

The Story of Union Forces in South Texas During the Civil War

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Revised April 2013

Key Words: South Texas, Civil War, Union Forces, Rio Grande Valley

With an aim to provide a comprehensive but relatively brief overview of Union activities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the Civil War, this narrative borrows freely from published and online resources.

The history begins, of course, with Secession of Texas from the Union. This was initiated January 28, 1861 when, at an *ad hoc* Secession Convention, the delegates overwhelmingly approved an ordinance of secession. It was then ratified by almost a 4 to 1 popular vote on 2/23/61. The state government was reorganized with secession loyalists taking office, and the state then went on to join the Confederacy after seceding from the Union on March 2, 1861.

All told, in early 1861, there were 2,500 U.S. soldiers along the Rio Grande, the western frontier, and at the Eighth Military Department headquartered in San Antonio. They were organized in ten companies, five of which were infantry and the remainder cavalry and artillery. There were United States troops garrisoning Fort Brown and the Ringgold Barracks in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). These were companies of the First Artillery and Companies C and E of the Third Infantry according to Frank Cushman Pierce in his *Texas' Last Frontier*. These were under Major W. H. French, 1st and 2nd Artillery, Fort Brown; Lieut. Col. E. Backus, 3rd Infantry, Fort Brown; Capt. B. H. Hill, 1st Artillery; Lieut. James Thompson, 2nd Artillery; and 2nd Lieut. G. D. Bailey, 2nd Artillery. As late as March 4, 1861 Captain Edward R. Platt continued to drill his artillery men at Fort Brown.

At the Brazos Island Depot on February 21, 1861, its commander, Lt. James Thompson with only 12 Regular Army artillerymen under him, was confronted by Col. John Salmon "Rip" Ford and E. B. Nichols, Commissioner for Texas. They had sailed from Galveston after embarking with six companies comprising about 500 men. On February 4, 1861, three days after the Texas ordinance of secession was adopted, Nichols, Morgan shipping line agent at Galveston, had been appointed commissioner and financial representative of the seceded state. He had been ordered to secure funds and transportation for the movement of Ford's command to Brazos St. Iago. From Charles Morgan's Southern Steamship Company of New Orleans, they had chartered the 417 ton steamer *General Rush* and the *Shark*, a schooner. The *General Rusk* was used by Texas troops from February 16 to March 15 at a fee of \$14,750. Thompson had no other option than to surrender the place and property. The Federals had tried to destroy stores and arms that

were at the depot, but a considerable quantity was retrieved by Texas forces landing on the island. After Ford lined his troops in three ranks the American flag was slowly lowered and the Lone Star flag of Texas raised. In a strange turn of events the *Rusk* was immediately chartered by the defeated Federal commander for \$12,500 to evacuate troops to Key West.

Even before the ratification was completed Nichols arrived in Brownsville on 2/22/61 and in an interview with Capt. B. H. Hill, commanding Fort Brown, asked those of the U.S. Army who were not inclined to join the Confederacy to depart the state but leave behind arms and ordnance. This latter request was refused. Hill was irate at the demands and felt that the initiators should be arrested as traitors. He had little choice in the matter when word reached him from Brevet Major General David E. Twiggs, commander of the Eighth Military Department (Department of Texas). Signed on February 18, 1861 it directed the surrender of all Federal troops and property in the state.

The Steamer *Daniel Webster* with Maj. Fitz-John Porter, Assistant Adjutant General U. S. Army and part of General Winfield Scott's staff, departed New York on 2/15/61 and arrived at Brazos de Santiago on March 3 to commence evacuating Federal troops. Porter was assisted by Captain George Stoneman of the 2nd Cavalry and Commissioner Nichols. Transported to New York were Companies M, Second Artillery, and Companies C and E of the 3rd Infantry. By March 21 the last U.S. officers had departed. One historian noted that Captain Stoneman " 'upon a touching appeal from Colonel Ford' left behind his company's weapons for use of civilians against possible Indian attack." Stoneman and Ford were friendly as they had together fought Indians along the wild frontier of the state. Almost immediately with their departure the Confederates took control of the garrisons. They were not to remain there however as the position would be poorly defensible against possible Union warship bombardments.

A delayed Associated Press report in the *Harper's Weekly* of April 13, 1861 presents an account and is accompanied by an excellent sketch of Point Isabel's landing facilities at the time.

*THE "DANIEL WEBSTER" AT
POINT ISABEL, TEXAS.*

WE publish on page 225, from a drawing by Government draughtsman, a view of Point Isabel with the steamer Daniel Webster lying off the coast. Point Isabel was a place of note in the Mexican War, and the name will be familiar to our readers. The Webster arrived here from thence, on Saturday, March 30, with United States troops.

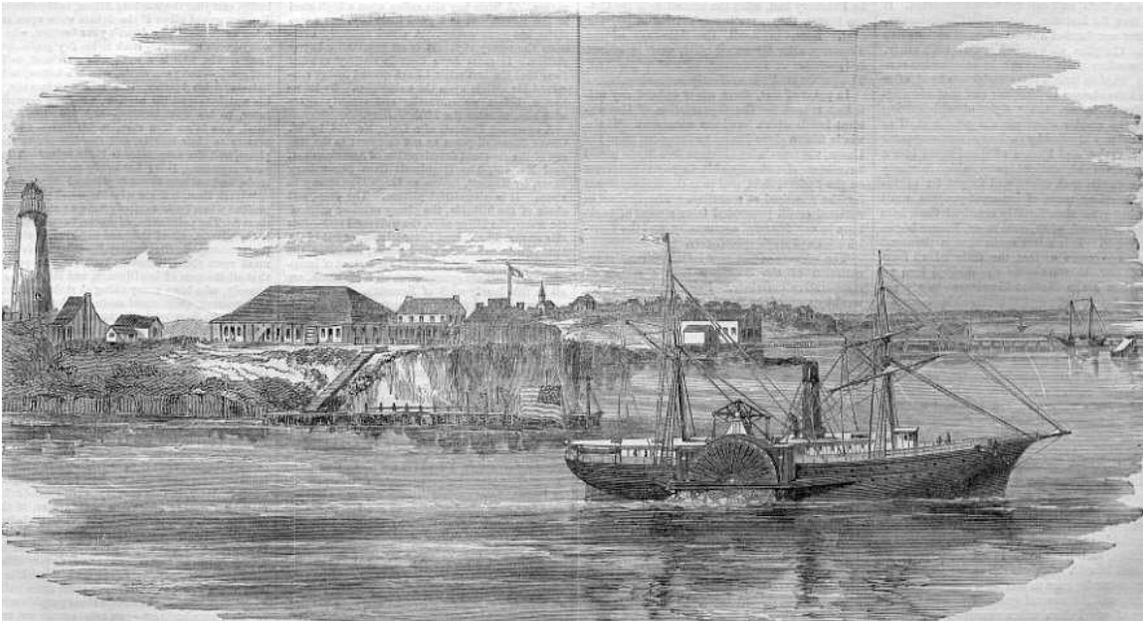
The reporter of the Associated Press states :

"When the Webster sailed there were left at Fort Brown one company Third Artillery, Captain Dawson commanding, and two companies of Second Cavalry Captain Stoneman commanding. The posts in the upper parts of Texas had generally been abandoned, and the troops, were being concentrated on the sea-coast. Colonel Backus was at Fort Brown, and two companies Third Infantry under Major Sibley, were expected soon. The Indians followed the march of the troops, and committed great havoc among the people, killing some and running off their stock. Major Sibley chastised some of the savages. Great fear is felt all along the line of the Rio Grande, and indeed the whole frontier, of attack from Indians. Cortinas was

understood to be simply waiting the departure of the Federal troops to recommence operations on a larger scale than heretofore, and in which he was checked by the army of last year.

" The Daniel Webster passed the Star of the West about two hundred miles off Tortugas. The Daniel Webster has had a remarkably pleasant passage, and the troops on board are all in fine health. When they reached Key West they found the people very much excited, and apparently not inclined to furnish them with fresh water ;but finding that the troops were determined to take by force, if necessary, whatever supplies were needed, they complied with the request, although with very ill grace. The troops which arrived here on Saturday in the Daniel Webster proceeded to Fort Hamilton Saturday night, where they will remain until further orders are received from headquarters."

The small *USS Montgomery*, under the command of Capt. Charles Hunter, had arrived off the mouth of the Rio Grande on April 29. The captain sent a message ashore to Capt. W. H. Brewin, CSA, at the Brazos Santiago Depot giving the post one day to evacuate any woman and children before commencing a bombardment of the area. Brewin then withdrew his forces beyond the gunnery range of the ship.



The steamer *Daniel Webster* off Point Isabel, Texas

As noted above, on 2/21/61 Texas Confederate States of America (CSA) troops under Col. John Ford had captured the U.S. Depot with its mortars, siege guns, and ordnance in the town of Brazos de Santiago on the north end of Brazos Island. General John P. Magruder of the CSA ordered the blasting of the Point Isabel Lighthouse, but, when executed, it was only damaged. Later its lenses were removed and buried in the backyard of Ford's Brownsville residence.

A ranger with Ford wrote a letter to a friend who in turn forwarded it to the [Little Rock] *Arkansas True Democrat*. It was reported in part as follows: "We arrived here on the 20th

inst., Col. Ford being commander-in-chief of our company. He is better known in the State as 'Old Rip', and is said to be always in a bad humor unless he is engaged in a fight. He had scarcely gotten more than half-way from the steamer to the barracks when he ordered the American flag to be pulled down and the lone star to be raised in its place. But after some time parleying he was persuaded by his brother officers to show the enemy a little more respect, and he accordingly gave them an hour to breathe. The United States flag was then struck in silence, no one seeming to exalt over it. But when the lone star went up a deafening shout came from Ford and his four hundred and fifty rangers. We have taken about fifty pieces of artillery and will go over to the Rio Grande tomorrow for the purpose of attacking the fort at Brownsville. They are aware of our intentions and are said to be busy making preparations to give us a 'warm reception'. They have one hundred forty field pieces and about three hundred and fifty soldiers, their position behind the fort giving them greatly the advantage. We received a dispatch this evening informing us that they intend to resist to the death. Our men are nearly all armed with a Minnie rifle, a six-shooter, and a cutlass. You may look for interesting news by the next steamer."

Louis J. Wortham in his "A History of Texas: From Wilderness to Commonwealth" goes on to tell us:

It was the Succession Convention of February 1861 that commissioned Colonels John S. "Rip" Ford and Henry E. McCulloch, both Indian fighters and Rangers, to each enlist a regiment for border service for short periods, six to twelve months in the Confederate service. McCulloch's and Dalrymple's forces were consolidated and afterwards reorganized as the First Texas Mounted Rifles.

This command was succeeded by an organization first known as the Frontier Regiment organized as State troops in 1862 and afterwards known as the 36th Texas Cavalry in the Confederate service. In the spring of 1864 Governor Murrah transferred the regiment to the Confederate service, and it was sent to the west. In 1863 and 1864, another regiment, which had several engagements with Indians, was in the frontier commanded by Colonel James Bourland. The last State troops on the northwest frontier during the winter of 1864 and spring of 1865 were 200 men under Major John Henry Brown. This force was disbanded in May 1865.

Later as part of the 32nd Brigade, Cameron County provided the 12th Infantry (CSA), a unit, usually composed of 115 men.

As the war progressed and the Union Navy became more adept at blockading Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico ports of the Confederate states, the South took another tact to continue exporting its most valuable commodity—cotton. Money-generating cotton was funneled through Texas into Mexico. Texas became a "blockade-running haven" referred to as the "back door" of the Confederacy.

On April 19, 1861, seven days after the war had begun, President Abraham Lincoln gave an order to blockade all rebel seaports, including that of Brazos de Santiago (transl.: Arms of St. James. Originally the name of the settlement was Brazos de St. Iago. After shortening to Brazos St. Iago, it was corrupted to Brazos Santiago.) on Brazos Island. Despite its strategic location the port left a lot to be desired. Expanded by the Mexican War, it had grown as a logistics center for military supplies in the years 1845 to 1848. Recent West Point graduate, Lt. George B. McClellan, who would later be a failed Union

general in the Civil War and run as the "peace" candidate opposing Lincoln's second term, described the area. He wrote "Brazos is probably the very worst port that could be found on the whole American coast.... nothing more than a sand bar, perfectly barren, utterly destitute of any sign of vegetation." As Baughman commented in his book *Charles Morgan*, "The passage of the shallow bar was unusually dangerous in any sea, and often steamers ran aground, to remain for hours awaiting a higher tide." He goes on to quote John W. Audubon who traversed the area on his way to the 1849 California gold fields. Audubon wrote "not a landmark more than ten feet high", only "miles of breakers, combing and dashing on the glaring beach" littered with "dark weather-stained wrecks."

Union General Winfield Scott had proposed a blockage of Confederate seaports coupled with a strategy to sever the Confederacy in two by controlling the Mississippi River. He hoped to squeeze the Confederacy materially and economically. After J. B. Elliot of Cincinnati published an 1861 cartoon showing a snake stretched along the coast from Maryland to Texas and then north along the Texas western border all the way to Kansas, the scheme was named the Anaconda Plan by the press.

