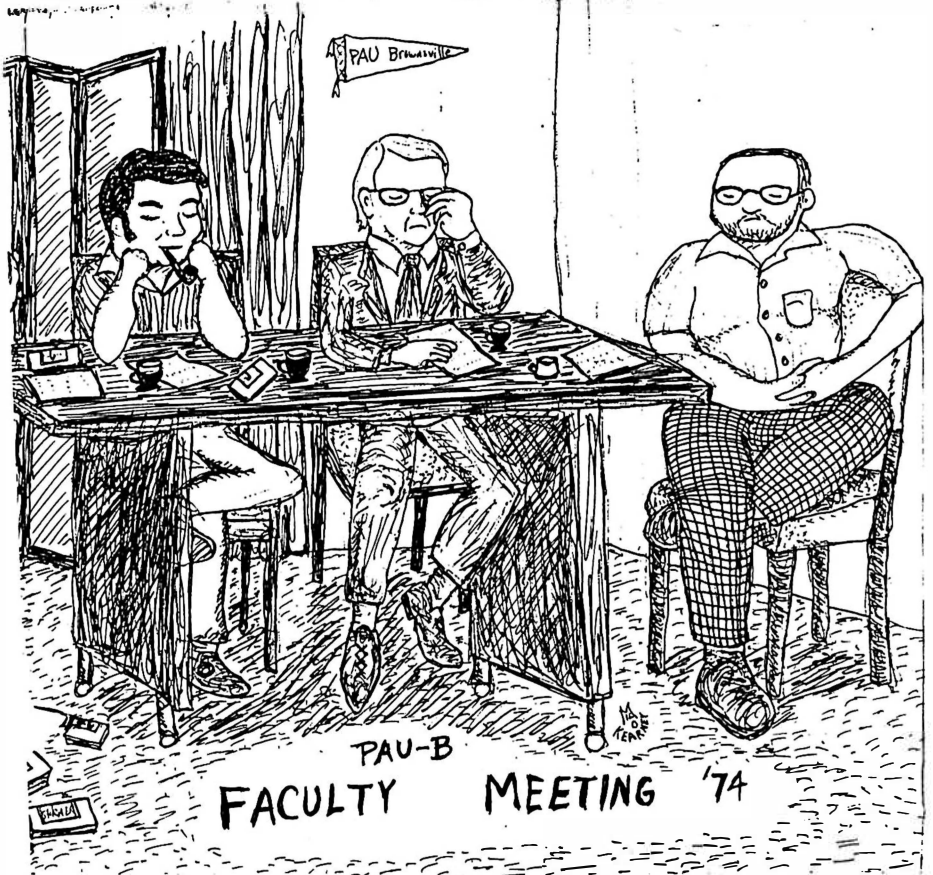
the thrill of the godless will leads
to cannibalism
O Shepherd
guide us back
from the cauldron
to Thy word

And let us later
meet Mark and the others
repentently
loving

Dr. Roberto Garza

Dr. Emmette Hutto

Dr. Joe Binder



PAU-B
FACULTY MEETING '74

The Creation of
The University of Texas at Brownsville

by

Milo Kearney

Brownsville has not been consistently famous for its spirit of growth. In the 1980s, while Harlingen and McAllen experienced impressive spurts in their population, Brownsville barely inched ahead. Against this background, the great strides made in the town's higher education have stood out all the more impressively. Through the same decade of the 1980s, new academic programs, increasing student enrollment, and imposing classroom buildings have proliferated. The crowning development in this achievement has been the creation of The University of Texas at Brownsville, a newly-autonomous institution created from the pre-existing University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville and located by a partnership arrangement on the campus of Texas Southmost College.

The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville itself had only recently been created on 26 May 1989, when Governor Bill Clements signed a bill absorbing Pan American University with its two campuses (at Edinburg and Brownsville) into the University of Texas system.¹

In the two years following its merger into the University of Texas System, the new University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville under the continuing direction of Dr. Homer Peña continued to expand its service to the community, through the addition of new educational programs and through the acquisition of new services. By the fall semester of 1990, the programs offered included the B.A., B.S., B.A.A.S (Bachelors of Applied Arts and Sciences), the B.S.C.J. (Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice), the M.A.I.S (Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Subjects), and the M.S.I.S. (Masters of Science in Interdisciplinary Subjects) in the Arts and Sciences Department; the B.B.A. and the M.B.A. in the Business Administration department; and Teacher Certifications, the M.Ed., Professional Certifications, and the Ed.D. (as a cooperative program with the University of Houston) in the Education Department.²

Arts and Sciences undergraduate majors were offered in English, History, Political Science, Spanish, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Mathematics, Biology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice (Police Administration and Corrections). Minors were offered in Computer Science, Art, English, History, Music, Political Science, Spanish, Mathematics, Biology, Sociology, Psychology, and Criminal Justice.³ M.A.I.S. and M.S.I.S. concentration or support area fields available were Biology, English, History, and Spanish, with support areas in Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, Business Administration, and Education.⁴ Business undergraduate majors were offered in Accounting, Finance, General Business, Management, Marketing, and Business Administration, with Minors in Business Administration, Economics, and Computer Information Systems.⁵ In the Education Department, elementary

teaching certificates were offered in Art, Bilingual Education, Biology, Early Childhood, English, Generic Special Education, History, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Reading, Social Studies, and Spanish, with endorsements in Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language.⁶ Secondary teaching certificates were offered in Art, Biology, Composite Business, Secretarial Business, Computer Information Systems, Life Earth Science, English, Generic Special Education, Government, History, Mathematics, Kinesiology, Physical Science, Psychology, Reading, Composite Science, Social Studies, Sociology, and Spanish, with an Endorsement in English as a Second Language.⁷ Graduate programs in Education included Elementary Education, Counseling and Guidance (Elementary and Secondary), Supervision (Elementary and Secondary), Reading (Elementary and secondary), Bilingual/Bicultural Education (Elementary), and Educational Administration.⁸

Underlying the blossoming of new fields in the Department of Arts and Sciences was Texas State Senate Bill 994, whereby an undergraduate major in a content field was by 1991 required to receive Texas teacher certification in elementary education. This change in the rules allowed the addition in the fall of 1991 of bachelor's degrees in Biology, Mathematics, and Kinesiology. The degree in liberal arts and sciences was designed to allow elementary education majors to add such fields as generic special education, bilingual education, and reading to two other subject areas.⁹

After becoming a part of the University of Texas System, the Brownsville campus also expanded the criminal justice program. Beginning in the fall of 1991, a master's degree in library science in cooperation with Sam Houston State University was made available. A degree program for the hearing-impaired was also proposed, to start in the spring of 1992.¹⁰

In January of 1991, the new nursing program was launched, in cooperation with the University of Texas at San Antonio and with partial funding from a federal grant awarded through the Area Health Education Center. This innovation eliminated the need to travel to Edinburg as the nearest campus with a nursing degree. The program was aimed at working students, certified LVN or RN nurses or nurses with other nursing experience, and full-time working educators. The degree can be completed in as little as two years, with hospital-based training at Brownsville Medical Center and Valley Regional Medical Center in Brownsville. The plan was for UT-PAB to phase in its own nursing program by 1994, with San Antonio pulling out by 1996. In June of 1991, two other programs were introduced. One allowed students to earn both a bachelor's and a master's degree in four to five years. The other Masters of Nursing was launched, with medical-surgical courses offered in cooperation with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and other nursing majors in cooperation with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.¹¹

Sam Houston State University in February 1991 requested permission from the Coordinating Board to deliver library science courses in conjunction with The University of Texas-Pan American-

Brownsville.¹² New capabilities at UT-PAB included interacting video and the electronic library catalog computer program.

In October 1990, three changes were made in the role and scope agreement by the Coordinating Board. In anticipation of SB 994 requirements, the Code for baccalaureate Education (13) was eliminated. The interdisciplinary program leading to certification for elementary education was recoded under "Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies (30)." Finally, the Physical Education programs were recorded as "Fitness and Sports (34.0199.10)" under "Health-Related Activities (34)."¹³

At the same time, spectacular changes had been underway under Dr. Juliet Garcia's leadership at Texas Southmost College. Most visible was the completion of a major expansion and beautification of campus buildings, in a community-bond-supported program which doubled both the campus' instructional capacity and the size of its library. A three million dollar endowment fund was also raised (one-third from private donations and two-thirds from matching federal funds) and used to award scholarships to TSC students of the college district who have received A's and B's in the more rigorous junior high and high school courses.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the outstanding problem facing higher education in Cameron County remained the lack of a four-year university. The new UT-PAB had been designed as a mere upper-level and graduate center. It was able neither to apply for those federal funds restricted to degree-granting institutions nor to request private support without the specific permission of The University of Texas-Pan American-Edinburg. The center status lacked the prestige of a full degree-granting institution which could recruit and maintain a high-level faculty and help to attract industry to Brownsville. A problem also existed regarding the accreditation of the School of Business concurrently with its counterpart on the Edinburg campus, in light of their different natures.¹⁵ A four-year and master's level institution was needed also in order to provide a coherent continuing program for those pursuing a university degree, to avoid a repetition of services resulting from separate lower-division and upper-division institutions, to provide a full faculty with specialized preparation in each advanced and graduate field, to give clear visibility to the existence of bachelors and masters-level programs locally, and to provide a solid academic focal point for advanced cultural offerings for the community as a whole.