Little was accomplished along the South Texas coast until, on 12/5/61, a naval blockade was organized at Point Isabel. This was extended to Brazos Santiago on 2/25/62, one of the participating Federal vessels being the *U.S.S. Portsmouth*, a 22-gun sloop of war. On the evening of May 27, 1863 the *U.S.S. Brooklyn*, a steam sloop under the command of Commodore H. H. Bell, anchored off the mouth of the Rio Grande. "The next morning Bell counted sixty-eight sails at anchor off the bar 'and a forest of smaller craft' inside the river." Spotting a mast to the north the *Brooklyn* got underway and was to seize the sloop *Kate* with its crew of three and its cargo of 18 bales cotton that had been loaded in Houston. He brought the prize cargo aboard.

Turning south again, the crew spied two sloops and two schooners inside Brazos Santiago. On the 30th the *Brooklyn* anchored off this pass and sent four small boats with 87 men over the Brazos Santiago Pass bar into the bay to capture the four vessels involved in smuggling. [Note: Brazos Santiago Pass is that now defined by the jetties projecting from the extreme south end of South Padre Island and the northernmost extent of Brazos Island]. The party returned with the 100-ton schooner *Star* and a fishing scow with two men. Point Isabel natives, upon seeing the approaching expedition party had set fire to the other schooner. The party however did capture the sloop *Victoria*, a Jamaican ship of 100 tons carrying a mixed cargo. It was run aground and torched. By June 1 the *Brooklyn* had returned to patrol duty at Galveston.

Soon circumvention action was taken by the merchants who were exporting smuggled, southern cotton via Mexico, moving it down the last stretch of the Rio Grande from Matamoros, and then offshore through Brazos Santiago. To avoid confiscation by blockading navy forces they began to fly the flag of Mexico on the lighter boats ferrying the cotton to British ships. It did not take long, that in violation of international neutrality laws, British ships suspected of delivering munitions and the like to the Confederacy via Mexico were seized by the Union off Brazos Island. These seizures led, of course to

diplomatic protests. Eventually the British made sure to anchor in Mexican waters for discharge of merchandise to Bagdad, Mexico and the subsequent on-loading of cotton bales.

Laura Synder in her 1938 Texas Tech masters thesis, *The Blockade of the Texas Coast During the Civil War*, clarifies the treaty situation even more. She writes:

According to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo...the boundary was defined as "commencing in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from the land opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande thence up the river following the deepest channel." Since Texas was in possession of the Confederates, the internal waters of the Rio Grande were not under blockage. Therefore United States officials could not interfere in any way with a vessel belonging to a friendly and neutral nation which had anchored in the port of another neutral power.

Regardless of her cargo foreign nations argued that the United States had no jurisdiction over such a vessel as long as she was within the bounds of a neutral country and therefore under the protection of that flag. Seizures made contrary to the observance of this recognized international law not only seriously injured the commercial interests of that country, but it also gave rise to serious complaints and claims for indemnity.

Anthony Fandino wrote an article titled "at anchor at the mouth of the Riogrande". It appeared surprisingly in the May 2008 issue of *U.S. Stamp News*, the reason being that it touched upon a stamped letter originating from the *Portsmouth*. Mail and other supplies were being delivered to the blockade vessels by the US Navy supply steamers *USS Rhode Island* and *USS Connecticut*. Fandino relates "On 2/1/62 Captain S. Swarthout in command of the sloop *Portsmouth* approached the British steamer *Labuan* and noticed it being loaded with cotton by a smaller steamer flying a Confederate flag. The lighter suddenly fled to the Texas shore. Captain Swarthout reasoned correctly that the source of the cotton was Texas. The boarding party confirmed this. The ship was seized and sent to a northern prize court. However the resulting court case released the *Labuan*, as despite her loading Texas cotton she had been at anchor in neutral waters, this making her safe from seizure. Under the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty of 1848 the mouth of the Rio Grande was made a neutral zone never to be blockaded by the U. S. or Mexico one mile north or south."

A letter from a sailor aboard the *Portsmouth* is reprinted in the article. Together with its misspellings and lack of punctuation, it reads:

Miss Annie Garland, Newington NH

US Ship Slupe of War Portsmouth Feb 26, 1862

My Dear Sister I rete myself to write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along my health is good at preasant I have bin well ever since I left We are laying at anchor at the mouth of the Riogrande Riogrande separate Mexico from Texas We have three prises one of them is a large steimer loaded with cotton We have got a few prisoners aboard I have written two letters to you cause I had started and I have not received any from you I suppose the people begun to talk about town meeting bi this time I want father to settle with Willey and let George Avoy have five dollars of it I want you to send me a paper tell miry to keep up a stiff upper lip I must close up mi letter for there is no chance to write so good by your brother and well wishes

When you write direct your letter to US Ship slupe of war Portsmouth Blokadeing Squadron

I want you to send me som silk thread send three kinds of red wite and pink I want to make stars of you need not send but a little.

In April 1862 the *Portsmouth* was relieved by the 201 ½ foot screw steamer *USS Montgomery* captained by Lt. Commander Charles Hunter. On June 3 as the ship cruised near the mouth of the river, sailors spotted a suspicious small vessel one and a half mile to their northeast. It was the small British schooner *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. Along side stood a suspicious lighter ready for offloading. A small boat was lowered with a two officers, a boarding/search party of two, and four rowers. Once on board there was found in the hold gunpowder in fish barrels and in bags, percussion caps, thick shoes, and a large case or cask of marked clothing. The boarding officers signaled to the mother ship, and soon she sent another officer with orders to take possession of the vessel if gunpowder or arms had been uncovered. This was effected. Since the lighter had no contraband aboard yet it was released.

A. A. Champion provides us this short segment of history. On March 1, 1862 Leonard Pierce, recently appointed American Consul at Matamoros, established himself there with difficulty. The Confederates had worked with Mexican authorities to refuse to acknowledge his rights. He had been prevented from communicating with the *Portsmouth*. On April 21 Pierce was able to notify commander Hunter on the *Montgomery* that about 100 Union refugees from Texas were in Matamoros, that they felt increasingly endangered, and wished to be evacuated. In fact early that day Rebel officers crossed over from Brownsville and with the compliance of Mexican police arrested four, then six or more, Americans that they considered "obnoxious" to them. The consul rushed to the plaza, and through Colonel Capistran's intercession was able to effect their release." Pierce had dispatched a young Englishman, Alfred Westrup, with the communication to the *Montgomery*, but upon returning from his mission he was seized at Bagdad by four Texas Rangers and taken to Fort Brown. Later he was released without the dispatches he was bringing the consul".

Champion continues "In the fall of 1862 Bagdad was in the grip of a yellow fever epidemic. Sickness became general and the mortality was great, perhaps partially paralyzing commerce through the port. During September, the American consul at Matamoros gave the schooner *Jicaltipac* and the schooner *Planet* from Nassau, New Providence, a Bill of Health certificate to clear from Bagdad, explaining that the passengers were refugees and [he] had to embark them as conditions at the Mexico port were so unbearable for them that he disregarded the fact of the danger of spreading the epidemic upon the arrival of these vessels at New Orleans. The *N. Berry* would clear Bagdad with refugees on October 7, 1862.

Admiral Farragut ordered the *U.S.S. Albatross* to the Rio Grande in 1862. He offered that its commander should suspect neutrals "whenever found under circumstances of the slightest suspicion." The fact was a ship from the Canadian maritime provinces had recently been anchored off the mouth of the river. Its listed cargo was fish. When boarded by Federals the barrels were found to contain war munitions rather than fish. This aggressive attitude would not continue. The ship was the schooner *Two Sisters* captured off the mouth of the Rio Grande on September 21, 1862. After the departure of the *U.S.S. Albatross* from blockade duty Commodore Farragut did not immediately send another cruiser as replacement as he did not wish to expose his men to the yellow fever epidemic.

He also had concluded that no useful purpose could be served by having a man-of-war at the Rio Grande at that time.

Because of this Union commanders were cautioned again and again not to make seizures unless there were very strong suspicions that contraband was aboard and the vessel was in US waters. Naturally, in almost all cases this left the US Navy squadron powerless to interfere with the illicit trade conducted just south of American jurisdictional waters. Admiral Farragut was well aware of this situation. Mexican sympathizers to the Confederacy frequently contrived fraudulent sales, transfers of property documents, and Consular certificates. These frustrated the Navy even more. When the *USS De Soto* arrived off Bagdad in August 1862, she did little more than send reports to Admiral Farragut.

There were a few successful seizures. Some blockade runners were captured off Boca Chica and Point Isabel. On July 9, 1862 the schooner *Reindeer* from Point Isabel was captured with 45 bales of cotton on board. Apparently it was released after its cargo was confiscated because on September 15 it ran the blockade at Brazos Santiago. The schooner *Water Witch* was captured on August 23. Captain Thomas B. King, its master, was an old citizen of Point Isabel and pilot at Brazos Santiago. The British schooner *Lilly* bound for Bagdad was captured August 31 and the schooner *Teresa* September 4. In October the schooners *Comet* and *West Florida* having departed Bagdad were captured. When General Banks, on November 8, 1863, advanced from the Rio Grande and took possession of Point Isabel and the surrounding area, he was able to seize several English ships that were anchored off the coast.

Other South Texas action chronicled by the US Naval History Division in 1966 were:

August 25, 1863 *USS William G. Anderson*, Acting Lieutenant F. S. Hill, captured schooner *Mack Canfield* off the mouth of the Rio Grande River with cargo of cotton.

August 27, 1863 *USS William G. Anderson*, Acting Lieutenant F. S. Hill, captured schooner *America* off the coast of Texas with cargo of cotton.

September 11, 1863 *USS Seminole*, Commander Henry Rolando, seized blockade running British steamer *William Peel* off the Rio Grande River with large cargo of cotton.

11/4/63 *USS Virginia*, Acting Lieutenant C. H. Brown, seized blockade running British schooner *Matamoros* at the mouth of the Rio Grande River with cargo including shoes, axes, and spades for the Confederate Army.

11/5/63 *USS Virginia*, Acting Lieutenant C.H. Brown, seized blockade running British bark *Science*, and, in company with *USS Owasco*, Lieutenant Commander Henry, captured blockade running British brigs *Volante* and *Dashing Wave* at the mouth of the Rio Grande River.

One minor incident apparently not recorded by the above division is compiled in Pierce's "Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley." He relates that on July 24, 1863 the US Gunboat *Antona* was anchored off the mouth of the Rio Grande when its Acting Master, Charles T. Chase, went ashore to nearby Bagdad, Mexico. His purpose was to forward a letter to the American Consul in Matamoros. Being returned to his ship on a Mexican boat, the *Magarita*, he was detained by a party of 8 to 10 men as the boat moved close to the Texas coast. He was taken to Fort Brown where Confederate Gen. Bee was to offer him parole. Chase refused this offer. Second in command on the *Antona*, now Acting

Master, S. V. Bennes, upon learning of Chase's predicament weighed anchor and sailed for Galveston. Bee rethinking his position now offered to deliver Chase to the river's mouth, but Chase asked to be sent across the river to Matamoros and his release was thereby effected.

One strange sideline to the year 1862 is an event that occurred on December 20, 1862. On that date a group of Mexicans led by Octaviano Zapata crossed the Rio Grande at Las Cuevas, opposite Los Ebanos. They attacked a Confederate wagon train. Zapata called his group "The 1st Regiment of Union Troops." It killed several guards before escaping across the river with the wagons. This and other disturbances caused CSA Major General John Bankhead Magruder to replace Col. Rip Ford who had been in command of the "Military Department of the Rio Grande." Hamilton P. Bee of Corpus Christi was placed in charge and arrived in Brownsville on January 29, 1863.

The Handbook of Texas Online provides more detail about Zapata and his activities: "**ZAPATA, OCTAVIANO** (?–1863). Octaviano Zapata, highwayman, was a native of northern Mexico about whom little is known before the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States. He owned a small ranch in Texas, near Clareño, but was forced to flee to the Mexican town of Guerrero with his wife and three children after the Clareño massacre of April 1861. He was once associated with Juan N. Cortina and Antonio Ochoa and organized a band of men that included outlaws, deserters, and political refugees from both sides of the border. They conducted raids in both Texas and Tamaulipas, Mexico, in search of money, supplies, and munitions. By the end of 1861, they were renowned bandits, famous along the lower Rio Grande border. The Union Army benefited from Zapata's raids into Texas, since they forced Confederate troops to remain in the area rather than participate in the military campaigns in the east. Beginning in 1862, Union agents, called *enganchadores*, offered rewards to Tejanos and Mexicans who conducted raids: 100 pesos in gold and from fifty to 150 acres of land in Texas. Zapata and his men were among the first recruited, and they were provided with arms and uniforms and promised additional rewards after the war. There is evidence that Zapata also received encouragement and support from the United States consul in Matamoros, Leonard Pierce Jr. He was also associated with Edmund J. Davis a former district court judge in Texas, who was conducting Northern-sponsored military activities in the vicinity of Brownsville and Matamoros. For these reasons, and because his band of men often flew the American flag during its raids, Zapata's party was often referred to as the "First Regiment of Union Troops."

In early December 1862 Zapata's men attacked a Confederate supply train; three weeks later a train of three wagons en route from Fort Brown to Ringgold Barracks, escorted by five Confederate soldiers, was attacked at Rancho Soledad near Las Cuevas, and all but one of the Confederate escorts were killed. These activities were instrumental in bringing about the extradition agreement negotiated in February 1863 between Confederate general Hamilton P. Bee of Fort Brown and Governor Albino López of Tamaulipas. Under the terms of this accord, Mexican authorities invited Confederate troops across the border to assist in the pursuit of outlaw parties. In late August Zapata's men ambushed Mexican troops on the road between Guerrero and Mier, and the alcalde of Guerrero

requested that Maj. Santos Benevides of the Thirty-third Texas Cavalry, a predominantly Tejano regiment, intervene. Benavides crossed the Rio Grande with seventy-nine men on September 1, 1863, and took up the pursuit of Zapata's party. The following day Benavides surrounded them near Mier. After a brief exchange of fire, the Zapatistas dispersed, leaving ten men dead, including Zapata.”

From Ralph Wooster in the *Handbook of Texas Online* we learn more about the trading action:

Trade with Mexico made more materials available to Texas than any other Confederate state. In return for cotton, Texas received military supplies, medicines, dry goods, food, iron goods, liquor, coffee, and tobacco. Matamoros on the Rio Grande across from Brownsville and Bagdad, Tamaulipas, a seaport village at the mouth of the Rio Grande, were the centers of this activity, in which thousands of vessels from Europe and the United States engaged in a flourishing business. The trade was interrupted from time to time by Union military activities along the Texas coast but even so provided many items needed by Texas during the war.

Few realize that the cotton brokerage and sales entities in New York City were such a major part of that city's economy that many there, including the city's mayor, involved in those operations opposed the war due to its negative effects on their livelihoods. When the war did ensue and cotton was being exported via Mexico, New York City continued to trade. The proof of the pudding was lading slips indicating one arrival to New York City from Matamoros in 1861, 20 in 1862, 72 in 1863, and from January to March 18, 1864 32 ships.

March 1864 saw a minor naval confrontation. Brownsville pioneer William Neale was to record it in his memoirs. The full-rigged schooner, *Whiteswan*, was spotted sailing directly for the mouth of the river, likely seeking the protection of Mexican or neutral waters. Its position was about nine miles northeast of the mouth, therefore she was in U.S. waters. A blockade ship dispatched a small wheeled steamer to the attack. When in range it opened fire and eventually hit the *Whiteswan* on its starboard side. The vessel quickly began listing and in course dumped 18 bales of cotton into the sea along with the crew of eight. The quick-thinking seamen swam to the cotton bundles and began to use them as flotation devices. In a two hour span they dog-paddled toward the shore as cannon shots dropped around them. They succeeded in safely reaching shore through the pounding surf. Perhaps somewhat farfetched in his narrative Neale proclaims that numerous workmen at Bagdad, just south of the river's mouth, stopped work to cheer the fleeing sailors on. Sighting that odd event would have been impossible unless the tides had pushed the bales and the sailors to the south.

The Valley area and the Confederate soldiers assigned here were under the control of Col. P. N. Lockett and Col. John S. Ford until Gen. H. P. Bee arrived on 1/29/63. From Fort Brown to Rio Grande City the Confederate force numbered between 1,200 and 1,500 men.

The military strategy of the North generally relegated Texas operations to the back burner but did make sporadic attempts to achieve specific goals. Wortham summarizes the Union events as follows:

The third attempt to invade Texas was more successful, but it caused no inconvenience to the thickly settled parts of the state. Indeed, its purpose was not primarily to subjugate Texas. The French had just seized Mexico and, in as much as the United States, under the Monroe Doctrine, was opposed to French plans in connection with that seizure it was feared by the Federal government that France might join forces with the Confederacy and thus complicate the war. In order to prevent any direct access from the French through Mexico, the Federals decided to occupy the Texas coast near the Mexican border. On 11/5/1863, therefore, an army of 6,000 Federals under General Banks took possession of Brownsville, the small force of Confederates there retiring without resistance. During the next two months Banks extended his operations by occupying Corpus Christi, Aransas Pass, Mustang Island, Pass Cavallo, St. Joseph Island, Indianola, and Port Lavaca.

After the French scare passed, however it was decided to attempt an invasion of Texas by way of the Red River, and all of the Federal forces along the south coast were withdrawn, except a small body of troops which occupied Brownsville. An expedition started from New Orleans with the role of invading East Texas but was defeated by Confederate forces before reaching the Texas border. Later the small force at Brownsville was withdrawn, and Texas remained free from the menace of French invasion during the rest of the war.

A momentous decision reported by Naval Historians records:

July 24, 1863 Because of the French occupation of Mexico City some 6 weeks before and the apparently hostile attitude of Emperor Napoleon III toward the United States . General Banks at New Orleans was ordered to prepare an expedition to Texas. For some time Secretary Welles had advocated a similar move in order to halt the extensive blockade running via Matamoras and the legally neutral Rio Grande River. "The use of the Rio Grande to evade the blockade," he recorded in his diary, "and the establishment of regular lines of steamers to Matamoras did not disturb some of our people, but certain movements and recent givings-out of the French have alarmed Seward, who says Louis Napoleon is making an effort to get Texas; he therefore urges the immediate occupation of Galveston and also some other point." The expedition could take two routes: striking by amphibious assault along the Texas coast, or via the Red River into the interior. In either case, a joint Army-Navy assault would be necessary.

In summary Unionists were to persuade President Lincoln to invade Texas in order to 1. provide a haven for loyal Texans, 2. show Maximilian the flag of the United State, and 3. strangle Texas economically by cutting cotton flows. Subsequent events would show that the Union never provided enough soldiers to seal the border.

It was on 10/27/63 that the Union expedition to capture Brazos Santiago, and the mouth of the Rio Grande River departed New Orleans accompanied by the USS *Monongahela*, Commander Strong; USS *Owasco*, Lieutenant Commander Edmund W. Henry; and USS *Virginia*, Acting Lieutenant C.H. Brown. This was the beginning of another Union move not only to wrest Texas from Confederate control but to preclude the possibility of a movement into the State by French troops in Mexico. The naval forces under Commander Strong convoyed and supported troops commanded by General Banks at Brazos Santiago, Texas. The landing began on the 2nd and continued the next day without opposition. On

the 4th Brownsville, Texas, was evacuated, and the Union foothold on the Mexican border was secured. Major General Dana wrote Commander Strong thanking him for the "many services you have rendered this expedition, particularly for the gallant service rendered by Captain Henry and the crew of the *Owasco* in saving the steam transport *Zephyr* from wreck during the late storm [encountered en route on 30 October] and towing her to the rendezvous, and to you and your crew for assisting the steam transport *Bagley* in distress; also especially for the signal gallantry of your brave tars in landing our soldiers through the dangerous surf yesterday at the mouth of the Rio Grande" The naval force also quickly effected the capture of several blockade runners in the vicinity.

Much has been written by Civil War historians about Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks. Banks had been a politician in Massachusetts, and then nationally, from 1849. Considered by President Lincoln for a cabinet post, he was eventually chosen as one of the first major generals of volunteers on 5/16/61. He was resented by United State Military Academy graduates despite the fact he "brought political benefits to the administration, including the ability to attract recruits and money for the Federal cause." His Shenandoah (1862) and Red River (1864) Campaigns are looked upon as defeats for his Union forces.

After the defeat of Confederate-occupied Vicksburg by General Grant, and pretty much complete control of the Mississippi River was then obtained by Federal forces, attention was paid to South Texas.

Various reports outline the activities that occurred. Primarily these are from the adjutants general of the different states. These are the chief administrative officers of an army and who are responsible especially for administration and preservation of personnel records. Gen. Banks was commanding the Department of the Gulf with Maj. Gen. Napoleon Jackson Tecumseh Dana its Second Division, Thirteenth Army Corps. It was in the Fall of 1863 that Dana was given divisional and then corps command in the Department of the Gulf. He led the Department's Second Division from September 26, 1863 to January 3, 1864 and the XIII Corps from 10/25/63 to January 9, 1864 then the 1st Division from March 11 to April 3. Under Dana fell the Second Brigade that took on the Rio Grande Expedition and operations on the coast of Texas. It was under the command of Col. William McEntire Dye. The units it initially encompassed were the 94th Illinois, 19th Iowa, 20th Iowa, 13th Maine, 20th Wisconsin, 1st Missouri Artillery (Battery B), 15th Maine, 1st Engineers (Corps d'Afrique, a Black unit), 1st Texas Cavalry, and Pioneer Company (another Black unit).

The formation of the Black units deserves some clarification. The first all-black regiment was formed in Union-controlled Louisiana on September 27, 1862. The history of the 87th Infantry—Old, US Colored Troops is as follows: It was organized at New Orleans, Louisiana in October 1863 as the 16th Infantry, Corps d'Afrique; designated this regiment, April 4, 1864, consolidated with the 95th Colored Infantry, November 26, 1864, to form the 81st Colored Infantry (new), designation changed to 87th Colored Infantry (new), August 14, 1865. The Pioneer Company also consisted of Black soldiers, primarily doing

engineering duties. Additional Colored troops of the 87th were assigned to Brazos Island duty from 9/64 to 5/65 after having been stationed in Morganza, Louisiana.

The Union Army in the Civil War was organized as follows:

company—82 privates, 13 sergeants and corporals, 2 lieutenants, 1 captain or 98 total;
infantry regiment—10 companies or 980 men commanded by a colonel, assisted by a lt. colonel and major;

cavalry regiment—12 companies;

brigade—initially 2 regiments or about 2,000 men commanded by a major general or brig. general;

division—several brigades (normally 3);

corps—several divisions;

army—group of more than one corps.

Initial recruitment for a regiment would be 1,100 with the expectation that reduced numbers would occur due to attrition. As the war progressed losses brought inroads to the stated numbers and in some instances regimental units were combined.

Maj.-Gen. Francis Jay Herron took command of the Union forces in the Valley on 1/3/64. Pierce gives a total figure of 6,479 U. S. soldiers along with 16 heavy guns and 12 field guns in the LRGV. General Bee, CSA, had reported to his superiors on 11/5/63 that the 26 Union transports had landed 6,998 troops. Even using spies this could only be a guess.

By February 1864 Major-Gen. Herron would report the garrisoning of Brownsville by the Second Division composed of two brigades. The First Brigade was composed of the 37th Illinois Infantry, 26th Indiana Infantry, 91st Illinois Infantry, the 38th Iowa Infantry, and Battery E, 1st Missouri Artillery with 1,172 men all told. The Second Brigade consisted of the 20th Wisconsin Infantry, 19th Iowa Infantry, the 94th Illinois Infantry, and Battery B, 1st Missouri Light Artillery with a total of 918 men. It had been organized in St. Louis and reorganized as Welfrey's Battery. It had marched to Brownsville 11/4-9/63 and remained on duty there until July 1864. In addition there were 925 cavalry, though available horses only numbered 650. Herron wished to enhance this number by purchasing local horses at the cost of \$40-50 gold or \$60-65 in treasury notes. The 37th Illinois and 26th Indiana were old regiments that would re-enlist as veterans but would be furloughed within 30 days. This would put the Brownsville manning at about 3,647 soldiers. In addition Herron listed the two regiments of Colored troops at Point Isabel and Brazos Island. In all these totaled 632 men.

Herron emphasized to his superiors the economic importance of the region to the Confederacy, namely its channeling of cotton into Mexico. He noted that the Matamoros cotton merchant, Belden, had such a great vested interest in the successful smuggling of cotton into Mexico that he had supplied a large number of pistols to Confederate Col. Benavides at Laredo. The merchant Samuel N. Belden, in partnership with Charles Stillman and Simon Mussina, had in 1848 formed the Brownsville Town Company.

Herron went on to clarify the situation. He transmitted the following information:

There would be strong inducements for the rebels to attack this post if weakened, for the following reasons: Before the occupation of Brownsville by the Federal troops this was the main crossing for cotton from Texas to Mexico, and for passing goods back. Since our arrival here they have been forced to cross at Eagle Pass, miles north, but within the past two weeks Vidauri (sic), governor of the States of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, has been seizing all cotton crossed into his States for an old debt due from the Confederate Government to citizens of Monterrey, and principally to one Milmo, his son-in-law. This action, of course, has made the blockage of the Rio Grande complete.

Most of the rebel officers in Texas are directly interested in the cotton now awaiting shipment to Mexico, and will not hesitate to use troops to get it over if that will do it. If passed into the States of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, it will be seized, and the only State left to them is Tamaulipas. There is no point above Brownsville that they could cross into Tamaulipas with subjecting themselves to attack from us, and therefore it would be just as well for them to open the route through Brownsville if possible. So great is the pecuniary interest of the Governor of Texas and the military officers in this matter that 2,500 troops can be had for such a purpose whenever necessary, and whenever that number of troops can accomplish it. A majority of the merchants in Matamoras have large amounts due them from these same cotton operators, and are therefore anxious to have some means devised for getting cotton through, and will furnish both money and arms for the purpose.

The general pointed out the importance of Brazos Santiago as the only good harbor within 150 miles on either side of the Rio Grande. The depth of water on Brazos Bar was given at 9 feet while the mouth of the Rio Grande had only 2 feet clearance.

Many of the aforementioned units had come down the Mississippi River after the battle of Vicksburg. Banks had tried to seize Sabine Pass, Texas, but "the expedition was a disgraceful failure." He then decided to move on to the South Texas coast after first hiding his intentions with a feint on Opelousas, Louisiana.

The landlubberly army troops were to experience a defining period in their lives. Their transport to Texas would leave them with lifelong impressions. What they were to encounter at sea was an intense, deep, low-pressure system accompanying the passage of a continental cold front. The storm that passed over them left an indelible imprint on their collective memories. The twenty-three transport steamer ships had commenced their voyage from Louisiana in two parallel columns spaced one-half mile apart.