Senator Uribe commented that the Rio Grande Valley was getting "very little in terms of money" as a result of the merger. Senator Carlos Truan, Democrat of Corpus Christi, told the state government that "by continuing this pattern of laying out the big money for the richest and most politically influential areas of the state, while starving South Texas into Third World category, you are violating not only the constitution of this state, but the spirit of human decency and the laws of common sense."¹⁶

An attempt to meet the statutory requirement that an independent campus enjoy free-standing status was made already in January of 1988 when Brownsville's Mayor Ygnacio ("Nacho") Garza presented the City's offer of 200 acres adjacent to the TSC

campus for an autonomous University of Texas at Brownsville.¹⁷ Senator Uribe and State Representative Eddie Lucio (both Democrats of Brownsville) had repeatedly tried to win free-standing status for the local school under the name of The University of Texas at Brownsville. Their effort was made initially during the planning of the bill bringing the merger into the UT System, next as an amendment to a bill upgrading the University of Texas at Dallas to a four-year school, and still later as a rider to a bill creating the four-year Central Texas University in Killeen. All of these attempted proposals were killed, either by difficulties in achieving passage in the House of Representatives or due to the governor's veto.¹⁸

Nonetheless, hemispheric forces were working in favor of Brownsville's development. U. S. President George Bush's continuing efforts, in tandem with Mexico's President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, to establish a free trade zone of North America, as prelude to a greater Common Market of the Western Hemisphere, helped to keep Brownsville higher on the list of national and state priorities than had been the case previously. Already in 1986, the Congressional Study Group on Mexico at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, consisting of sixteen representatives and senators, had called for a Common Market of Mexico, the United States, and Canada,¹⁹ to offset the growing rivalry of European and Japanese trade.¹⁹ Referring to the role of Brownsville and Matamoros as a major gateway to Mexico, Senator Uribe had cautioned that before "that economic growth can occur...the state must change its higher education system."²⁰

A principal stumbling block, in a state whose budget was no longer floating happily in the black from oil revenue, was the disinclination of lawmakers to vote for the expense of adding a new university in a remote and underpopulated corner of Texas. This barrier was overcome thanks to the felicitous suggestion that The University of Texas-Pan American-Brownsville be linked in a partnership with Texas Southmost College to provide programs. The status of UT-PAB would be changed to a four-year and graduate free-standing upper-level university with degree-granting capability. In this way, the campus and buildings in the partnership (along with their maintenance staff) could be provided at no new additional expense by TSC, while streamlining the staff structure by consolidating administrative, academic, and support services (including the mail-room, computer programming, payroll, and scheduling). All faculty members of the new institution would become employees of The University of Texas at Brownsville. The TSC Board would retain all of the responsibilities of the community college, including the occupational-technical and continuing education and the first two years of transfer course work. It would also continue to hold ownership of the land and physical facilities, participate in governing the school, continue to levy and collect taxes, and oversee sensitivity to community needs.²¹

The idea to suggest such an arrangement first began to grow when in September 1990, TSC Board Chairperson Mary Rose Cárdenas asked for Senator Eddie Lucio's support in setting up a meeting for her and Vice Chairperson Mervyn Mosbacher with Dr. Hans Mark,

Chancellor of The University of Texas System. At this meeting, Dr. Mark was told of the TSC Board's concern that the University of Texas System take action to improve the higher educational scene in Brownsville, not twenty years in the future, but now. Rose Mary Cárdenas was herself a woman of vision who held expectations of a spurt in Brownsville's growth once the North American Free Trade Zone would come into being and of how the creation of The University of Brownsville would prepare the town for such a development. Agreeing that the problem of proximate action needed to be addressed, Dr. Mark assigned the Presidents of the two institutions concerned to join with the members of the staff of UT-Austin to search for solutions.²²

Senator Eddie Lucio played a vital role at this juncture by calling attention to Senate Bill 923, a dusty and little-used law allowing a community college and an upper-level university to form a partnership. All later developments were a logical result of Senator Lucio's brainstorm that this be used to solve the local academic dilemma.²³ The solution was unique; no other two schools in the country had ever attempted such a partnership.²⁴

The follow-up was facilitated by the high-minded dedication of a conjunction of outstanding educational leaders. The presidents of the two co-operating institutions, Dr. Homer Peña at The University of Texas-Pan American-Brownsville and Dr. Juliet Villarreal García at Texas Southmost College, played a particularly crucial role in creating the necessary mood of cooperation. The dream they shared of creating a great center of higher education in Brownsville was rooted in similar background experiences. Both Mexican-Americans from the Lower Rio Grande Valley, they are both known for a gracious accessibility which, albeit a relative hallmark of the Lower Rio Grande region, is nonetheless a unique quality in any part of the world. They each began their higher educational training locally at the institutions they would later head--Juliet Villarreal at Texas Southmost College and Homer Peña at Pan American University (in Edinburg). Doctoral degrees were earned by both, in Education from The University of Houston by Dr. Peña and in Communications and Linguistics from The University of Texas at Austin by Dr. García. Both of them married and raised children--five in Dr. Peña's case and two for Dr. García. As Presidents of their institutions, both demonstrated an unusual personal involvement in their student and faculty activities. Finally, both surmounted major difficulties to lead Brownsville into a major leap forward in higher education.²⁵

On 25 February 1991, Dr. Peña and Dr. García received a joint letter from James P. Duncan, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for The University of Texas System, based in Austin. This letter announced the resolve of The University of Texas System Administration and Board of Regents, in agreement with the Trustees of Texas Southmost College, to seek a partnership with Texas Southmost College. This arrangement was intended to maintain the authority, responsibility, and current fund eligibility of both the University of Texas Board of Regents and the Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees, without entailing increased local taxes or state appropriations (except for what might occur from a resulting growth in enrollment). There was to

be one president for The University of Texas at Brownsville (to be elected by the two boards), with one administration. An Advisory Committee for the new institution was to be established consisting of three members from each board. The planned University of Texas at Brownsville would be empowered to award associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs. All Texas Southmost employees, including academic departments, administrative services, and student support services, would become employees of the consolidated University of Texas at Brownsville. These changes were expected to be implemented in part by the Fall of 1991 and in toto by the Fall of 1992.²⁶ Each school retained the right to terminate the agreement after a four-year written notice to its partner institution.²⁷

While such a partnership could be made without recourse to legislative action, Vice Chancellor Duncan announced The University of Texas System's resolve to ask the state legislature to change the name of The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville to The University of Texas at Brownsville. The bill included a provision allowing the acceptance of gifts, grants, and donations of any kind and from any source for use by The University of Texas at Brownsville. Joint faculty appointments were to be permitted, with the salaries of those people holding joint appointments to be apportioned on the basis of services rendered. Salaries and benefits were to be prorated and paid from the funds of the two institutions in proportion to their respective share of each employee's responsibility to each institution. To expedite the legislation, which was to go into effect on 1 September 1991, the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three separate days in each house was suspended.²⁸

State Senator Eddie Lucio and State Representative Rene Oliveira and the Presidents of the two schools involved lost no time in jumping into the work of preparing the new partnership. On 7 March 1991, Senator Lucio and Representative Oliveira filed the bill in their respective houses, as Senate Bill 1050 and House Bill 1949.²⁹ Briefing teams including Mary Rose Cárdenas, Mervyn Mosbacher, Michael Putegnat (President of the Board of Directors of the TSC Foundation), Dr. Homer Peña, Dr. Juliet García, Dr. James Duncan, (Executive Vice Chancellor of the University of Texas System), and Dr. Joe Stafford (Vice Chancellor of the University of Texas System) contacted legislators in Austin. The proposal was accepted by both houses, by the Senate on 17 April and by the House on 1 May.³⁰

Already since 25 April, a Partnership Agreement Task Force had been at work hammering out an early draft of the partnership agreement, which was presented on 8 May. Dr. Joe Stafford and Francie Frederick represented the University of Texas System on this task force, while Dr. Homer Peña, Dr. Mark Magee, Ms. Sara Owen, Ms. Debra Hernández, and Ms. Melana Conner represented UT-PAB, and Dr. García, Mary Rose Cárdenas, Mervyn Mosbacher, Dr. Joe Zavaletta, Michael Putegnat, Dr. Chip Dameron, Ms. Alicia Gracia, Ms. Raquel Castro, and Reynaldo Garza represented TSC.³¹ Melana Conner, Reynaldo Garza, Jr., and Dr. Charles Comeaux also came to participate on the Task Force. The resulting agreement was filed with the Coordinating Board on 7 May, and signed by the

TSC Board of Trustees and the UT Board of Regents on 6 June, leaving only the Coordinating Board to consider the measure on 11 July.³² It provided for a joint advisory committee to be composed of three board members from each of the cooperating institutions to oversee the partnership, especially in regard to the sharing of faculty, staff, library services, and facilities, as well as the continuity of course curriculum.³³

The new arrangement combined The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville's 1,398 students with Texas Southmost College's 7,043 students for a total of 8,441 students for the incipient University of Texas at Brownsville. The TSC faculty brought twenty-eight Ph.D.s (19.2% of the TSC faculty) to join The University of Texas-Pan American-Brownsville's twenty-five Ph.D.s (or 73.5% of its faculty) to make a combined total of fifty-three Ph.D.s (or 29.4% of the new University of Texas at Brownsville faculty).³⁴

On 8 June 1991, Senate Bill 1050 was formally signed in the Endowment Courtyard at Texas Southmost College. After a choral presentation and a presentation of colors by Brownsville's Boys Club, Dr. Juliet Garcia welcomed the spectators and Dr. Homer Peña introduced the guests. Brownsville Mayor Ygnacio Garza, Representative Rene Oliveira, and Senator Eddie Lucio made comments, and then Governor Ann Richards signed the bill. The ceremony was concluded with final statements from Dr. James Duncan, Executive Vice Chancellor of the UT System, by Mario Ramirez, UT System Regent, and by Mary Rose Cárdenas.³⁵ The agreement was to take effect on 1 September 1991 or when signed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, whichever is later.³⁶

The creation of The University of Texas at Brownsville may prove to have been one of the major turning points in Brownsville's history. As she signed the bill, the Governor re-emphasized that the Rio Grande Valley "is about to become the hub of the largest free trade area in the world." She predicted that the "free trade agreement will demand a highly skilled work force, and the new university will meet that need."³⁷

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. Rickey Dailey, "Governor signs bill merging PAU, UT," Brownsville Herald, 26 May 1989, 12A.
2. Announcement of The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville, 8 August 1990.
3. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, p. 72.
4. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, p. 84.
5. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, p. 91.
6. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, p. 104.

7. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, pp. 115-116.

8. The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville Catalog, 1990-1991, p. 135.

9. Mary I. Valdez, "Biology degree added to UT-PAB curriculum," The Brownsville Herald, 7 August 1990, p. 2B; and Mary I. Valdez, "UT-PAB adds math degree," The Brownsville Herald, 30 October 1990, p. 1B.

10. Mary I. Valdez, "UT-PAB still pursuing independence," The Brownsville Herald, 8 February 1991, pp. 13A and 20A.

11. Peter Gawenda, "Public Service Announcement from The Office of Institutional Research and Planning of The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville," pp. 1-2.

12. Letter to Dr. Peter Gawenda, Assistant to the President of The University of Texas-PAB, from William H. Pichette, Chairman of the Department of Library Science at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, 6 February 1991.

13. Memorandum from James P. Duncan, Office of the Chancellor of The University of Texas System to Dr. Homer J. Peña.

14. Curriculum Vitae for Juliet Villarreal Garcia, provided by the TSC President's Office.

15. William W. Thompson, "What Price Merger?," in UT-PAB campus records, 1-4.

16. Dailey, "Senate OKs UT-Dallas Bill," A1 and A8.

17. "Brownsville Progress: A Chamber of Commerce Report on the Economic Progress of our City," January 1988, 1.

18. Rickey Dailey, "Uribe Takes 3rd Try at PAU-B Upgrade," Valley Morning Star, Harlingen, Texas, 16 May 1989, A1; "Lawmakers Divided on UT-Dallas Expansion," Valley Morning Star, Harlingen, Texas, 2 June 1989, A1 and A8; and Rickey Dailey, "House snubs Valley, pulls PAU-B from bill," Brownsville Herald, 16 July 1989, 1D.

19. Liz Stanley, "Border lawmakers start new push for improved ties across continent," Brownsville Herald, 20 July 1989, 1B.

20. Dailey, "House snubs Valley," 1D.

21. Mary Rose Cárdenas: "Remarks for Press Briefing", March 8, 1991; "Mr. Mervyn Mosbacher"; and Elise Ackerman, "UT-Brownsville signs on with a flourish," The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 12A.

22. M. R. Cárdenas: "Remarks for Press Briefing," March 8, 1991; and Elise Ackerman, "TSC joining University of Texas: Governor Richards expected to sign bill at 11 Saturday morning at TSC," The Brownsville Herald, 7 June 1991, 1A.

23. Elise Ackermann, "UT-Brownsville signs on with a flourish," The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 12A.

24. Brad Binder, "UT-B will compete next season at junior college level," The Brownsville Herald, 23 June 1991, 13A.

25. Curricula vitae for Dr. Homer José Peña and for Dr. Juliet Villarreal Garcia, provided by their respective presidential offices.

26. Letter to Dr. Juliet Garcia and to Dr. Homer Peña from James P. Duncan, 25 February 1991; Open Letter from Dr. Juliet V. Garcia, President of Texas Southmost College, 7 March 1991; and Mary I. Valdez, "UTPA partnership announced," The Brownsville Herald, 8 March 1991, pp. 13A and 19A.

27. "UT-TSC Marriage produces latest addition to UT System," Brownsville Progress: A Chamber of Commerce Report on the Economic Progress of our City, 24 June 1991, 1.

28. Letter to Dr. Juliet Garcia and to Dr. Homer Peña from James P. Duncan, 25 February 1991.

29. Mary I. Valdez, "UTPA partnership announced," The Brownsville Herald, 8 March 1991, pp. 13A and 19A.

30. "Report by the Chairman of the TSC Board of Trustees on the TSC/UT Partnership".

31. "Report by the Chairman of the TSC Board of Trustees on the TSC/UT Partnership".

32. "Open Letter from the President of Texas Southmost College, May 22, 1991.

33. "Educational Partnership Agreement Draft," May 7, 1991.

34. "TSC/UT-PAB Student Bodies," in a Memo from the Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Planning and Public Information at The University of Texas-Pan American at Brownsville, 31 May 1991.

35. "Program" for the Signing Ceremony; and Elise Ackerman, "UT-Brownsville signs on with a flourish," The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 1A.

36. Elise Ackerman, "UT, TSC reps meet to discuss partnership," The Brownsville Herald, 22 May 1991, 13A.

37. Elise Ackerman, "UT-Brownsville signs on with a flourish," The Brownsville Herald, 9 June 1991, 1A.



Demographics of Spring Breakers Require a New Approach by South Padre Island Businesses

by

Randall L. Florey and Leigh Ann Hanby

This study examines the characteristics of spring breakers visiting South Padre Island and their relationship to local businesses. Specifically, it focuses on maximizing profits of businesses through promotion.

Peer Influences

Most spring breakers gained prior knowledge of South Padre Island through two main sources. The largest number, 57 percent, of individuals had been informed about South Padre Island from previous visits. Less than 5 percent had learned about South Padre Island by the travel agencies they had contacted. A little over 5 percent of the visitors had been informed about the Island by magazine advertisements and even fewer, less than 3 percent, had gotten information from television advertisements.

It was also found that social influences have a major impact in determining where the spring breakers spend their vacation. The study found that 58 percent of the visitors ranked friends as the most important influence in selecting South Padre Island as their vacation site. The desire to meet the opposite sex ranked second with 23 percent of the response. Sorority, fraternity, and organizational influences were ranked third by 15 percent of the subjects. The influence of boy or girl friend ranked last with .015 percent in determining South Padre Island as the vacation choice.

Travel Arrangements

Automobiles and airplanes were the two primary modes of transportation used by travelers to reach the Island. A large number, 59 percent, came by car. Of this group, 37 percent car pooled and 22 percent drove their own car. The remaining 41 percent came by airplane. Of those who used commercial airlines, 19 percent rode Surftran, 8 percent took a taxi, 7 percent rented a car and 4 percent used hotel-motel furnished transportation to commute to their lodging facility.

Travel arrangements were made primarily by two methods. Reservations were made 44 percent of the time through a travel agency and 40 percent of the time by a friend. Nine percent of the individuals reported actually making reservation themselves. The majority of reservations, 59 percent, were made 1-2 months prior to the trip, 33 percent were made 3-4 months prior, and 4 percent 7-8 months prior to their trip. Only 1 percent made reservations less than one month or greater than nine months to their trip.

Hotel, Motel, Condominium Arrangements

Reservations for hotel, motel, condominiums were made well in advance of spring break. Lodging reservations were made 1-2 months in advance by 62 percent of the subjects, 3-4 months in advance by 32 percent and 5-6 months in advance by 2 percent of the visitors. The length of stay was 6 or more days by 69 percent of the sample, 5 days by 15 percent, 4 days by 8 percent, 3 days by 5 percent and 1-2 days by 1 percent of the visitors. One group of spring breakers, 80 percent, anticipated spending 200-300 dollars and another group of 8 percent anticipated spending between 301-400 dollars for their rooms. Seven percent anticipated spending between 401-600 dollars. Four percent anticipated spending less than 200 dollars for lodging.

One hundred percent of the subjects sampled were sharing rooms. The number of people sharing a room varied considerably between 2 and 12. The largest group, 34 percent, sharing a room with 5-6 people, next was 24 percent with 4 people per room, next was 19 percent with greater than six people, next was 8 percent with 3, and last, 1 percent of the rooms were being shared by 2 people. Twenty-nine percent were sharing their room with a boy or girl friend.

Hotel, Motel, Condominium Selection

The amenities that the hotel, motel, condominium provide is important in the selection of lodging facility. The amenity given the most importance, 31 percent, was the facility's proximity to the beach. The second most important reason, 20 percent, given in the selection process was drinking alcoholic beverages. Next, 14 percent of the subjects found the pool facilities to be of importance. Fourth, with 12 percent of the response were contests, then food with 9 percent, sixth were band concerts with 6 percent and last was security with 5 percent.

Environmental Considerations

Three environmental factors were found to be of greater importance to the spring breakers in selecting South Padre Island as their vacation site. The most important environmental considerations were the beach, warm weather and sunshine ranking first, second and third respectively. The environmental factors found to be of least importance to the spring breakers were the ocean and fresh air.

Spring Breaker's Desired Activities

Spring breakers come to South Padre island to participate in specific activities. The most important activity was found to be sunbathing by 75 percent of the sample. The second most important was drinking alcoholic beverages by 66 percent of the respondents. Visiting Mexico ranked third in importance, however 84 percent of the members sampled had visited Mexico. The

fourth, fifth, and sixth positions can be shared food-restaurants, bands-concerts and contests (beauty, hunk, volley ball, etc.). The group of activities that ranked last in importance was corporate sponsored activities. The amount to be spent on these activities ranged from less than 100 dollars to greater than 400 dollars. The percentages for the four categories of expected spending on activities were: less than \$100 (5%), \$100-200 (34%), \$201-300 (38%), \$301-400 (16%) and greater than \$400 (4%).