Edwin B. Lufkin, a private of Co E, 13th Maine wrote of the succeeding events in a memoir published in 1898. His experiences of embarking and crossing the Gulf of Mexico are mirrored in other accounts. To quote:

The morning of Oct. 23rd dawned dull and gloomy. During the forenoon there were occasional showers, each heavier than the one preceding, and by the middle of the afternoon the rain began in earnest. At 4 p.m. the regiment left its comfortable quarters, marched to the levee in the pouring rain, and went aboard the new steamer Clinton, of the Crescent City Line, where we found the 15th Maine already embarked. The steamer was so badly crowded that there was not room for nearly all the men to lie down, and many had to sleep that night in a sitting position. About dark, the steamer moved up river and anchored at Carrollton, where the next day the regimental baggage and horses were taken on board. Three companies of the 15th Maine were transferred to the Steamer Gen. Banks (formerly the Creole) thus making it possible for those who remained to lie down, by close packing.

About 4 p. m. the steamer returned to the city and took on board several life-boats, then continued down river, passing Fort Jackson about midnight, and at 2 a. m. next morning anchoring at the head of the passes,

where the expeditionary force was assembling. After daylight, on attempting to fill water casks, the water in the river was found to be salt; a strong southeast gale having driven the water from the gulf up into the river. The steamer, therefore, went back up the river in search of fresh water, but did not find any fit to use until the Quarantine Station, forty miles from the mouth of the river, was reached, and even there was brackish.

In the morning of the 27th, we dropped down through the Southwest Pass and anchored again. In the afternoon the expedition sailed, being convoyed by several gunboats. Many of the steamers, including the Clinton, each had a sailing vessel in tow, loaded with stores.

Nothing of note occurred until the 30th, when there was a shower, followed by heavy wind; the water becoming so rough that the men on the hurricane deck were ordered into the cabin, as they were in danger of being pitched overboard. The schooner which was in tow sprung a leak, and by evening had taken so much water that it had to be abandoned, the crew being saved with much difficulty.

The next morning, though the wind had gone down, not another vessel could be seen from the Clinton's deck; but during the day most of the expedition reassembled, and in the afternoon we came in sight of Padre Island, on the coast of Texas. Shortly after noon, Nov. 1st, the Clinton anchored off Brazos Santiago Pass, a few miles northeast of the mouth of the Rio Grande.

Henry Carl Ketzle of Company A, 37th Illinois Volunteer Infantry and called the Illinois Greyhounds, also put down his sea transport experiences in a Civil War Diary. He relates of the passage:

Embark by noon of the 23rd on the G. Peabody along with two troops of 1st Texas Cavalry. Drop down past Crescent—26th go down to head of passes and by noon October 27th steam through southwest pass into Gulf—on the 28th under convoy of gunboats start in regular line across the heaving bosom of the Gulf of Mexico (need I say how he exacted his tribute of nearly all of us) had fair weather and sailing on the 29th, but on the morning of the 30th it was quite stormy and rough, so much so that our rudder chain snapped and thus left the boat unmanageable—boat hands with the assistance of our boys (most of Company D being old lake sailors) soon fixed the steering apparatus with ropes, block and tackle thereby we were able to keep in our course but soon we noticed other boats having apparently worst trouble than we, as some we could see white flags hoisted

Morning of October 31st found us on place of rendezvous, assigned by General, where we found a dispatch boat and soon others followed till afternoon when Generals Banks and Dana, in their boats ordered us into proper line, but 7 vessels of the fleet were still missing. On the 1st of November by 4 p.m. we dropped anchor near Brazos San Diego.

Private (later sergeant) Benjamin F. McIntyre kept a record of his service in the 19th Iowa Infantry. Tilley's annotated *The Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre 1862-1864* details his experiences in the Rio Grande Expedition. He and fellow infantrymen commanded by Col. Kent boarded the Gulf steamer *General Banks* at Carrollton, Louisiana on 10/23/1863. The entire fleet according to Major John Bruce's 19th Iowa report consisted of 16 large vessels and three gunboats. There was also a number of schooners used for troop, munitions, and provisions transport. The convoy left New Orleans on the 24th. Also aboard the *Gen. Banks* were two companies—15th Maine and a portion of Battery "B" 1st Missouri Artillery. The captain of the *Banks* complained at the excess number of personnel brought aboard but to no avail.

Sunday, the 25th, saw the ship anchored off the lighthouse at the Southwest Pass awaiting the arrival of other ships to be in the convoy. Lt. Col. Benjamin B. Murray Jr. of the 15th Maine was the ranking senior officer aboard and exercised his privileges much to the chagrin of the Iowa officers over the 239 enlisted Iowans. After an inspection on the 27th,

60 rounds of cartridges were issued to each soldier. The fleet departed the Mississippi Delta that evening and the very next day began to encounter rough seas.

With 23 vessels in sight of the *Banks*, a gale commenced on the 29th. This however was not the peak of the storm; that was to arrive the next day. Soon a flag of distress was raised on the masthead of the *Banks*. Col. Murray reluctantly consented to having the eleven mules aboard, one battery wagon, and other items such as forage thrown overboard and "deep-sixed." The fact of the matter was that many vessels of the fleet that had been requisitioned by the Federal government had years before been condemned.

On the 31st with its fuel nearly exhausted the *Gen. Banks* was taken in tow by the *Empire City*. It had been taking on water and was in very poor physical state due to the battering by the waves. Captain Edward Gee Miller of the 20th Wisconsin was another who described the rough seas. He noted one sailor being swept overboard and lost. The convoy was supposed to rendezvous at 27 ½ north latitude and about 95 west longitude where the Gulf depth was 25 fathoms. In a later report after landfall had been made by the fleet, Commander J. H. Strong of the gunship *Monongahela* reported that one schooner, the *Union*, one schooner, and one launch had been lost in the storm, but all hands aboard them had been rescued. Among the vessels that made the journey were the *George Peabody*; *Thomas A. Scott* with Captain Chester Barney; the flagship *McClellan* with Generals Banks and Dana aboard; the *General Banks*, formerly the *Creole*; *Empire City*; *Monongahela*; *Crescent*; *Drew*; *Belvidere*; *Bagley*; *Owasco*; *Zephyr*, a transport saved by the *Owasco*; *J. W. Hancock*, a tug that sprang a leak off Brazos Island on 11/4 and was run ashore in several feet of water; *Nassau*, lost, 11/5/63, on the Brazos Santiago bar due to its excessive draft and poor maneuverability; and the *Clinton*, a new steamer of the Crescent City Line. The *Bagley* was lost within two weeks at Aransas Pass. Two smaller schooners lost at Brazos were the *Kate* and the *Partridge*.

The Federal chartering, whether by time or by flat fee, of these vessels did not come cheaply. Charles Morgan of the Morgan Lines with his three ships *Clinton*, *Crescent*, and *St. Mary*, on a time charter (9/1/63-7/31/65) @ \$500 a day earned \$612,185. The same ships returning troops home 8/1/65-8/1/66 earned him \$489,133.

On 11/1 the Iowans had been aboard ship 10 days and five days out of sight of land. On this day one man of the 15th Maine was buried at sea in a solemn ceremony that saw his body in a sack with a heavy weight entrusted to the sea. This day too land was sighted, but the ship sailed past the designated landing site and soon encountered a fleet of 34 foreign sailing vessels near the mouth of the Rio Grande. These were, of course, waiting to load cotton. In turning north rough seas once more brought concerns to those aboard..

David Wildman tells yet another story of the stormy crossing, this time relating the experiences of Lt. T.L. Dilley of the 38th Iowa Volunteer Regiment. According to Wildman "On October 23, 1863, the regiment embarked on the ocean steamer, *Empire City*, and joined the expedition to Texas, under the command of Maj. Gen. Banks. There were sixteen transports loaded with troops, and three gunboats accompanied the fleet.

The fleet went to sea on October 28th, and on the 30th, encountered a heavy storm, during which one of the vessels foundered, but the troops, which she carried, were removed to the *Empire City*, and no lives were lost."

Lt. Dilley on board the *Belvadier* (sic) composed letters dated October 31 through November 1, 1863 and addressed to Capt. Know, then editor of the *Indianola (Iowa) Visitor*. They read:

Dear Captain—As the sea is not very rough today, I embrace the opportunity to write you another prosy epistle, hoping the same may have a salutary effect upon the good people generally. We set sail from New Orleans on Sunday, 25th inst., at 3 p. m. a large concourse of citizens assembled upon the wharf to witness our departure; and as the vessel pushed off and headed downstream, a farewell salute was fired which made the welkin ring with everything but melody. After passing the city the first object, which engaged our attention, was the battle-ground upon which General Jackson defeated the British forces under command of Packingham. We saw the monument erected upon the battlefield, in honor of that patriot and hero, General Jackson. On Sunday night, we anchored at the head of the Balize, where we remained until Tuesday morning. At nine a. m. Tuesday we passed over the bar and anchored near the delta of the southwest pass of the Mississippi River.

After arranging the preliminaries of the voyage and firing thirteen guns in honor of General Banks, we raised anchor and set sail in a southwesterly direction. We soon found ourselves sailing on the bosom of the great briny substance, far from home, land, and everything pleasant or desirable. Nothing occurred to mar our joy until after several hours' sailing, when suddenly a score of men and officers were seized with a violent upheaving of great alimentary depository, which resulted in the summary ejection of all that had been deposited during the day. As we felt no disposition to "upheave", we, of course, laughed at those who did, which, to them was cold comfort.

On Wednesday morning we had but few aboard who were not prostrated by "seasickness." Lieutenant Martin, Swank, and myself were the only lieutenants who were able for duty. The sea during Wednesday and part of Thursday was rather rough, but not enough to terrify the timid or unsophisticated. The barometer on Tuesday evening indicated that a change was going on in the elements above, and that a storm would probably overtake us ere we entered port of destination. This proved to be no mistake; for at five o'clock

on Friday morning, there was a sudden gale from the north, accompanied with rain. The sea began to move with great violence, the ship rolled to and fro as if in great agony, the inmates were awakened from their slumbers and arose from their beds, only to be dashed from one side of the ship to the other, or to witness the increased fury of an angry ocean. The waves loomed like mountains; and as they lashed against the ship and swept over the fore-castle, she trembled as if shaken by an earthquake. The heavens grew more dark, the winds rage with greater fury, the ocean groaned with greater anger, and the waves lashed with greater violence; and as the deep, solemn roar of the sea greeted our ears, and the waves rolled on in whitened madness, as the ship quivered, rolled and plunged like a mountain in labor, as she rode on the top of a towering wave and then with quickened speed descended into the opening chasms below, we thought all would be lost—that the next moment or the next wave might carry us down to a watery grave. Thoughts of the future, of home, of friends, of a watery grave far out at sea, rushed across our minds like an electric flash, and can you, dear Captain, imagine our feelings at that moment? Nay; they are beyond the description of an angel, and can only be comprehended by those who have witnessed a storm at sea. The storm continued unabated until in the afternoon, when the clouds became broken, the winds hushed, and the sea calmed. As our terror and fright in the storm was great, so was our joy when the storm ceased and the sea resumed its calmness. We have often heard and talked of the "calm cerulean sea", "a life on the ocean wave", "a home on the roaring deep", but such poetic phrases are "played out", and the sea has no charms for us except of grandeur. We often thought, when we were young and had matrimony in our head, that when we became so fortunate as to get a wife, we would indulge in a wedding tour across the ocean, but alas! For such boyish thoughts, they are gone: gone to the moles and bats. With the light of age, wisdom and experience, we are prepared to say when we marry, yeas marry, we would prefer spending a fortnight, or even a month, in a lonely and deserted cabin in a western prairie, rather than cross the ocean with all the

pomp and paraphernalia of an Emperor. We are heartily tired of that thing called a gulf, sea, or ocean, and long to plant our feet upon old mother earth.

The ships, being eighteen or twenty, kept together until separated by the storm, and up to this time, they have not been gathered together; probably some have perished. We expect to land tomorrow at some point not far from the mouth of the Rio Grande River.

November 1st--- The ships, during the night, wandered about as if lost, and of course, made little headway. We have been out to sea five days, and have not even seen land in the dim distance. How long we are to remain out of sight of land and rebels, Diety only knows. From the delta of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Rio Grande, is a distance of five hundred mile, which ought to be sailed in forty-eight hours, but we are occupying three times as many hours. There is a strong gale blowing from the south today, which will keep us from landing, as we cannot venture in shallow water while the wind blows to the land.

Six o'clock p. m.—At two and a half p. m., the fleet came in sight of land, and if you possess a comprehensive imagination, and a vivid conception, you can perhaps, realize to some extent, at least, the joy which filled our hearts and ravished our souls. Columbus, and his mutinous crew, could not have felt more joyous than we, when the sandy coast of Texas peered above the dashing waves.

McIntyre's vessel was the first to cross the bar and effect a landing. The honor on November 2, 1863 of being the first to unfurl its colors on the newly seized territory went therefore to the 19th Iowa Infantry, under Major John Bruce. The flag had been presented to Co "A" by Keokuk citizens upon its departure from Iowa.

One last account of the voyage is provided by J. S. Clark, historian of the 34th Iowa Regiment. He comments:

On the 24th of October 1863, our division embarked at Carrollton on Steamer Belvidere, reaching the mouth of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico on the 27th, and after a tedious and stormy voyage, during which storm to save the ships the cavalry horses of the command were thrown overboard, and on the third of November arrived at Brazos de Santiago. Nine days were occupied in the passage for which three was the usual time.

Nearly all were very sea sick, and during the 30th, men lashed themselves to the sides with ropes, otherwise they would have been washed overboard.