South Padre Island Activities

The Island provides many activities for the tourist to enjoy, however, the spring breakers did not participate in a large number of these activities. The list of activities available to tourists include jet-skiing, parasailing, sailing, horse back riding, banana boat riding, surfing, windsurfing, boggie boarding, dune buggy rental, snorkeling, scuba diving, pleasure cruises, fishing and water skiing. The largest category (69%) of the respondents had not or did not intend to participate in any of these activities. There were 31 percent who had either participated or intended to participate in one or more of these activities. Other activities include visiting museums, historical landmarks, zoos and wildlife sanctuaries. Non-participant in this group were 94 percent.

Sources of Information

There are many sources of information for visitors while visiting South Padre Island. These sources include the island papers, outside billboards, the tourist bureau, hotel, motel, condominium (pamphlets, signs, posters), radio stations, television, air towed-banners and word of mouth. Word of mouth was number one with 38 percent of the total responses. next, radio received 14 percent of the total responses. Third, hotel, motel, condominium (pamphlets, signs posters) received 14 percent of the total responses. Fourth, air towed banners received 9 percent of the total responses.

Method of Payment

The members of the sample were asked to identify the manner in which they intended to pay for their trip. Payment in the form of cash or check was found to be the most desirable by 84 percent of the individuals. The second most preferable method, 74 percent, was credit. Many of the respondents used a combination of cash, check or credit. The trip was to be paid for by 72 percent of the individuals, 25 percent by their parents and 8 percent by a combination of parents and spring breakers.

Spring Break 1992

Most of the respondents indicated that they will return to South Padre Island in the future. The largest group, 69 percent, plan

on returning to South Padre Island next year during spring break. The next largest group, 26 percent, said that they would return to South Padre Island but not during spring break. Four percent of the subjects said they would never return to South Padre Island.

Discussion

The study identifies several characteristics common to a large number of spring breakers. These observations fall into the category of information passage, reservations, selection of lodging accommodations and payments. These topics will be briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

The flow of information during the spring break period to potential visitors and actual visitors is crucial to the success of the commercial establishments located on South Padre Island. Information is disseminated by friends who have either been exposed to an advertisement, or who have visited South Padre Island in the past. The concept of communicating among friends ties together with the members of fraternities, sororities and other organizations. Obviously, members of organizations play an important role in communicating to their members past experiences at South Padre Island and influencing the decision of their friends and members to return to the Island the following year.

Communication is also important to business in maximizing profits from the seasonal visitors. The primary source of information flow between individuals visiting the Island is word of mouth. This makes good advertising essential within the short time period (approximately six days) to communicate the message and sell goods and services. Perhaps the most difficult problem to overcome is how to reach a group of individuals who have a very definite idea as to what they want to do and are not receptive to most advertising. Advertising on the radio seems to be the most effective means of communicating and possibly posters on vehicles and billboards outside of the business. The most effective way of communicating would be inside the lobbies of hotels, motels and condominiums, but this will not likely be permitted by the management of the establishments. It may be that handouts may be effective in gaining attention, yet remains an expensive method of communicating with short-term buyers. It is obvious that many businesses besides the lodging facilities are not maximizing revenues as a result of a serious communication gap.

The selection of the lodging facility is based to a great extent on the amenities that the establishment offers to their guest. The spring breakers ranked proximity to the beach, drinking alcoholic beverages and pool facilities as the three main considerations in selecting lodging accommodations. This directly parallels what spring breakers desire to do while visiting. The two most important desired activities were sunbathing and drinking alcoholic beverages. The beach, warm weather, and sunshine, also received top ranking as important to the potential spring breaker and should be emphasized in advertisements directly targeting this specific market. Corporate sponsored activities may have been ranked lowest in importance because of the

lack of sponsorship this year relative to years past. The importance of corporate sponsored activities should not be totally discounted for future spring breaks.

Reservations for travel and lodging accommodations tend to be made during the same time period. Reservations for travel are made 1-2 months and 3-4 months prior to their visit by 59 and 33 percent, respectively. Reservations for lodging are made 1-2 months and 3-4 months prior to their visit by 62 and 32 percent, respectively. The implications are that advertising for spring breakers should be four to five months prior to their visit in March. Advertising could be directed at fraternities, sororities, organizations and dorm residents on college campuses. In addition there may be opportunities for cooperative advertising between lodging establishments and various airlines servicing South Padre Island.

The amount of money spring breakers spend seems to be relatively limited and earmarked for specific activities. The fact that airline reservations are made from on to three months prior to their visit suggest that they are taking advantage of advance airline booking discounts. The fact that most of the visitors are sharing rooms (four or more individuals) indicates an effort to reduce individual lodging expenses. Also, the fact that individuals come to the island with a predetermined set of activities to spend their money on makes it difficult for other businesses to prosper. In addition, the fact that 72 percent intend to pay for the trip themselves and with 94 percent working part-time or not at all (6 percent) indicates a limited budget for additional activities or purchases.

Finally, it is important for South Padre Island and its businesses to continue to ensure that visitors have an enjoyable time. This will result in bringing the tourists back year after year. The sample responses suggest that the spring breakers' expectations were met, and that they were satisfied with their stay. Sixty-nine percent indicated they would like to return for next year's spring break, and another 26 percent intend to return at a time other than spring break. These numbers suggest that the South Padre Island experience met expectations and that a loyal returning clientele is being developed for future seasons.¹

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. William Vaughn and Marsha Glowatski for editing this paper.



by

Chris Clearman

The business dealings between people of different countries comprises an arena we call international commerce. The types and amounts of such commerce are influenced by a number of forces. Economic necessity supposedly follows the rules of supply and demand. War, peace and diplomacy open or shut down avenues of trade. Natural calamities alter the needs for goods, labor and services. Technological changes destroy the profitability of long established crafts, professions and trades. This study attempts to track down some of the factors responsible for the growth of Brownsville as a focal point of international trade.

Historical Development

Charles Stillman of Wethersfield, Connecticut arrived at the Rio Grande River in 1828 as a lad to take charge of his father's mercantile and shipping interests in Durango and Matamoros, Mexico. His father's partner was the U.S. Consul at Matamoros, Daniel W. Smith. These business interests were fabulously lucrative as was documented by Zebulon Pike as early as 1810. Imported cloth costing pennies a yard in New England sold in the El Paso area at \$20 to \$25 a yard. Other goods sold in like proportion. (Duffus, 1930) (Stillman, 1956).

After the Texas War of Independence clothing, agricultural implements, firearms, iron mongery and a host of manufactures flowed into Mexico. The growing needs of ranchers along the river and deep into the interior were supplied by expensive overland routes such as the Santa Fe Trail. However sailing vessels of Smith-Stillman and Co. outbound from New York could land thousands of tons of cargo at the Rio Grande for only a fraction of the cost of overland cartage. Flat bottomed craft called ferries then moved these goods upstream to Laredo and Camargo.

Stillman was highly successful because he "vertically integrated" his operations. He purchased merchandise straight from New England factories. He shipped it on his father's vessels thus avoiding the highly inflated cargo charges of his day. The Stillman's stores sold to other merchants as well as to customers. Stillman's boatmen and teamsters hauled his goods but also the merchandise of competitors. Stillman also was noted for his generous credit terms to his patrons (long time customers). He also reduced his risk and exposure to calamity by taking in partners whenever possible. He made sure that the cash always flowed through his hands. Conrad Hilton of New Mexico used this same strategy to build his hotel empire in the early 1900's so these business tactics were obviously common knowledge of the era. Stillman had the capital, the vessels and the "connections"

to make it work. the saying in South Texas is "he found a little gold mine". (Hilton, 1957)

In 1845 the Mexican-American War created new opportunities. Prior to the war about 300 foreign merchants (mostly Norte Americanos) imported lumber and general merchandise and exported hides, wool, and specie (gold and silver coinage). The vessels of Smith-Stillman and Co. handled all of this cargo bound for New Orleans, New York and Europe. During the war the U.S. Army under General Zachary Taylor had massive tonnages of supplies hauled up river to Fort Brown opposite Matamoros. The Mexican commander Generalissimo Pedro de Ampudia had already rounded up all foreign merchants and marched them under military guard far up river. Somehow Stillman disappeared into the mesquite brush. He reappeared five weeks later in Matamoros the day after Taylor overran the town. The only American merchant on the scene, Stillman negotiated a shipping contract. He also billed the U.S. Army for \$17,500 in damages to his Matamoros properties when the army looted Matamoros.