While the worst part of the passage was behind them there still awaited some dangers associated with landing. When the fleet did arrive off the island, seas were still too rough to chance a landing that day. Some of the larger vessels let the cavalry horses swim for shore. The *George Peabody*, the ship carrying some of the First Texas Cavalry, slung twenty-five horses overboard; only seven made it to the beach. Even the next day as the surf had subsided somewhat two sailors and seven soldiers drowned when a boat from the *Owasco* was swamped during the embarkation. A dispatch dated Nov. 3 states "Commenced landing by lighters and small boat on Brazos Island, consuming several days, and losing two steamers and two schooners."

Lufkin of the 13th Maine relates:

About noon of Nov. 2nd, the Gen. Banks and the Clinton were ordered to cross the bar and land their troops. The Gen. Banks, a steamer of light draught, went ahead and crossed the bar without difficulty. Then came a trial for the Clinton. The channel was narrow and crooked, with barely water enough for the steamer, while the breakers were running dangerously high. Her commander, Capt. Baxter, a brave and skillful old sailor, gave the order to go ahead slowly; and with only good steerage-way the steamer cautiously approached the bar.

The scene at that moment can never be forgotten by those who stood on the deck of the Clinton, uncertain whether the next hour would see them safely ashore or trying to escape in life-boats from a stranded vessel.

The unclouded, noon-day sun, shone from a sky of as a brilliant a blue as poet or painter ever gave the sky of Italy. On the right, the low, sandy shore of Padre Island extended farther than the eye could reach; on the left, the high, round-topped sand hills of Brazos Island hid the distant mainland from view; and a little farther away, beyond the mouth of the Rio Grande, lay the chaparral-fringed Mexican coast, with the dark blue wall of the Guadeloupe mountains in the background [this is quite a stretch of imagination on the part of the author]; straight ahead, a few miles distant, stood a lofty landmark, the white lighthouse of Point Isabel while close at hand tossed the fierce breakers of Brazos Santiago bar.

With a sailor at each cathead, constantly heaving the lead, the Clinton moved slowly ahead in the narrow, crooked pass, and soon reached the most dangerous place, where just at the shoalest point the channel made a sharp bend. The order was given to starboard the helm, but the quartermaster who was then on duty, confused by his responsibility, made a mistake and turned the wheel the wrong way. "Starboard! Starboard!! Hard-a-starboard!!!" shouted old Captain Baxter. "What kind of a man are you? Fourteen years quartermaster and don't know starboard from port."

The error was quickly rectified and the bow slowly swung in the right direction; but it came too late, for the deeply loaded steamer struck heavily twice, though fortunately not sticking fast. The most dangerous place being passed, Capt. Baxter gave the order: "Hook her on, Mr. Synder and go ahead strong!" And, although rubbing the bottom several times, we were soon over the bar and in good water.

Preparations for landing were quickly made. Capt. Baxter, hurriedly lowering his boats, endeavored to land the first troops and succeeded in doing so.; but for some reason, our flag was not carried ashore till after one band had been landed from the Gen. Banks, thus losing for the Thirteenth the honor of displaying the first flag in the permanent occupation of Texas. As the landing was unexpected the enemy had no force there sufficient to attempt resistance, and soon the troops on both steamers were ashore.

The 37th Illinois was joined by the rest of the missing boats on the morning of November 3. Ketzle wrote: November 4, our Regiment crossed the breakers and shortly afterward in great joy, landed on the sandy beach but suffered for lack of water. Clark commented similarly when he wrote: "We remained on Brazos de Santiago three days on half rations of hard bread and only one quart of water to each man per day. One evening there was a rain when we filled our canteens with water caught on our rubber blankets." Logistics for all units seemed to have been problematic as they moved toward Brownsville.

On this same date the 20th Iowa and 20th Wisconsin had failed in the attempt to land, having drowned 3 or 4 men in the breakers and lost a number of arms, accouterments, knapsacks, etc.

Upon landing Banks sent the following dispatch to General Halleck and to the President of the United States: "The flag of the Union floated over Texas today (November 2, 1863) at Meridian precisely." The reason for the dispatch was two-fold – to declare it as a signal of subjugating Texas and as a notice to the French in Mexico to keep out of the conflict.

The Union forces under Banks were said to number 6,998 men, not including the 15th Maine with about 350 men. The Corps d'Afrique (1st Engineers and 16th Infantry) included in the 6,998 figure numbered 467. By 11/6 the latter contingent was busily occupied in unloading vessels and assisting the Pioneers at constructing pontoon bridges. While the first soldiers to cross Boca Chica on the march to Brownsville experienced bad footing, later transitions were eased by a pontoon bridge. This consisted of two long huge India rubber bladders upon which cross timbers were secured.

Accompanying the fleet to South Texas was the sloop of war, *USS Monongahela*. With a barkentine rig, this auxiliary screw sloop capable of 12 knots speed was commissioned in early 1863. This 225' vessel was armed with one 200 pounder, two 24 pounders, four 12 pounders and two 11 footers. In the spring of 1864, she resumed blockade duty off Mobile.

Frank Gilbert, a Texas refugee who deserted, was to report that in the week's passage Union losses were three steamboats, four schooners, all artillery except two six-pounders, and all but 100 horses. No ammunition was lost. Another source noted that all hands had been rescued from the schooner *Union*, another schooner and a launch that went down. It was indeed fortunate that the Union forces landing on Brazos Island were offered no opposition whatsoever.

A word here about the First Texas Cavalry, USA from the *Handbook of Texas Online*: During the Civil War, Texas contributed two regiments and two battalions of cavalry to the Federal army. A total of 1,915 men from Texas served the Union; of these 141 died, 12 in action. One source states that "the strength of the Texas Federal Regiments consisted primarily of Mexicans, Germans, and Irishmen." It was organized at New Orleans on November 6, 1862 and was assigned the defense of that city. After other action in Louisiana it embarked October 23 as part of the Rio Grande expedition, landing on the South Texas coast on November 2 and occupying Brownsville four days later. Within a month the First Texas Cavalry, which reached Texas with a strength of 16 officers and 205 enlisted men, grew by slightly over 50 percent. During this time the Second Texas Cavalry Regiment was formed at Brownsville. Both regiments left Texas in July 1864 for duty in Louisiana. It must also be noted that John Baylor's 2nd Texas Rifles' attack on Hispanics in San Antonio in December 1862 would influence some Tejanos to join the 1st.

Associated with the First Texas Cavalry is the story of Edmund J. Davis. He first got involved in military affairs in 1859, when as a district judge of the Twelfth Judicial District at Brownsville, he accompanied the ranger unit of Capt. William G. Tobin during the Cortina wars in Brownsville. As the Civil War approached he supported Sam Houston and opposed secession. After secession he refused to take an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy and was removed from his judgeship. President Lincoln commissioned Davis a colonel in the Union army. Davis then recruited and led the First Texas Cavalry, USA and saw action in Galveston, Matamoros, and the Rio Grande Valley. The latter included his unit marching "to Rio Grande City in order to seize cotton and slaves in an effort to disrupt the border trade."

Davis, a transplanted Floridian, was involved in a defining moment of American history. After the special convention had met and instigated a referendum on secession and which passed 46,129 to 14,697, individual citizens and federal military men had to decide to swear allegiance to the Confederacy or not. Robert E. Lee, a lieutenant colonel of the 2d Cavalry stationed in Texas was one of those. Davis met with Lee in a small hotel off

Main Plaza in San Antonio. As T. R. Fehrenbach relates in his seminal book, *Lone Star A History of Texas and Texans* : [Davis told]

Lee that he was the ablest man in federal service, and begged him to stand by the Union, on both legal and emotional grounds. Davis was a Southerner who believed secession was suicidal. Colonel Lee, "superb, perfect, handsome, bronzed, and compact", as a Union-sympathizing observer wrote in his diary, showed visible anguish. He began to pace the room. Finally he told the judge that his arguments were "correct and unanswerable." Secession was suicidal and meant certain disaster for the Southern people. But Lee said quietly that his higher loyalty must be to his own people, and to the state his family had served so long. He would go with Virginia. Lee's demeanor and decision profoundly affected the Unionists in the room, who never forgot the scene.

Davis was involved in an international incident when, on March 15, 1863, Confederate citizens and off-duty soldiers seized Davis in Bagdad, Mexico where he was attempting to take his family out of Texas and recruit men for his unit. Davis and Montgomery had been granted permission to seek volunteers, some of whom might be Confederate deserters. He and Union officer Capt. William W. Montgomery had come to the mouth of the Rio Grande on the Federal Steamer *Honduras* and reached Bagdad on 3/10/63. Their apprehension was not by chance. In actuality Major George Chilton of Brownsville had solicited a force of six companies for a special mission to surreptitiously capture the two. Davis was captured first, and when Montgomery who had learned of the plot came to warn Davis, he too was captured. This event precipitated diplomatic trouble between the Confederacy and Mexico until Gen. Hamilton P. Bee released Davis to appease Mexican Governor Albino Lopez. Mrs. Davis had pleaded for her husband's release otherwise his fate may have been the same of his associate. Bee's men had however already hung Montgomery, a man of poor reputation who had previously taunted CSA forces. Why legalities were ignored is unknown for, as a prisoner of war, he should have had some rights, unless of course, he was treated either as a spy or a traitor. He was, in fact, well-known as a individual who strongly advocated that Texas remain in the Union and, before fleeing to Mexico had attempted to raise a regiment to serve with the Union forces. Once in Mexico it was said he ignored its neutrality and crossed the river to kill Confederate cotton teamsters. His corpse was discovered in early April His corpse was discovered in early April, eight to ten miles below Brownsville. He had been hung by a squad led by Sgt. H.B. Adams but was later cut down and shallowly buried. The tied arms and head were above ground. A rope around its neck was tied to a small mesquite tree. Wild animals had devoured all the body flesh even digging beneath the soil surface to get at it. He was reburied with honors in the center of the public square. Military Governor Hamilton gave a moving eulogy to a large audience of soldiers and the Masonic fraternity. In December 1863, Hamilton heard testimony in the case that convinced him that Dick Hamilton had killed Montgomery. The alleged killer was in Matamoros but was extradited by the governor of Tamaulipas and delivered to Gen. Dana.

Davis was promoted to brigadier general in November 1864 after which time he commanded the cavalry of Gen. Joseph J. Reynolds in the Division of Western Mississippi. On June 2, 1865 he was among those who represented the Union in the surrender of Confederate forces in Texas. In 1869 Davis would be elected governor of

Texas in the reconstruction era. His administration favoring the Radical wing of the Republican Party was a very controversial one. Davis was near dictatorial in running the affairs of reconstruction Texas. He lost re-nomination by the Republican Party.

The nation learned of the expedition's landing through newspaper stories. One popular source at the time was *Harper's Weekly* with its fine illustrations. The 11/28/63 issue carried an article written by a (New York?) Herald reporter who was aboard an expedition vessel. He gave an eye-witness account of General Bank's arrival at Brazos Santiago on November 2. Full of patriotic spirit and stimulating prose, it was prefaced by the statement "The expedition is destined to restore Texas to the Union and put an end to the contraband trade which has been carried on at Matamoras." It read:

At an early hour this morning the bar was examined and casks laid down as buoys. Nine feet of water was found upon the bar and, once over, navigation was easy.

We accordingly commenced preparing to enter the harbor, and the light-draught steamer *General Banks* with the 19th Iowa on board got under way and was soon rising and falling amidst the foam of the huge breakers, but as she steamed gallantly on and crossed the bar in safety, the soldiers on board gave three cheers which were heard on the flag-ship and answered by the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. She crossed the bar at precisely twelve o'clock noon. The General's dispatch boat-the little steamer *Drew* – followed, and she went capering along like a frisky young coquette of sixteen, bounding over the bar like a cork.

The *Clinton* with the 13th and 15th Maine regiments on board, was the third to cross, and it was her good fortune to be the first to disembark her troops, the soldiers of the 15th Maine first touching Texas soil. The next moment, the flag of this regiment, followed by that of the 19th Iowa was raised.

Thus the men from the extreme northern point of the Union were the first to raise the flag of America over the soil of the extreme southern point and finish the work so gloriously begun, of planting the banner of freedom in the last state in rebellion, over which the Stars and Stripes have not waved for some time.

On landing on Brazos Island, the 15th Maine, Col. Dwyer, accompanied by Major Von Hermann of General Bank's staff started for Boca Chica, took possession of the Pass, and encamped there throwing out pickets. No resistance whatsoever was offered, and no human beings have yet been seen on the island or elsewhere, if I except the repulse of two companies of cavalry by the guns of the *T. A. Scott*, Captain O'Brien, which anchored off the mouth of Boca Chica this morning and opened upon the rebels who had attempted to cross.

The same transport the night previous and when off the mouth of the Rio Grande had amused itself by keeping up an almost constant fire upon the Mexican vessels crossing and re-crossing the river.

The old salt was a few miles wrong in his reckonings for he afterwards stated that he "thought he was peppering away at damned rebels in Boca Chica instead of harmless Mexicans on the Rio Grande." so that we shall have to make an apology for the slight mistake of firing upon their vessels while engaged in a contraband trade with the rebels on the Texas shore.

Those of you readers who have ever visited Ship Island can have a good idea of this barren, inhospitable shore. Brazos, as well as all islands along the Texas coast, is a sandy desert. One house, deserted, stands to the right, and a mile or so farther toward the interior are two lighthouses, one on each side. Charred ruins show that three dwellings were destroyed by fire some time ago. Nothing but the chimneys remain standing.

The foundations of the buildings used by General Taylor for stores can yet be seen, but no other vestige remains. Sand and sand-hills meet the eye in every direction; and for miles there is no covering from the rays of the burning sun by day, nor the heavy chilly dew by night.

Four wells were discovered by soldiers; but the water is brackish and unpalatable. Around these were collected from 30 to 40 head of poor cattle. They were suffering terribly from thirst, and drank with avidity the miserable water that our men gave out to them from the wells.

The few inhabitants who lived on this desert probably fled as our fleet anchored off the shore, for, as I have stated, not a human being was to be seen.

Lufkin had noted:

The Thirteenth landed on the east end of Brazos Island, near what was said to be the ruins of some salt works, marched about a mile, to where there were holes containing brackish water; and as we had no tents, went into bivouac. Next day quite a large detail from the regiment was at work unloading supplies from vessels; and as the regiment was all together in open ground for the first time since leaving Ship Island, nearly sixteen months before, Lt. Col. Hesseltine improved the opportunity by having a battalion drill. He soon ascertained that the regiment had not been perceptibly injured by its short stay in New Orleans. Every movement, from the simplest marching to the forming and reducing of a square, was performed with almost the accuracy of a machine.

Nov. 4th, reveille sounded at 3 a. m., and at 5 the regiment started for the mouth of the Rio Grande. There was a dense fog which hid all landmarks; and, as there was no competent guide, the regiment marched for some time almost at random. As this was our first experience in real marching, a large part of the men had started with knapsacks too heavily loaded. The marching in the loose sand was very hard; so at every halt the ground was strewn with articles which had previously been considered indispensable, but which now suddenly became serious encumbrances. By-and-by the fog lifted, and toward noon we reached Boca Chica Pass, at the west end of the island.

As there was only one small boat available for the crossing of our nearly 600 men, Lt. Col. Hesseltine ordered the men to strip and wade, carrying their clothes; while the guns, equipment, etc. were carried across in the boat. The water was only about three feet deep, but the bottom was covered with oysters; so the sixty rods of the ford became a real "Via Dolorosa" to our naked feet, and but few were so fortunate to escape without more or less cuts from the sharp edges of the shells. Each wing of the regiment ate dinner while the other wing was crossing, and soon as possible the march was continued, the route being along the beach.

Ketzle recalled this place also. He remarked: (on the 5th we) "started for mainland by fording Boca Chico (sic), an inlet over one-half mile wide and over four feet deep—most of the boys had to make two trips to bring arms, clothing, and accouterments across, a trip long to be remembered." [Boca Chica is the narrow pass that separates the south tip of Brazos Island from the mainland. It allows Gulf of Mexico waters to enter the shallow marine estuary called the Bahia Grande.] He goes on to state: "After a short rest on mainland, form and march till about 9 p. m. We bivouac near Rio Grande on old battleground of Palo Alto. [This is the southeastern extension of the Palo Alto Plain and not the site of the actual Palo Alto battle site of the Mexican War.] Remain for two days waiting for rations, resume march on the 8th of November and by the 9th reach Brownsville, pass thru town and go camp about one mile beyond."

Col. Charles Block, commanding the 37th Illinois Regiment, also later remarked on this Boca Chica crossing. "It was a most ludicrous sight. Men with kettles, pans, tin cups, guns, knapsacks, clothes, accoutrements, dotting the wide ford, some naked, others in drawers and shorts, others in full dress." He too noted the severe lacerations sustained from the submerged oyster bed. Later the army engineers were to bridge this outlet with two long india rubber bladders overlaid with cross timbers.

Following the fording at Boca Chica the 13th Maine moved up river as Lufkin records: The marching on the beach was much easier than it had been in the dry sand of Brazos Island, but still by no means easy; and every man had had enough of it when we reached Clarksville, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, just before dark. As most of our canteens had been empty since noon, our first proceeding was to drink, almost intemperately, of the cool water of the river, the best water we had seen since leaving Maine

nearly two years before—then after filling our canteens we marched back a short distance from the river and lay down for the night. There was a heavy shower in the night, but the weary soldiers were so sleepy, they were scarcely disturbed by it.

Clarksville, at that time consisted of three old wooden houses; but Bagdad, on the Mexican side, looked like quite a thriving place. We found at Clarksville the 20th Wisconsin, which had landed there the previous evening. Their landing, like ours at Brazos, had been unopposed by the enemy; but in landing through the surf some of their boats were capsized and a few men drowned. In the night the 94th Illinois marched past us on the way to Brownsville. That was also our intended destination, but instead of marching again the next morning, we remained in Clarksville nearly all day, the reason being that the three day's rations which had been issued about the time of our landing, were nearly exhausted. As no rations could be obtained at Brownsville, it was not prudent to start for that place with empty haversacks.

In the afternoon the Quartermaster went across to Bagdad and purchased a supply of bread, which was immediately issued; then we were ordered to leave our knapsacks to be brought up by steamer and make a forced march to Brownsville. About 6 p. m. the regiment started, and after marching nearly ten mile on a road made terribly muddy by the rain of the previous night, we were obliged to halt for the night, as it was too dark to follow the road. Next morning the march was resumed, and at 3 p. m. the regiment reached Brownsville, arriving only eight hours later than the 94th Illinois, which had started from Clarksville eighteen hours earlier than we did. For that night we quartered in an empty warehouse near the river. Next morning Nov. 7th we marched down river about a mile and occupied Fort Brown, which we found to be a dilapidated earthwork, apparently unimproved since the Mexican War. In the afternoon a detail of two hundred men was made from the regiment for provost duty in town, and the next day another large detail for pickets at Freeport Crossing, a few miles upstream. As there as no drill, and not a large amount of guard or fatigue duty, the few men left in the fort had much leisure time. Much time was spent bathing in the clear, sweet water of the Rio Grande; and many of the younger men swam across the river for the sake of setting foot on Mexican soil. Nothing of particular importance occurred in Brownsville while the regiment remained there; but between the 5th and 6th of November there were three revolutions in Matamoras, just across the river in Mexico.

During one of these revolutions, when the office of the United States Consul in Matamoras was threatened, the troops in Brownsville were held in readiness to cross the river to protect it; but as it was not actually molested we were not called upon to invade Mexico. Gen. Banks was at Brownsville during most of our stay; and it possible that his being there, with an armed force, may have has some influence on the result of the third revolution in Matamoras in which the successful party was hostile to Maximilian's French army and friendly to the United States.

Lt. Col. Hudnutt with the 38th Iowans gave his impressions of the march to Brownsville. He wrote:

Our march thus far was over sand plains, destitute of water or vegetation save stinte (sic) shrubs and prickly pear (a species of Cactus) with here and there a cluster of Spanish bayonet (Yucca). The region is the same for leagues, dreary and desolate. Twenty miles from Point Isabel the Rio Grande is reached, along crooked muddy stream, fringed with chaparral or groves of musite (sic); and the soil produce a grass called musquite (sic) also said to be very nutritious. Large herds of cattle were met with, miles from the river and seem to be doing well upon the grass; no hay is cut or other provision for winter.

Gen. Bee had learned of the Union landing on the afternoon of 11/2/63 and immediately laid plans for evacuating the area. Of course, General Bee with only about 100 men could offer little resistance. He commenced his preparations for the evacuation. Only a dozen or so local citizens offered any help. With forty-five wagons he planned to transport supplies toward the Nueces River but not before his troops had destroyed portions of Fort Brown and as much cotton as they could. Two bulky cannon were dumped into the river as their transport would have been difficult. Both were retrieved by Union soldiers in mid-December. Although somewhat old-fashioned a large 24 pound round shot with its

carriage would supplement the fort defenses. These would be strengthened on April 11, 1864 by the arrival on the steamer *James Hale* of six heavy cannon.

The government building were burned as was some of the cotton stored in the garrison while many bales were thrown into the river. The fire from the cotton soon went out of control and would eventually destroy an entire block along the riverfront. Bee and his force of 80 men of the 33rd Texas Cavalry marched off on November 5 to Santa Gertrudis, now Kingsville. The uncontrolled fires spread to housing and businesses and if this didn't suffice to panic the residents it was the explosion of four tons of powder stored at the fort that caused deep consternation in the citizenry. Imperialist-favoring Mexican General Jose Maria Cobos, who had taken refuge in Brownsville, organized some semblance of order. A few short days later he returned to Matamoros only to be executed by followers of the cunning Juan N. Cortina.

Very little has been documented about the Confederate retreat from Brownsville in 1863. The following first hand account is unique in that regard and is detailed and comprehensive. As such it deserves reprinting in its entirety despite its length. The ending portion is especially poignant. The original is in the University of Texas Library. Its author is John Warren Hunter (1846-1915). A resident of Sulphur Bluff, Hopkins County, TX when the war broke out, he became a teamster to avoid conscription. He was 17 years of age when he observed the events he describes. After delivering a load of cotton to Brownsville, he crossed to Matamoros where he remained until the end of the war. He later became a teacher, writer, and a newspaper and magazine publisher.

The Fall of Brownsville on the Rio Grande **November 1863**

Some two or three years ago, Captain J. B. Polley, who edits an historical page in the San Antonio Sunday Express, made the following statement which the reader will observe closes with a very timely request and most pertinent interrogation:--

"A gentleman by the name of R. H. Williams, an Englishman, now a justice of the peace in his native land, who claims to have served in Duff's cavalry regiment during the civil War, has published a book in which he relates some strange stories. One of these is in relation to an alleged scare at Brownsville which, although without foundation in fact, drove the Confederates and their valiant commanders not only to the destruction of all cotton and stores then on hand, but as well to precipitate an indiscriminate flight. The date given for the occurrence is in the fall of 1863.

"We should like to know something more definite and convincing about this retreat than can be gathered from the book of a foreigner. Will not some of the Trans-Mississippi veterans furnish the information? The history of the war as it relates to the Trans-Mississippi Department has never been published; and it seems a pity it should not be. There must be yet those living who can tell as interesting stories of the doings on the Rio Grande frontier, and we shall be glad to hear from them.

"In Governor Frank Lubbock's Six Decades in Texas, it is stated that in November 1863, an expedition under generals Banks and Dana landed at Brazos Santiago in bad plight, and that Banks immediately notified his government that the flag of the Union floated over Texas. It is further stated that no opposition was made to the landing of the Federals and that on this advance to Brownsville that post was evacuated, the troops stationed there falling back to the Confederate line of frontier defense, carrying with them an immense quantity of government store.

"Where was that line of frontier defense? And why was there an immense quantity of stores at Brownsville?"

The writer does not offer to assume the task of replying to Veteran Polley's appeal for information further than a plain statement of facts, nor would he attempt to refute any assertion made by that venerated statesman soldier, patriot, governor- F. R. Lubbock; on the contrary he will attempt to narrate events and incidents as he saw them, and state the facts in connection with the fall of Brownsville as they actually occurred.

However, before proceeding with this narrative, it may be well to mention the particular location of Brownsville and explain the importance of the place as a commercial point for Texas, and as an *entrepot* of arms and munitions of war for the Southern Confederacy.

As is generally known, Brownsville is situated on the north bank of the Rio Grande, twenty miles west of Point Isabelle (sic) and by meandering of the river about forty miles from Bagdad, the point where the Rio Grande debouches into the Mexican Gulf. [Bagdad was actually about three miles west of the river's mouth.] The City of Matamoros stands on the Mexican side of the river and its main plaza is just one mile from the courthouse in Brownsville. Before the beginning of the Civil War Brownsville was a struggling village of little consequence commercially or otherwise. A small garrison of U.S. regulars occupied the place, which since Taylor's victory at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma and the bombardment of Fort Brown, 1846, had never achieved notoriety or public mention other than having been the seat of the so-called Cortina War, during the winter of 1859. The town could boast only a limited number of commercial establishments and four-fifths of the population were (sic) Mexicans. The government had erected at great expense a large number of commodious buildings including a hospital, barracks, commissary, officer's quarter, etc. When Texas withdrew from the Union and cast her lot with her sister states of the South, the U.S. troops were withdrawn from Brownsville, as elsewhere along the Texas frontier, leaving the government buildings intact and these were later occupied by the Confederate forces.

When the Federal blockade went into effect July, 1861, Brownsville was the only port left open to the Southern Confederacy. In a sense Brownsville was an inland town and while on the banks of a river chartered as being navigable, yet only vessels of shallow draft could reach the city. But the river was narrow. On the opposite bank stood Matamoros, a friendly city on neutral territory. And a short distance below Matamoros was the gulf shore with vessels carrying the flags of different nations lying in the offing waiting for cotton that found its only outlet through Brownsville into Matamoros and thence by wagon to Bagdad at the mouth of the river; the Federal Government being utterly powerless to interfere. Matamoros became a great commercial center. Cotton and other commodities for export poured into her warehouses, and, in trains, hauled to the coast and shipped to Northern and European ports. At the same time Brownsville became the greatest shipping point in the South. The handsome barracks were tenanted by Confederate soldiers. The elegant officers' quarters were occupied by Confederate officials and their families, between whom and the authorities on the Mexican side existed the most amicable relations, and in a brief period Brownsville became a city of importance second to none in the state.

For a period of three and half years, a never ending stream of cotton poured into Brownsville, thence into Matamoros, thence to the wharves of Bagdad. Ox trains, mule trains and trains of Mexican carts, all laden with cotton coming from almost every town in Texas, many from Arkansas and Louisiana wended their weary way to the commercial mecca of the Southwest. Speculation was vast and immense fortunes were accumulated by men in the cotton business.