This army contract was a typical Stillman partnership utilizing newly arrived steamboat captain Mifflin Kennedy, his pilot Richard King and another merchant James O'Donell. The Kennedy and Co. Steamship Line monopolized navigation of the Rio Grande for the next twenty years. By only landing on the U.S. side of the river, their four original steamboats avoided registry as engaged in foreign commerce. Goods bound for Mexico were simply ferried across on small boats. (Stillman, 1956)

The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 ceded all lands north of the Rio Grande to the United States. All Mexican citizens had to remove themselves south or become U.S. citizens. Most stayed. This became the era of the Great Land Grab. Norte Americanos swarmed to file claims on already established ranchos (Original Spanish Land Grants were even recorded on the American survey maps!). Hundreds of Mexican families were booted off their ancestral homes. Stillman purchased acreage next to Fort Brown from lawyers handling the de la Garza estate for about \$10,000. He had the land surveyed and laid out a town site which he named Brownsville after Captain Jacob Brown the heroic defender of the fort. Within the year this bustling township valued at one million dollars and contained 8,541 residents. Stillman's reasons for this site were: on U.S. side of river, next to fort for protection, near Matamoros for trade, on highest ground in area to avoid spring flooding of river and Stillman just happened to own the ferry rights at this location (both governments). (Stillman, 1956) (Vezzetti, 1986) (Zavaleta, 1986) (Madsen, 1964)

During the 1850's the Norte Americanos occupying the ranchos began intermarrying with the more refined, educated and gentile Spanish families. Only in Matamoros could one find a church in which to get married, a doctor with European education, or mingle with polite society. Many an Anglo surnamed baby documented U.S. citizenship with a Mexican birth certificate. The practice of dual citizenship came into existence. These new ranchers learned the arts of cattle raising and small scale cotton, grain and sugar cane growing. Stillman purchased five large ranches. King and Kennedy purchased the Santa Gertrudis Ranch which became the

cornerstone of the King Ranch empire. (Stillman, 1956) (Madsen, 1964)

In 1858 bank credit dried up so Stillman, his partners, and other big merchants such as Jose San Ramon, Humphrey E. Woodhouse and Jeremiah Galvan used their own capital resources to freeze out the newly arrived gringo merchants (the established Anglo merchants were now not to be called gringo-almost a fighting word). This left more business to be handled by the "old hands." (Stillman, 1956)

In 1859 the so called Cortina War saw this bandito and 80 mounted riders invade Brownsville to shoot down Yankee gringos who had robbed and cheated the original land owners. At this time 26 King and Co. steamers plied the river and linked to Morgan Steamship Lines in New Orleans. The riverboat Rancho was attacked by Cortinistas on its journey back from Rio Grande City because it was carrying \$300,000 in gold bullion. Apparently this was an ordinary cargo since the Rancho also carried cannon on its deck and a force of los rinches (Rangers) under the command of Captain Rip Ford. The rinches easily repulsed the bandits. A Morgan schooner manifest for this period listed cotton, hides, wool, skins, pigs, slabs of lead and \$408,300 in gold specie and bullion. (Vezzetti, 1986)

In 1860 the outbreak of the Civil War threatened to strangle this trade. The Union Navy began its blockade of all Southern ports. Kennedy and Co. vessels as well as Smith and Stillman Co. sea vessels immediately registered as Mexican vessels. Merchants quickly relocated their assets to Matamoros properties. By 1862 Union gunboats prowled the river. Brownsville entrepreneurs set in motion a massive cotton export system. Cotton from Louisiana and East Texas was snapped up at 6 cents a pound by brokers such as the Rhine brothers, East Texas Jewish merchants. They then purchased as many as 300 wagons pulled by 1800 yoke of oxen. Thousands of teamsters were hired from the ranks of draft dodgers, school teachers, college professors and society dudes (Hunter, 1989) to haul ten to twelve bales of cotton per wagon to Brownsville. After a trip lasting as long as seven months, the cotton arrived at the "yard" located at present day Amigoland Mall. Guarded by confederate troops under Rip Fors, the bales were snapped up by merchants at 80 cents a pound and ferried to Matamoros. (Robinson, 1989)(Johnston, 1989)

Once in Mexico Kennedy, King, Stillman and partners; using their "Mexican" steamboats and ox teams for overland cartage, moved hundreds of thousands of bales to the boom town of Bagdad near the mouth of the river. The bales were then loaded onto waiting sailing vessels. Many were owned by Stillman and old New England cronies. These vessels were registered as Mexican, Cuban and English. President Lincoln's orders to the Union Navy prohibited the searching of neutral vessels sailing from non-Confederate ports. The Emperor Maximillian supported by the French government ruled Mexico. He was courted by Confederate diplomats and merchants to overlook the Matamoros cotton trade. Lincoln feared that a navy "incident" might trigger France or Britain into entering the war on the side of the Confederacy. This almost happened in the Mason-Slidell arrests by the Union

Navy from the British mail steamer Trent leaving the West Indies. Lord Palmerston and Queen Victoria almost declared war over this insult to the British flag and international law. (Catton, 1963)(Johnston, 1989)

As an example, on February 25, 1862 Stillman, Kennedy and company moved 200,000 bales down river under the nose of the Union blockader Portsmouth (22 guns) to the awaiting English cargo ship Propeller. At a haulage fee of five dollars a bale the partners stood to gain \$100,000 for a mere day's work. The last leg of the journey was delayed until the Portsmouth departed as Stillman felt it was imprudent to tempt fate. He stated, "loss of the cotton would do more damage to the coast than a bombardment by the largest warship in the Union Navy". The same contrabandista system operated in reverse to import critical war materials needed to equip Southern armies. Payment to British, French, German and Mexican suppliers was demanded in gold as Confederate money devalued too quickly. General Hamilton Bee and quartermaster Major Russell had to negotiate arrangements with Kennedy and Co. for advance credit in gold which was redeemed with government cotton in the "yard". (Johnston, 1989)(Magruder, 1863)

Sensing the end of the war, Stillman in 1864 sold out his Brownsville and other interests to King, Kennedy, Robert Dalzell, Joseph Cooper, Jeremiah Galvan, Francisco Yturria and Artemus Brown amongst others. He retired to New York and Connecticut in 1866 as a multimillionaire. His grandchildren married into the Rockefellers, Goodriches, Underhills, Whitneys (San Francisco), Carnegies, Browns (Dallas), Gillets and Proxmires. (Stillman, 1956)

Kennedy and King having purchased Los Laureles Ranch from Stillman as well as other huge acreages between Rio Grande and Nueces rivers went on to found the King Ranch cattle empire. Yturria founded the present day family fortune in merchandising and cattle ranching. While he was Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller often enjoyed the white wing dove hunting on the Yturria ranch. (Stillman, 1956)

Johnston (1989) reported that in March, 1863 no less than 60 vessels were present off the Rio Grande most of them foreign. By late 1864 vessels numbered 200 to 300 due to the Union conquests of New Orleans and Galveston. (Lea, 1957)

The so called "Burning of Brownsville" illustrates the frontier and war mentality of this era. On November 1, 1863 Union forces under General Nathaniel P. Banks landed near Port Isabel. Rip Ford had been ousted as Confederate commander and replaced by General Bee who only had 19 men at the time. Bee panicked. He evacuated the fort burning the cotton in the yard as well as the wooden barracks and warehouses. The siege guns were dumped into the river. He fled north burning incoming "cotton trains" of Confederate teamsters. (Hunter, 1989)

The Union forces surprisingly did not arrive until November 6 where they found Brownsville arsoned and looted. The cotton had somehow disappeared. Accounts vary but all agree that the populace panicked. Families, merchandise, and household effects were rushed to the ferry landing where skiffs charged five dol-

lars a head for a 200 yard crossing. Matamoros rateros (thieves, vagabonds and unemployed) swarmed north to loot first the empty Confederate barracks still intact then into downtown stores. Why the five day delay? Speculation includes bribery by the localmerchants of General Banks quickly buy up Kennedy and Co. steamboats to haul Union commanders in league with Northern as well as Southern speculators. (Catton, 1963)(Johnston, 1989)(Robinson, 1989)(Hunter, 1989)

On June 30, 1864 Colonel Rip Ford with a rag tag coalition of volunteers (probably including a high percentage of Hispanics) drove the Union forces back to within 18 miles of the Gulf. In February, 1865 General Lew Wallace, later author of Ben Hur, negotiated a truce and offered amnesty (Wallace, 1865). However, a Captain Theodore H. Barret with a force of 300 men were induced by Yankee was speculators cooped up at Port Isabel to raid Brownsville and seize the newly arrived Confederate cotton. Barret needed a victory to polish his here-to-for lack lustre career. Half way to Brownsville at Palmetto Hill he was met by Colonel Ford's boys and chased all the way back to the coast. Thus the last battle of the Civil War was won by the Confederacy and los rinches. (Johnston, 1989)(Branson, 1865)(Ford, undated)(Robinson, 1989)

From the Civil War to 1900 various revolutions in Mexico interfered with normal trade but presented profitable dealings for military weaponry. Union army commanders openly aided such rebels as Juaristas. General Weizel drew his sword and attempted to skewer Canales. (Robinson, 1989)

The 1800's was a decade of epidemics, floods and hurricanes which proved very costly to the area. The major source of cash was cattle. The famous Chisholm Trail actually began at the Rio Grande near Brownsville with cattle and horse rustling by both gringo cowboys and Mexican vaqueros. These undocumented animals were herded up trail and joined with the big herds and horse remudas of Los Jefes (literally the chiefs - or big cattle ranchers). By 1870 Brownsville's population stood at 25,000 with a large proportion of deserters, homeless and adventurers from both sides of the river. (Zavaleta, 1986)(Foley, 1977)

The 1890's ushered in a new era of prosperity. The locally financed Rio Grande Railroad started in 1870 from Port Isabel to Brownsville served as the sea port link for all of Northern and Central Mexico due to the dearth of harbors along the Gulf coast of MEXICO. A swing bridge route over the river near present day Gateway Bridge used mule teams to pull boxcars to and from Matamoros. In 1903 Uriah Lott began the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad running from Robstown to Matamoros then westward. Every town in the Valley from San Benito to Mission was created by the arrival of this line and the erection of a train station

called peones). Many settlers bore German, Jewish and other ethnic surnames (Hewitt, 1972) (Institute of Texan Cultures, 1970, 1974). They brought new skills, attitudes, and social customs which eventually blended with the old to create the culture of the present day Rio Grande Valley. (Madsen, 1964) (Foley, 1977)