One instance of many: In 1861 Col. M.T. Johnson of Tarrant County and the Rhine brothers, Jewish merchants of North Texas, formed a partnership and bought all the cotton in the North and East Texas market, paying 10 cents per pound, Confederate money which at that time was current at par. They next bought three hundred wagons, each capable of carrying ten or twelve bales of cotton. Eighteen hundred yoke of oxen—six yoke for each three hundred wagons—were purchased with yokes, bows, chains, etc. to draw these three hundred wagons with their freight and over 3000 bales of cotton. They subdivided these into trains of twenty-five wagons with an experienced wagon master in charge of each train. Time, distance and expense were factors seemingly without reckoning. A train loaded at Pittsburgh in East Texas Sept. 1, 1862 reached Brownsville July 22, 1863.

For these trains there was no dearth of teamsters before reaching Brownsville. That point once reached, many would escape into Mexico and the return trips were always short on drivers. The outbound trains had no difficulty in securing teamsters. The Conscript law was in force and thousands preferred driving an ox team to service in the army. School teachers, college professors, society dudes became ox drivers. They

would enlist with Johnson and Rhine who would have them detailed to drive their teams. This firm continued to haul cotton to the Rio Grande until the close of the war, bringing government supplies on each return trip and it was current report that theirs was a species of graft in which they were aided and abetted by those in high authority at Richmond. The vast sums of Confederate money expended and the matter of detailing men to drive their teams at thirty dollars a month, "New Issue", gave color to this conclusion. All roads from every cotton section of the state in the direction of Brownsville converged at King's Ranch, one hundred and twenty-five miles from Brownsville; and during the spring, summer, fall seasons, this long stretch of 125 miles became a broad thoroughfare along which continuously moved vast unending trains of wagons; the one outward bound with cotton, the other homeward bound with merchandise and army supplies. The government exacted a tithe on every bale and the officers in Brownsville were never slow to collect the government toll, as thousands could testify. In 1863 cotton sold for 80 cents per pound in Matamoros and steadily advanced up to the close of the war. Buyers were numerous. They were there from the great manufacturing centers of Europe, and New York, Boston, Lowell, Philadelphia and other northern cities were not without representation. These latter came boldly across into Brownsville, plunked down the Yankee gold, received cotton and no questions were asked.

During these days of frenzied commercialism, communication with the outside world was limited. There was no telegraph service in either city. A daily stage line plied between Brownsville and Austin via San Antonio. Passenger fare on this line was 10 cents a mile (gold) and only twenty-five pounds baggage was allowed each passenger. But notwithstanding the exorbitant charges, the coaches were always crowded to the limit and the owners of the line made a fortune in three years. New York and London papers, received by way of Bagdad and Tampico were called "late papers" although two to four weeks had elapsed since date of issue.

The route from Matamoros to Bagdad lay over a hard smooth road, and like that between King's Ranch and Brownsville was one vast and almost unbroken line of wagons and carts carrying cotton to the gulf shore and returning with merchandise and stores for the Confederacy. Under the neutrality laws war material was considered contraband but the Mexican Customs officials were human--very human—and were not always immune against the lure of confederate gold. Huge cases of Enfield guns labeled "Hollow ware", keys and barrels branded "bean flour" a new name for gun powder and percussion caps bearing the legend "canned goods" with cargoes of lead as "Bat Metal", readily passed inspection and were allowed to cross into Brownsville. Illustration of the volume extent and importance of this Brownsville-Matamoros trade is stated on the best authority that while his army at Little Rock, Arkansas, General Marmaluke received a shipment of 4000 Enfield rifles which had been purchased in England, shipped to Brownsville via Bagdad and Matamoros and thence to Little Rock, a distance of more than a thousand miles.

The number of bales of cotton that lay in the cotton yard in the bend of the river in the upper suburb of Brownsville November 1, 1863, was estimated at 10,000. As to the correctness of this estimate the writer cannot vouch. He knows however—that a large area of ground was covered with this staple, orderly stacked, four to six bales in height with alleys or gang ways at regular intervals. Most of this cotton bore the brand C.S.A. although a large percent belonged to individuals and had their respective brands. T all hours of day and night an armed guard kept watch over this cotton, while just below Freeport, a suburb of Matamoros, the cotton bales kept lonely vigil and morning sun often revealed rents and gaps in the well ordered ranks of cotton bales, but the Sergeant of the guard was taciturn and the river flowed on in silence toward the gulf.

First Note of Alarm.

The writer does not remember the number of soldiers stationed in Brownsville November 1st, 1863. General Bee was in command and probably had a regiment or more of troops. During these months and years, no preparations for the defense of the city had been made. Old Fort Brown had long since been allowed to fall into decay. The Confederate authorities doubtless considered fortifications unnecessary. Point Isabelle (sic) and Brazos Island offered no facilities for landing an army of invasion. No vessel of heavy tonnage could cross the bar at either of these points nor could the smallest gunboat ascent the Rio Grande. Hence, why the fortification? Of the men composing the garrison, few had ever heard the crash of Federal guns. Their duties while stationed at Brownsville consisted in the usual routine of garrison life, standing guard, eating,

drinking, gambling, answering roll call, drawing their monthly stipend (species) and chasing men who were trying to get into Mexico to keep out of the army.

At an early hour on the morning of November 3, 1863, a runner brought the startling news that a Federal fleet had appeared off Brazos Santiago 15 miles distant from Brownsville and that 50,000 men were being landed, infantry, cavalry and artillery and that a cavalry force of 4000 troops was approaching the defenseless city. General Bee was the first to receive the intelligence from the lips of a trusted scout and there could be no doubt as to the correctness of the report. Orders were hastily issued and the more observant citizens who chanced to be abroad at that early morning hour detected unmistakable signs of confusion and unusual activity in military circles. Couriers dashed wildly along the streets. The bugles rang out and drums beat the long roll. "The Yankees are coming", said one. "Cortina has broke lose again", said another. (General Cortina was then in command of Matamoros.) By this time the affrighted populace began to pour into the streets. Inquiry was on every lip but other than flying rumor, no explanation of the real cause of confusion could be obtained. Wagon trains and ambulances heavily laden were next seen leaving the barracks and commissary buildings under which a body of soldiers marched past armed and equipped. "They are going out to meet the enemy and there is going to be a battle", rang along the sidewalks. An officer passing was asked the meaning of this unusual stir. "I don't know. Ask General Bee", was his curt reply.

Presently a company of artillery men were seen rolling their guns off the high bank into the river. This procedure revealed the true situation. The city was to be abandoned to the hated Yankees without an effort towards defense. The people had expected the brave General Bee and his gallant soldiers to make some show of resistance, and if over-powered to secure at best favorable terms for the non-combatant citizens. But when they saw those guns go over the embankment into the river, their hopes went with them. The last gun to go was a fine 64 pounder. Judge Bigelow approached the young artillery officer in command and said: "Lieutenant, what does this all mean?" "I am obeying orders, Sir; ask General Bee", was his reply.

About this time dense black smoke began to ascend from the bend of the river just above the town. The cotton yard was on fire! A detail of men with flaming torches had hastened through the narrow alleys between the ranks of cotton bales and right and left had scattered the blazing faggots and in a few brief moments the greatest cotton depot in all the Southland was wrapped in a swirling holocaust of flame. Rumor was swift to announce that this was the work of a large body of Federal cavalry which had passed around to a point above the city and had directed their first attack upon the cotton yard. No one suspected, no one believed that the Confederate authorities would burn the stores of cotton in that yard.

The announcement that the cotton yard was burning, and the dense pall of smoke that began to spread over the city threw the people into a state of utmost dismay and excitement. Men, women, and children crowded into the streets begging and pleading to know the worst. Public attention had been directed and fixed upon the burning cotton yard and few noticed the new peril that was springing up almost in their very midst. The elegant quarters erected by the government long years ago for her officers and soldiers were situated in the lower edge of the city and the parade ground or reservation fronted on the river just against and below, the main ferry. These buildings were wooden structures and while the public mind was engrossed and appalled over the burning of the cotton yard and the hasty flight of the garrison, the cry rang out: "The barracks are on fire--the government buildings are burning." This proved to be true. The costly buildings, soldiers' quarters, officers' residences, hospital, magazine, commissary buildings had all been set on fire by departing troops and were now flame wrapt, and the panic stricken citizens realized that their city was doomed.

As on all like occasions, the wildest rumors flew with increasing exaggeration from group to congested throng. "Ten thousand drunken Negro troops are moving on the city. They are led by E. J. Davis; the city is to be pillaged and burned and the inhabitants put

to the sword for the hanging of Colonel Montgomery", was the burden of the most imaginative alarmists. And the statement gained credence as it spread with electrical speed and effect over the city.

The rear guard-- if such it may be called--left the city, followed by the fierce imprecations of a maddened, betrayed people whose only safety now lay in sudden and precipitate flight to Matamoros. But the sullen river lay between them and the haven of refuge.

Terrible Scenes at the Ferry

There was but one ferry opposite the city, the Freeport crossing being a mile above and now cut off by the burning cotton yard. On the American side of this ferry opposite to the city, the approach to the ferry landing at the water's edge was through a deep cut in the high bank extending from the river's margin to the level of the street. This cut was thirty or thirty-five feet in width. A small flat boat propelled by oars was usually in service at this ferry but on this occasion a small steamboat was brought into requisition. By one common impulse this ferry became the objective point of the fleeing terror stricken citizens. Those wishing to save their most valuable household effects from the impending destruction, found the utmost difficulty in securing means by which to get their chattel to the ferry. Everything in the shape of a vehicle commanded, or rather exacted, the most exorbitant prices, even to the extent that many gathered a few of their most valued belongings, abandoned their homes and fled to the ferry where the congestion soon became so great that men and women fought for priority in loading their chattel on the boats. Mexican owners of skiffs charge \$5 gold for each passenger that passed over in their frail craft; those availing themselves of this mode of transit being mostly women and children whose fathers and husbands remained to superintend the shipping of their household belongings—a vast stream of which poured into the cut at the ferry until it was filled from the water's edge to the street and even to the curb on the opposite side; a vast accumulation of clothing, bedding, trunks, musical instruments and furniture of every description from the cultured homes of the wealthy, and the cottages of the poor. When the last squadron of soldiers passed beyond the suburbs of the town all order was at an end. The *canaille* of Brownsville and the *Rateros* from Matamoros emerged from the dankish precincts of their concealment, and the work of the robber and incendiary began. The first to be plundered was the burning commissary buildings which contained immense quantities of government stores. Despite the approaching flames these stores were carried away in large quantities by the howling mob, among whom were many American citizens and a number of deserters from the ranks of the fleeing Confederates. While these government buildings were burning, such was the state of excitement and intense desire to get across the river that few took thought of the magazine, the roof of which was now ablaze. But suddenly there came a crash—a deafening detonation—a concussion as if heaven and earth had come into collision. The magazine had blown up, men and women on the side walks, in the street, and those keeping vigil over their effects at the ferry were shocked, stunned, and many thrown to the ground. A scantling nine feet long was hurled across the river and driven with great force through the gable of the Mexican Custom house. A boy standing on the river bank just below the ferry was blown to mid-channel of the stream and drowned. The force of the explosion filled the air with fiery missiles—burning shingles, lumber, etc. and these showered down over the city. The vast accumulation of household goods in the cut at the ferry took fire and the place soon became a roaring furnace. The buildings, mostly of brick just back of the ferry and fronting on the river took fire and the holocaust threatened to become general all over the city. Women and little children screamed with terror and despair when they saw the flames consuming their possessions in the cut, but here was no remedy, no rescue, and the encroaching heat drove them from the scene and within a few hours that cut was a smoking Gehenna, filled with twisted iron, the remains of pianos, stoves, sewing machines, and other incombustible matter.

A Reign of Terror

Finding that all authority had vanished and order at an end, the criminal element sallied forth and the spirit of pandemonium became rampant. Every *pelado* that nurse a grievance real or imaginary against the hated gringo or against a *paisano* came out in the open and helped swell the ranks of the howling rabble among whom, be it said with shame, were a number of our own countrymen drawn into the vortex of the prospect of spoils. Bodies of mounted Mexicans, yelling demons, swept along the streets, shooting into houses, stores, and the panic stricken throng along the sidewalks. Saloon doors were forced and entered by these mounted bandits who rode p along side the bars, took what so ever they fancied, shot up the wares and bar fixtures, and retired to make room for others. For an American citizen to show himself in certain quarters of the city meant assassination at the hands of these desperate thieves and *rateros*. Men were shot down in their homes, in their yards, and on the streets. The city was at the mercy of thieves, outlaws and murderers and the *grito* "*Mueran a los gringos!*" rang out above the unearthly din. Stores were looted, residences

plundered and it all will never be known the amount of property carried away or destroyed or the number of lives sacrificed on that fatal day.

The inference must not be drawn that the Americans were the only sufferers on that occasion. The mob had no respect for nationalities and the better element of Mexican citizens alike with their American friends and neighbors and with whom they stood shoulder to shoulder in the attempt to suppress rioting, and in the restoration of order.

Judge Bigelow, an old veteran who had served under General Scott in Mexico and who was yet suffering from an ulcerous wound inflicted by a copper shot at Contreras, aided by a few bold courageous men, rallied the citizens for defense and an effort to suppress the prevailing disorder.