The Lott Line (St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico) was acquired in 1962 by Missouri Pacific Railroad. In its last year the line hauled 35,562 car loads out of the Valley. The long awaited arrival of the Mexican Northern Railroad and the opening of the first International Bridge (now called the B & M bridge) for rail and pedestrian traffic in 1910 spurred trade to the South. Monterrey became the boom town and many Matamoros families relocated to it. The Revolution of 1910 also sent tens of thousands of peones fleeing to the Valley to become a vast pool of even cheaper labor. (Hollander, 1989) (Zavaleta, 1986)

From 1900 to 1930 vast irrigation projects (a specialty of Germanic immigrants) began tapping the water of the Rio Grande. Water Districts with authority to float public bonds were created. Businessmen with sufficient capital could buy up several small farms, utilize the new fangled tractor to level the fields, dig irrigation ditches and plant two crops a year. There was abundant peon labor for clearing, digging and harvesting. Cotton, winter vegetables and citrus orchards literally converted the landscape into a Garden of Eden. On May 14, 1936 the deep water Port of Brownsville opened. Linked by a 17 mile ship channel, full size ocean liners could now dock in a hurricane proof port which was the southern terminus of the Intra-Coastal Waterway from Baltimore, Miami, Mobile, New Orleans, and Houston. (Zavaleta, 1986) (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991)

Modern Development

An economic resources study by Williamson (1965) forecast that the economic future of South Texas would revolve around:

1. Retail sales to Mexican shoppers.
2. Developing a tourism infrastructure to host winter visitors from the Mid West.
3. Local Manufacturing to take advantage of cheap Mexican American labor.

Tourism

In the 1950's older residents from the Mid West begin to vacation in the Valley to escape the cold winters up north. These so-called snow birds reputedly come down with a twenty dollar bill and a new pair of overalls and never change either one while they are here (local anecdote, Edinburg, Texas, 1972). The U.S. Census reports that in 1963 Brownsville alone contained 33 hotels, motels and camps. Many of these trailer camps cater exclusively to **Winter Texans**. The value of rents was reported at \$1,067,000. (U.S. Census, 1967)

Today tourism is the third largest prime industry of the

Valley. It caters not only to winter visitors but to upper class Mexican vacationers. Especially during Easter Holy Week (Semana Santa) thousands of Mexican families flock to Brownsville and South Padre Island for shopping and socializing. Retail merchants report as much as one third of their annual sales occur during Semana Santa. Easter is the real Christmas season for retailers in Brownsville.

Beginning in the early 1960's college students flocked to Padre Island for Spring Break during the month of March. At night thousands drive to Brownsville for the night life in Matamoros. They also shop, gas up their vehicles and cash checks at the banks. In 1991 they spent 42 million dollars on the Island alone (Binder, preliminary findings, 1991). Additional millions flow through Brownsville for supplies, air fares, buses, restaurants, hotel rooms, vehicle repairs, etc... Brownsville is the major city visited other than the Island by spring breakers. It is also the primary recipient of hotel overflow bookings from sold out island facilities (Clearman, 1988). Williamson failed to forecast either Mexican vacationers or spring breakers.

It should be noted that hurricanes such as Allen in the early 1980's and the Ixtoc oil spill in the 1970's did adversely impact tourism for three to five months. The Matamoros cult murders in 1988 were also expected to reduce area tourism. Only Matamoros tourism was effected. Brownsville and South Padre Island tourism held up.

Transportation

The year 1965 is a landmark for industrial progress. The multi-lane Gateway International Bridge opens up heavy truck traffic. Convoys of hundreds of Petroleos Mexicanos tank trucks began hauling crude oil and refined products to the waiting ocean vessels at the port. Fertilizer, chemicals, giant electromagnets and steel smelting tools flowed back to Monterrey. The railroads become so clogged that at times over 1,000 boxcars become stranded in Mexico. (Zavaleta, 1986)

Shopping

With the oil money a new class of Mexican shopper come into vogue. The chiveras, usually housewives, arrive in Brownsville with a long list of shopping. 600 pairs of panty hose, 250 blow driers, 100 boxes of Pampers are needed. She pays in cash. Local merchants treat the chiveras like visiting royalty (Zavaleta, 1986). Also sales of elegant homes and condominiums to "nationals" spark a construction and interior decorating boom. Entire subdivisions such as Rancho Viejo and Brownsville Country Club spring up to cater to these new rich.

Williamson's prediction on shopping materializes in the form of giant shopping malls. The first mall, Amigoland, opened in 1972 within sight of the river and the international bridges. Penny's, Sears, Montgomery Wards and Dillards form the anchor stores. Within a decade malls arise in every city having a bridge over the river. Even the Galleria in Houston caters to

this trade bonanza (interviews with mall merchants, February 2, 1991). Leading Brownsville merchants (personal interviews, 1985) estimate that only one third of the retail stores are sufficient to satisfy all the shopping needs of U.S. citizens. The other two thirds exist only due to the Mexican buyers.

Manufacturing

Williamson's forecast for manufacturing is now reality. Major corporations such as Union Carbide, Levis, Hagggar, Eagle International Bus, Atari, A.T. and T., Carlingswitch, Trico, Duro Paper Bag, Magnetek and Norton Industries operate manufacturing plants. Marathon-LeTourneau built giant off-shore oil drilling rigs at the Port of Brownsville. These rigs drill all over the world including the North Sea and Persian Gulf. Andy International, a ship dismantling firm, buys up antiquated vessels, breaks them into scrap, and ships it by rail to the hungry blast furnaces of Monterray.

Maquiladora Industries

Williamson fails in predicting a new development in industrialization, the maquiladora. In 1965 the Mexican government initiates the Border Industries Program to alleviate high unemployment and to import modern technology into a faltering domestic industrialization process. The typical maquila set up is to have a Matamoros assembly plant using cheap Mexican labor and a Brownsville facility for finish out, warehousing, packaging and shipping. The concept of the Twin Plant is born.

Enterprising businessmen also lobby for Foreign Trade Zones. Parts and materials can be imported into the zone but no customs duties are levied until the final product is shipped out. Thus consumables, damaged parts and spoiled raw materials are not taxed. For example cucumbers are made into pickles. But over half of the cucumbers are "lost" in the pickling process. No duty is paid on the lost portion of cucumbers.

By 1984 thirty seven corporations have facilities employing 17,500 workers. By 1990 this swells to 94 corporations employing 39,700 individuals (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991). Furthermore, re-exports to European and other countries avoids duties imposed on domestic imports.

One of the constraints on industrialization noted by Williamson is the potential lack of potable water from the Rio Grande. So far the Falcon Reservoir has held sufficient water to outlast droughts. Major concerns over pollution from up stream Mexican towns or the drying up of the river in a major drought have failed to materialize.

Shrimping

Few laymen would believe that a prosaic enterprise like shrimping would be involved in international commerce. Prior to World War II shrimping consists of fishing the bays during the day time with small boats called bay trawlers. White shrimp are harvested, sold to local packing houses and distributed by re-

frigerated rail cars. Shortly after the war an unknown fisherman went out into the Gulf at night and dropped his nets. Lifting them out he found them filled to the top of the bag with shrimp. But they are different. They are brownish pink. Needless to say upon arrival at the docks none of the packers wanted to buy these dirty Brown Shrimp. Nevertheless there are millions out in the Gulf so a marketing campaign begins to build consumer acceptance. Finally the idea of "jumbo shrimp" catches the consumer's fancy. Larger boats called gulf trawlers are built containing insulated storage holds. Tons of ice are shoveled in to allow boats to stay out for weeks. Big diesel engines and power equipment for lifting become standard. Today an average shrimp boat carries in excess of \$100,000 worth of electronic equipment for Loran and satellite navigation and for listening in on the Mexican Navy patrol boats. Huge cold storage facilities line the road leading to the Shrimp Turning Basin that can dock in excess of 200 trawlers.

This industry quickly matures. In 1950 the Texas Shrimp Association is founded. The membership in T.S.A. is a testimony to the cultural melting pot theory. Surnames include Anglo, French (Cajun), Spanish and Estonian. Interviews with the Kaiv family (interviews, 1976, 1991) reveal that after the war Estonians being held at Ellis Island needed a job to gain legal entry. Ship owners arrive looking for crews. Many Estonians are skilled seamen and even licensed captains. Many speak several languages including English. They find ready acceptance by the industry. Hard work, saving money and moving down to this new area of opportunity leads to prosperity. (The Estonian ambassador to the fledgling United Nations in 1945 was Captain Kaiv who wielded great influence and prestige in the local community)

Similarly Oscar Longnecker, the 1963 President of T.S.A., also served as President of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, the Texas Banking Commission and as a skilled negotiator in conferences with Mexico. Captain Louis Lapeyre became Mayor of Brownsville. Locally the Martinez, Wilson (related to Justin Wilson the Louisiana entertainer), Pashos, Pace, Salinas, Goga, DuBose, Gayman, Gonzales, Collins, Fisher, Solano, Eymard and Zimmerman families depict the cultural diversity in this industry. (Texas Shrimp Association, 1990)

Technological progress quickly develops. In 1953 mechanical sizing and sorting machinery introduce automation. In 1956 sodium bisulfate is approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for preserving freshness of shrimp. This same year sees Texas A & M initiate studies on off shore drilling, pipelaying and blasting that results in Texas legislation which reconciles the shrimp and petroleum industries. (Texas Shrimp Association, 1990)

Landed shrimp in Texas ranges from 153 to 235 million pounds a year. The industry generates a half billion dollars in revenue annually for the Texas coast. Brownsville-Port Isabel being located near Mexican waters is home port to the largest concentration of shrimp boats in the Gulf. T.S.A. since 1951 maintains strong ties with the National Shrimp Industry Association of Mexico to developed and regulate and orderly importing and mar-

keting plan. They negotiate with both U.S. and Mexican governments for fair regulation of the industry and permits for boats to fish bilaterally. The protection of endangered sea turtles and the 200 miles contiguous offshore fishery regulations of both nations have become ongoing projects. This association sponsors the U.S. Fish and Wildlife 200 mile offshore closed season which allows shrimp to mature to larger sizes. Association leaders are often called upon to exercise their expertise in negotiations between U.S. and Mexican agencies. Paid lobbyists are permanently assigned to both the Texas and U.S. Congresses to monitor and sponsor maritime legislation. International marketing campaigns have expanded this fishery from a provider of a local delicacy to an industry rivaling beef and poultry. (Texas Shrimp Association, 1990)

Hurricanes Beulah and Allen did wreck considerable damage on the shrimp fleet. Although protected anchorage limit the direct storm damage, the tidal surges are unstoppable. A ten foot vertical rise in water level lifts boats and carries them inland. An interesting Sunday drive after Allen was to go see the trawler stranded on the parking lot of the Yacht Club.

Peso Devaluation

The two economies are now closely linked. This intertwining is well depicted by the peso devaluation of 1982-85. Rocked by world oil price slumps, the Mexican government devalues the peso drastically. It plummets from 25 to 1 to a low of 1000 to 1 before semi-stabilizing with daily small increments of devaluation. Zavaleta (1986) reports 500 Brownsville businesses close their doors (bankrupt), unemployment soars to over 15%, retail sales fall and a glut of homes and offices hit the real estate market. (In 1983 Clearman (unpublished traffic survey) found a reduction in shoppers at Amigoland Mall of two thirds. This was measured by customer vehicle parking at the mall as compared to pre-devaluation days.

A review of 1990 Brownsville business operations illustrates the impact of international commerce on the over all economy.

Transportation

There are two interstate Highways, U.S. 77 and 83. Fourteen motor freight common carriers service Brownsville. Three major airports in the Valley have international passenger and cargo schedules from five commercial airlines. The largest Foreign Trade Zone-Enterprise Zones in the nation are at the Port of Brownsville and the Brownsville International Airport. Rail services are provided by Missouri Pacific, Union Pacific, Ferrocarriles Nacionales de Mexico and Rio Grande International Railroad. Two international bridges will soon be complimented by two more bridges now in final planning stages. (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991)

Tourism Infrastructure

Brownsville is the number one destination point in the state of Texas for automobile tourist traffic entering from either a foreign country or contiguous state. facilities include four hotels with convention capabilities, 26 motels, three country clubs, four golf courses, 44 apartments projects, 41 mobile home parks and 85 restaurants. (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991)

Cultural attractions include two battlefields, two museums, Jacob Brown Auditorium, Friendship gardens Convention Center and Gladys Porter Zoo. The zoo is rated in the top ten nation wide. Mrs. Gladys Porter , the daughter of Earl C. Sams the original business partner of J.C. Penny, has endowed Brownsville with numerous philanthropic gifts including Camille Lightner Playhouse, Dean Porter Park, Sams Stadium, and other civic benefits. Porter High School is named to honor this heir to J.C. Penny's Department Stores.

The close proximity of South Padre Island must be included as a magnet attraction for visitors who are stying primarily in Brownsville. In March, 1988 12% of an estimated 70,000 tourists to South Padre Island listed Brownsville as their vacation address. (Clearman, 1988)

Higher Education with International Commerce Related Courses

The University of Texas Pan American Brownsville offers business administration bachelors and masters degrees, Spanish translator and interpreter certifications, and an engineering program is planned for the near future. Texas Southmost College offers a full range of occupational and vocational training in ten certification areas. Texas A&I now a component of the Texas A&M System offers graduate studies in engineering at the T.S.C. campus. Texas State Technological Institute is located at Harlingen but services Brownsville students with a full range of technical and vocational training in 25 different programs.

Building Permits

In 1984 there are 536 commercial permits for 27 million in construction. By 1990 this leaps to 843 permits for over 40 million. (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991)

International Manufacturers and Processors

There are 165 U.S. manufactures with Brownsville facilities in support of a Mexican In-Bond company located in Matamoros, Mexico. This area is the third largest employment center rivaled only by El Paso and San Diego. Ten industrial parks are currently completed and in operation. In 1989 a survey of twenty one major corporations in Brownsville reports 611 new jobs created and an estimated 1686 spin off jobs created in support of this corporate growth (Brownsville Economic Development Foundation, 1991)

Public Sector Investment

In 1989 the building of streets, sewers, pipe lines, power lines, buildings and other public works is reported as:

City of Brownsville	\$5,474,571
Public Utilities Board	\$8,919,452
Texas Southmost College	\$7,794,234

Admittedly not all of this growth is due directly to international commerce. However some large percentage of this economic expansion can certainly be attributed to Brownsville's ties to foreign trade, manufacturing, tourism and retailing.

Future Developments

Where is Brownsville headed economically? There are many speculations. Unfortunately no "Williamson" study is available. Therefore a mail survey of 144 Brownsville businessmen was undertaken in March, 1991.

Opinion survey 1991

Lists of Brownsville companies involved in international trade were generated which contain the name of the owner or manager. The following industry categories depict the survey effort. The named individuals received a short open ended questionnaire.

<u>POPULATION</u>		<u>SAMPLE</u>
165	Manufacturers & Processors	32
166	Wholesalers	15
692	Retailers	50
20	Customs Brokers	10
6	Bonded Fright Tansporters	6
4	Consultants	3
5	International Banks	5
4	Hotels with international convention offices	3
50	Real Estate Dealers	20

These occupations do not represent all occupations involved in international business. Nor do thy contain the names of all businesses or business people with in that occupation. Many

additional people are only engaged part time in these activities and are thus omitted fro these lists. Additionally operations based in Matamoros or in other nearby towns would have been excluded. thus the sample population only approximates to some undetermined extent the real population. No reliability or validity estimates can be generated for this study. However the sample does provide an interesting "slice" of current business leaders and their opinions.

RESPONSE

PERCENTAGE

Item one- What is the greatest challenge faced by international commerce in the next ten years?

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| A. | Promote more trade between United States, Canada and Mexico including Free Trade Agreements. | 38% |
| B. | Changes by Mexican government politics & enforcement towards a position more conducive to foreign business expansion. | 14% |
| C. | Both U.S. & Mexico need to build more infra-structure (roads, bridges, etc...) | 17% |
| D. | Establish modern technologies including capatilization to competent with Europe and Japan. | 10% |
| E. | Find ways to beat foreign competition, pricing and discounting tactics. | 7% |
| F. | Reduce cultural differences in business & finance methods of doing business. | 7% |
| G. | Nationalistic protectionism & labor union demands create unfavorable climate. | 3% |
| H. | No response | 3% |

RESPONSE

PERCENTAGE

Item two - What is the most troublesome problem or issue you must face on a daily basis.

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| A. | Lack of infrastructure to support current levels of commerce. | 28% |
| B. | Government regulations (both nations). | 24% |
| C. | Quality of employees including language barriers, skills & attitudes (both nations). | 17% |
| D. | Peso devaluation still a problem. | 7% |
| E. | Different ways of conducting business. | 7% |
| F. | Increasing your clientele. | 3% |
| G. | Texas government regulations. | 3% |
| H. | No response | 3% |

Item three - What advise would you give to a newly arrived businessman and his family.

- A. Get involved in local community, assimilate. 48%
- B. Learn Spanish. 24%
- C. Make an advanced study of this area. 7%
- D. Don't start a business here at this time. 7%
- E. Have sufficient capitalization. 3%
- F. Establish your business firmly on the U.S. side before expanding into Mexico. 3%
- G. Hire professional experts such as lawyers, consultants. 3%
- H. No response. 3%

Respondents occupations - could indicate more than one, all responses were tabulated.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Importing	23%
Industrial	18%
Tourism	10%
Financial	7%
Retail	7%
Consulting	7%
Real Estate	4%
Training	4%
Fisheries	4%
Customs Brokers	4%
Communications	2%
Agricultural	2%
Legal	2%
Professional	2%
Technical	2%
Transportation	2%

conslusions about the survey

The major new area of business noted by business repondents is expanding into Mexican retail markets which have been sheltered by Mexcian government protectionism. Free trade negotiations between the U.S. and Mexcican governments have been quoted daily by the Valley news media during this survey period. (Bentson, 1991) (Long, 1991)

Grouping all responses in item one which are controlled by the public sector instead of by private business yields a startling 72% of all responses. Business people see their futer as controlled by government decisions and at the mercy of governemtn regulations. The public sector's responsibility to provide adequate roads, bridges, inspection stations, communications, etc... (infrastructure) is severely castigated. Grouping responses in item two also depicts this concern with public sector failure to support commerce at 62%. The State of Texas and City of Brownsville are singled out by respondents in addition to

their major complaints against both the U.S. and Mexican governments.

The vision expressed by Brownsville business people definitely includes beating the Japanese and Europeans in marketing, pricing structures, discount, finance and high technology. They firmly grasp the principles of interlocking world events upon the local economy. This global vision event seems a bit paranoid in its intensity on "beating Japanese illegal pricing strategies", "smashing European under the table discounts and kick backs" and "forcing the U.S. government to halt Asian shrimp imports which are packed in unsanitary conditions while we must meet every U.S.D.A. quality standard on the books". The only major area in which local business people complain about themselves is in the quality of employees. The 17% response to quality of employees refers to bad employee attitudes, tardiness, and language barriers. Both U.S. and Mexican laborers (from unskilled to highly skilled) are drubbed for not staying on the task. Quality control of fabricated and assembled products is seen as a major headache due to low quality of labor. Surprisingly, organized labor unions are only mentioned in context with Mexico's nationalistic protectionism of domestic businesses.

Overview of Factors Influencing Commerce

This study has identified the following factors as contributing to Brownsville's growth and decline over the last fourteen decades.

Geographical location. Position along the border and by the sea creates a focal point for international trade. Once established additional industry, transportation, merchandizing and labor are attracted. Today Brownsville is seen as an international center.

Political and diplomatic. Public events ranging from war, to treaties, to regulatory actions repeatedly create booms and busts for economic investment. Strong family and business links between the two communities of Brownsville and Matamoros insure that any positive changes will be quickly exploited. These local communities exert tremendous clout on state and national legislators through contributions for election, lobbyists, powerful trade associations and block voter appeals. In the 1990 gubernatorial election Ann Richards professed that the "Valley Vote" as critical for her victory (personal observations, Democratic Rally, November, 1990).

New technology. Inventions from steamboats to computerized factories have led to millionaire status for many entrepreneurs. Stillman and King were the early arrivals. Today several hundred families can boast million-dollar enterprises.

Natural resources. Resources such as cheap land, semi-tropical climate, abundant irrigation water, coastal estuaries to nurture shrimp, etc...are already exploited. Only a few economic gains remain, such as the development of salt water mariculture ponds to cultivate domestically-grown shrimp. Another opportunity lies in drilling deep wells to tap hot underground waters for the generation of cheap electricity.

The Forces of Nature. Hurricanes, droughts, citrus canker, killer bees, and red tides can threaten various areas of commerce. Valleyites have a knack of turning disasters into windfalls. In 1981, Hurricane Allen, the most powerful ever recorded by Miami's Hurricane Center, rips into a moribund Brownsville economy. Everyone moans, "This is the end; we'll never recover." But the doom-sayers forget about home-owners insurance required for bank mortgages. Within six months, over 20 million dollars in insured repair claims are filed. Sales skyrocket on the new money injected by Prudential, Allstate, State Farm, Metropolitan, and other carriers. The local banks make sure their collateral is fully protected. (Clearman, 1981)

Human Resources. Cheap peom labor historically provides the economic incentive for initiating most new projects. But modern industry needs skilled labor. This huge pool of cheap but unskilled labor will dwindle in importance. Future industry will need a work force that possesses the latest in vocational and academic preparation. Fortunately, the higher education infrastructure is in place. In 1989, Texas Southmost College campaigns for a three million dollar challenge grant. The local community raises one million which is matched with two million from the U.S. Department of Education. By 1994, local high school graduates can receive free tuiton from this fund (telephone interview, T.S.C. President's Office, April, 1991).

The University of Texas at Brownsville

References

Bentsen, Lloyd. (1991, February 19). Free-trde agreement will help Texas. Brownsville Herald. Brownsville, Tx.: Freedom Newspapers. 4.

Binder, Norman. (1991, preliminary findings). South Padre Island Tourism Survey. in press. South Padre Island Tourism and Convention Bureau.

Black, J.S. (1990, March). Personal Characteristics of Japanese Expatriate Mangers. Management International Review. 119-133.

Brownsville Economic Development Foundation. (1991). Economic Overview of Brownsville, Texas. Brownsville, Tx: author. 1-36.

Braubach, Robet P. (1991, March). texas Business and the European Community. Twin Plant News. 6. el Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 52-56.

Catton, Bruce. (1963). Terrible Swift Sword. New York: Doubleday. 358.

Clearman, Chris & Thompson, William W. (1988). South Padre Island Tourism Survey. Brownsville, Tx: Cameron County Parks System. 1-29.

Clearman, Chris. (1981, February). Hurricane Allen. Texas Police Journal. Dallas: author.

Duffus, Robert L. (1930). the Santa Fe Trail. New York: Macmillan. 53.

- Elias, Lois. (1991, March). Who Needs Management Skills in Your Maquila. Twin Plant News. 6. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 37-39.
- Foley, Douglas, Mata, Clarice, post, donald E., Lozano, Ignacio. (1977). From peones to Politicos. Austin: U.T. Press. 1-6.
- Ford, John S. (undated). memoirs. Austin: Archives Texas State Library. 1005-1024.
- Hewitt, W. Phil. (1972). The Czech Texans. Austin: U.T. Press.
- Hilton, Conrad N. (1957). Be My Guest. Englewood cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Hollander, Alan. (1989). Golden Years of the Rail, in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University at Brownsville. 309-317.
- Hunter, John W. (1989). The Fall of Brownsville, in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University at Brownsville 214-227.
- Institute of Texan Cultures. (1974). The Jewish Texans. San Antonio: author.
- Johnston, David. (1989). The Impact of the Civil War on the Rio Grande, in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University. 190-206.
- Klaus, Agthe. (1989). Managing the Mixed Marriage. Business Horizons. 33(1). 37-43.
- Kras, Eva. (1991, March). Teamwork in the Maquiladoras. Twin Plant News. 6. Nibbe & Assoc. 31-35.
- Kruegar, R. Blair. (1991, March). Mexico's Regulation of Foreign Technology. Twin Plant News. 6. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 43-47.
- Lea, Tom. (1957). The King Ranch. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 187.
- Leon, Ruben. (1991). Education. Monterray, Mexico. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 28-31.
- Long, Gary. (1991, April 17). House Ag Committee head wants tariffs in pact. Brownsville Herald. Brownsville, Tx: Freedom Newspapers. 6B.
- Lowery, Susan V. (1991, March). Education in Mexico: The Molding of a Nation. Twin Plant News. 6. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 25-28.
- Lowery, Susan V. (1989, December). A Different Life; The Mexican Experience. Twin Plant News. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 16.
- Macgruder, John B. (1863, March 31). General Macgruder to General Cooper. Official Army Records. I.26(2). Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Records. 63.
- Madsen, William. (1964). Mexican-American of South Texas. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 4-7.
- Nibbe, Don. (1991, February). Maquila Distribution systems. Twin Plant News. 6. El Paso: Nibbe & Assoc. 32-34.
- Onkvisit, Sak & Shaw, John. (1991). Myopic Management: the Hollow Strength of American Competitiveness. Business Horizons. 34(1). 20-25.

Robinson, Charles M. (1989). Brownsville and the Blockade, in Milo Kearney (ed.), More Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University at Brownsville. 207-227.

Stillman, Chauncy D. (1956). Charles Stillman. New York: author. 1-72

Taylor, Graham D. (1981, autumn). Management Relations in a Multi-national Enterprise: the case of Canadian Industries Limited. Business History Review. 337-358.

Texas Shrimp association. (producer). (1990). 40 Years of Service to the Industry. (Videotape). Brownsville, Tx: author.

Tung, Rosalie & Miller, Edwin. (1990, January). Managing in the 21st Century: The Need for Global Orientation. Management International Review. 5-18.

U.S. Census. (1952). 1952 County & City Data Book. Washington D.C.: author.

U.S. Census. (1967). 1967 County & City Data Book. Washington D.C.: author.

U.S. Census (1988). 1988 County & City Data Book. Washington D.C.: author.

Vezzetti, Robert B. (1986). Steamboats on the Lower Rio Grand in the 19th Century, in Milo Kearney (ed.), Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University at Brownsville. 67-76.

Wallace, Lew. (1865, March 14). Major General Lew Wallace to General U.S. Grant, Brazos Santiago, Texas. Official Army Records. I. Texas. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Records. 1167-1168.

Williamson, Robert B. (1965). The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Austin, Tx: University of Texas.

Wittenberg-Cox, Ahwiah. (1991). Delivering Global Leaders. International Management. 46(1). 51-56.

Zavaleta, Antonio N. (1986). The Twin Cities: a Historical Synthesis of the Socio-Economic Interdependence of the Brownsville-Matamoros Border Community, in Milo Kearney (ed.), Studies in Brownsville History. Brownsville, Tx: Pan American University at Brownsville. 125-174.

Christmas on the Rio Grande
The Reaction of a Northern Migrant to the Lower Rio Grande

I grew up with snow and ice--
Apple cider laced with spice--
Caroling on coldest nights
While pine trees glowed with twinkling lights.
Now I live on the Rio Grande;
Cactus plants and lots of sand.
Palm trees pointing to the sky
And warm Gulf breezes blowing by.
The malls are trying hard to show
What things look like when heaped with snow.
Christmas trees are hard to find
(And mostly the synthetic kind).
I didn't know how I would feel
Since everything seemed so unreal
With Christmas season now at hand
And living on the Rio Grande.
But then it came to me one day
That Christmas isn't just for play--
For Santa Claus and snow and trees
And incidentals such as these.
My mind went back through time and space
And landed in a distant place
Where Christ was born--in Bethlehem;
A place not unlike where I am.
I saw no pines with twinkling lights,
No fields of snow or frosty nights.
No holly wreaths nor mistletoe,
No "Rudolph" with his nose aglow.
I see a barren desert land
With palm trees rising from the sand.
The sun beat down and warmed the breeze
That moved the sand and bent the trees.
I felt the warmth upon my face
And saw the beauty of the place.
My vision made me realize
I must view Christmas through new eyes.
The things that make our season bright
Are far removed from Christmas night.
We don't recall the humble birth--
The night that God came down to earth.
My thoughts have made it very clear.
The Season's blessings all are here.
The palm trees and the desert sand--
It's Christmas on the Rio Grande.

by Bob Rose