A message was sent to General Cortina calling for help. "This is your fight; not mine", said the bandit general, but he sent two companies of men to see that no one crossed from the Mexican side to the American side of the river.

The mob defied Judge Bigelow and his party. A French officer serving under Marshall Bazaine then at the head of the French army of invasion in Mexico, and who chanced to be in Brownsville when Bee retreated was overheard to say to Judge Bigelow, "Your force is sufficient; a mob never fights." The bandits, satiated with blood and laden with plunder, were driven out of town, order was partially restored, and Brownsville lay in ruins.

Federals Occupy Brownsville

On the 2nd of November, 1863, the Federal fleet carrying Bank's army of 5,000 men arrived at Brazos Santiago where, owing to natural barriers, the transports were forced to anchor a mile or more from the beach. Two regiments of cavalry were sent ashore as an advance guard, horses and men being forced to swim or wade to the mainland. The infantry came next, wading to their armpits. Governor Jack Hamilton who accompanied the expedition as "Military Governor of Texas" informed the writer that when Banks' men got ashore at Brazos Santiago there was not a dry cartridge in the entire division and that General Bee with one hundred men could have captured the whole army without firing a gun. General Franklin's defeat at Sabine Pass by a mere handful of Confederates on the 9th of Sept. preceding, would have been eclipsed by the complete destruction of Banks' army, if Bee had displayed any qualities of generalship.

Finding it impossible to get the artillery ashore at this point, the transports were moved around to Point Isabelle (sic) where the guns were landed and rejoined the army several Days after it had reached Brownsville.

On the morning of the 3rd, the great pall of smoke that hung over the city gave Banks to understand that there was unusual commotion in Brownsville and in the afternoon his scouts reported the Confederate forces in full, and hasty flight in the direction of King's Ranch, leaving a path of smoke and flame in their wake. But Banks was in no condition to give pursuit and on the 5th his division entered Brownsville and went into quarters for the winter.

Wanton Destruction of Cotton

As related elsewhere, the road from King's Ranch to Brownsville was lined with cotton trains, slowly, wearily, bearing their fleecy cargo to market. By order of the Confederate commander, every bale within reach of the retreating army along this 125 mile stretch was rolled off, the baling ties cut, and the match applied. Word of the approach of these cotton burners outran the fleeing army and was passed along, even as far as King's Ranch, and many trains escaped by leaving the main road and seeking concealment in the mazes of the dense *chapparal* that lay to the westward, where they remained unmolested until the gallant army had reached the "line of frontier defense" wherever that may have been, after which some of the trains resumed their course and went into Brownsville, while others crossed into Mexico above the limits of the Federal patrol.

A Pathetic Incident

Illustrative of the terrible suffering entailed by this unwarranted destruction of cotton, the writer will relate one instance of several that came under his immediate observation during that deplorable period.

A few weeks prior to the fall of Brownsville, he had occasion to spend the night at King's Ranch and camped with a train of twenty-five wagons freighted with cotton and en route to Brownsville. It proved to be a "neighborhood" train, jointly made up and owned by citizens, or more properly speaking, women and children living in one of the counties of Arkansas bounded on the Red River. Old white haired men, young boys and a few old trusted Negro uncles drove the teams of this train. One of these old men pointed out one wagon carrying six bales of cotton and drawn by six old plow nags. With the help of her little half-clad children, a mother whose husband was with Lee in Virginia had raised one bale of cotton; another mother in like condition had raised two bales, another one bale, and yet another two bales—six in all. One had an old wagon, another owned a span of old plow horses and by hiring another span they were able to fit up a wagon and team and jointly then load their cotton for a market nearly a thousand miles away. The old man, ever handy with tools, patched the old wagon, a new spoke here, and a new felloe there and hewed from the forest timbers with which to fashion them. The old plow "gears" were overhauled with a link in the trace chains where needed and raw hide thongs for repairs of the breeching and buck boards. An aged father, too old to go into the army volunteered to drive the team, sell the cotton in Brownsville, then worth 80 to 90 cents in gold—purchase shoes for mother and little children, cotton cloth and "factory thread" for the women, and a few pounds of coffee for grandmother and grandsire and other various sundry articles of supply. The entire train, so the writer was informed, was made up this way and in most instances each bale represented a separate ownership, and on the whole this cotton was the product of the sweat and unremitting toil of tender women and little children.

These old men and boys represented the rarest spectacle the writer has ever beheld among his own countrymen. The men were unshaven, unshorn and there was not a whole garment of apparel in the whole company. The scant garments they wore hung about them in rags, strings, strips, and streamers, and when they moved about each bore the appearance of a bundle of old rags and tatters in motion.

But these old men and boys were cheerful and happy. They had been on the road several months; no evil had befallen them, grass was good, their teams were in fair condition, and they were within 125 miles of Brownsville, the promised land of so many fond hopes, where past toils and hardships would be forgotten, their rags replaced by respectable raiment, and supplies purchased for the dependent loved ones at home. The day after the fall of Brownsville the writer with others had occasion to go out some distance along the road leading to King's Ranch and over which the retreating column of Confederates had passed the day before. The air was yet laden with the odor of burning cotton and the pall of smoke that hung over the landscape. The dismantled wagons and the half-consumed yet burning bales, the forlorn and woeful look of the teamsters, all these gave mute evidence of the fearful ravages under the thin guise of expediency. But the saddest spectacle was yet in store. On Jackass Prairie [an area about 5 miles north of the Brownsville ferry crossing] and in full view of the church spires of the two cities, they came upon the camp of those people from Arkansas with whom the writer had camped but a few weeks before at King's Ranch. General Bee's forces had met them at this point, and with ears closed to all pleading in behalf of the Southern mothers who had planted, cultivated and gathered this cotton with their own fair tender hands while their men folk were off fighting with Lee and Jackson—despite all this—their cotton was rolled off, the tie cut the torch applied, and the troops pushed forward to the next train. The writer found these old men sitting around as if in a stupor, while the boys wandered aimlessly about, silent, morose, and as if trying to comprehend the enormity of the calamity that had engulfed them in general ruin. With tears coursing down his venerable face one of these old fathers said, "The loss falls so heavily on so many, They had toiled so hard and so long and they are so poor and needy. And to think we were so near our journey's end. I don't know how we can ever get back home. To go back empty will be awful, and besides, as you can see, we have nothing to wear and winter is near and in all our company there is not so much as two dollars. I don't know why General Bee would want to burn our cotton."

Laredo, the Confederate Gateway

The occupation of Brownsville during the winter of 1863, failed of the main objective of the Federal Government, that was to cut off the cotton shipments into Mexico. True the arrival of Banks' army checked

the movement for a brief season, but when the spring of 1864 opened, the roads leading to Laredo were thronged with cotton trains and the little village high up on the Rio Grande suddenly sprang into prominence as the greatest cotton shipping point in the South. The Federals sent an expedition from Brownsville against this point, but Benavides with his regiment of cavalry, nearly all Mexicans, drove the enemy back, and the cotton trade continued in its increasing volume until the evacuation of Brownsville in 1864.

(Hunter goes on to comment that the destruction of the cotton was not wholly General Bee's fault as he received orders from higher up on what to do. [Purportedly Bee received orders from his superior General "Prince John" Bankhead MaGruder.] He also states that Bee received no graft from the cotton trade and died a poor but honest man. Hunt adds that he found William's book, *Border Ruffians*, authentic except for mistakes with a few minor names.)

At 10:00 a.m. on November 6, 1863, the 94th Illinois Regiment under Col. William M. Dye entered Brownsville, facing light resistance. At 3:00 p. m., with assistance from the 1st Missouri Light Artillery and the 13th Maine Volunteer Regiment, the town was secured. Brownsville would be used as a base for expeditions up the Rio Grande in order to cut off a route for goods that entered the Confederacy from Mexico. The Second Brigade, excepting the Twentieth Iowa, reached Brownsville the same date. Clark was to relate "the rebels evacuated upon our approach after burning their barracks and all the cotton remaining on the Texas side of the Rio Grande. We could see thousands of bales which they had hastily moved across to the Mexican shore." Someone estimated that there were 10,000 bales now on the Mexico side of the river and only 500 on the US side. The firing of the barracks had spread to adjacent properties destroying them as well. There was no military opposition in Brownsville for the rebel force had retreated to the north and interior at the approach of the Union troops. The First Brigade, excepting the Fifteenth Maine which remained on Brazos, marched on the same day toward Brownsville while the Twentieth Iowa occupied Point Isabel.

Wildman reports in his 38th Regiment history that:

The Rebels under the command of General Bee gave themselves up to plunder and violence once the order to evacuate was given. His actions excited the residents to a considerable degree of resistance. A former Mexican general, Jose Maria Cobos, was given permission by the Brownsville authorities to organize the residents to resist the rebel depredations and put out the fires. When the first Union soldiers entered the town, Cobos took his men across the Rio Grande and occupied the town of Matamoras, holding it as a bargaining chip for his own benefit.

The Adjutant General's report of the 91st Illinois Infantry indicates that this unit started for Brownsville on the 6th of November, "skirmishing all the way with the enemy, under command of the rebel General (Hamilton Prioleau) Bee, and landed at Fort Brown, Texas, on the 9th day of November, 1863, and went into winter quarters where we remained until December 31, 1863..." This account appears fairly imaginative regarding enemy contact.

McIntyre in his diary indicates that he was impressed by the "singular white flakey appearance" of the chapperal. It had extracted its toll on passing cotton that was being transported.

E. B. Quiner provides some history of the 20th Wisconsin and one of its adventures in the Valley. He recounts that the regiment was assigned to the XIII Army Corps and left Carrollton for Texas on the steamer *Thomas A. Scott* which also carried the 20th Iowa. On November 1 an unsuccessful attempt was made by Col. Bertram to land at the mouth of the river. Starting in small boats with 100 men, he got into the surf, losing two men of the 20th Iowa and two sailors drowned. It subsequently joined the rest of the fleet at Brazos Santiago and using a light long-draught boat was able to clear the bar safely at dark. By the 9th it was camped at Brownsville. After Rebel General Bee fled with his [supposedly] 300 men, the citizens welcomed the Union troops cordially. The prevention of the smuggling of English goods, including cloth and horseshoes, into the Confederacy was one mission of the troops. The English merchants at Matamoras had been doing an immense business.

He then relates this incident:

Matters were so unsettled and unsafe at Matamoras (sic) that the American Consul, Mr. (Leonard, Jr.) Pierce asked protection of General Herron, the two belligerent parties on that side of the river being engaged in constant warfare to the imminent danger of peaceable citizens and non-combatants. General Herron accordingly ordered Colonel Bertram with the Twentieth Wisconsin, Ninety-fourth Illinois, and Battery B, with forty rounds of ammunition and one day's rations, to move to the other side of the river into Mexico, with orders to protect the American Consul, not to fire upon either party unless fired upon and then to defend themselves. The property in the custody of the Consul was removed to the other side of the river, and Colonel Bertram returned to Fort Brown on the 14th. Great credit was conceded to Colonel Bertram for the admirable manner in which he managed this affair. The regiment remained at Brownsville, Col. Bertram being in command of the fort until it was evacuated by the Union forces, July 28th, 1864. They embarked on the 1st of August, and landed at Carrollton, above New Orleans, on the 5th and went into camp.

Another account is more colorful. It prefaced itself by remarking "Colonel Cortina, a Mexican officer with a small army had become engaged in a civil broil with the authorities of Matamoras and in the night attacked the town." The somewhat fanciful account goes on to read:

In a short time an exciting battle was raging in the streets in the heart of the city. The federals advanced with the stars and stripes flying, and the bands playing "Yankee Doodle" and "Rally Round the Flag, Boys." The Twentieth was detailed to guard the residence of the Consul during the fight. Each of the belligerents sought the aid of the Yankees against the other. The women thanked God at their approach. Colonel Bertram, however, in accordance with his instructions, took no part in the fray. For the skillful manner in which he performed his delicate task, he was afterward complimented in all order by Major General Herron. General Banks, also, says that the duty could not have been entrusted to better hands to execute. The Consul and three army wagonloads of gold and silver were escorted across to Brownsville for safety. All returned to the American side on the 14th, and the Twentieth returned to Fort Brown.

Frank Pierce in his book quotes the communication American Consul Leonard Pierce, Jr. had addressed to Herron on 1/12/64. It reads:

A battle is now raging in the streets of this City between the forces of Governor Manuel Ruiz and Col. Juan N. Cortina. My person and family are in great danger as the road between here and the ferry is said to be

infested with robbers. I have also about \$1,000,000 in specie and a large amount of other valuable property under my charge in the consulate, and from the well-known character of Cortina and his followers, I fear the city will be plundered. I therefore earnestly request that you send a sufficient force to protect myself and property and to transport the money within the limits of the United States at the earliest possible moment.

Gov. Ruiz was shortly thereafter to confirm the state of affairs to Herron who then dispatched Col. Black of the 37th Illinois Infantry to make a firsthand inspection of the situation. Upon confirmation Herron sent 40 men of the 20th Wisconsin to take charge of the ferry and four companies of the same regiment to the Consulate.

The American Consulate flying the U.S. flag was located on the principle square's south side and near the Cathedral. It was on the upper story of Francisco Yturria's large mercantile building. This gentleman had learned to amass his fortune under the tutelage of Charles Stillman, Brownsville founder, steamboat baron, and cotton speculator. The consulate's offices were in the front and living quarters to the rear. The astute Yturria had made the second story available to the Americans at no cost. In this manner he hoped to protect his belongings from marauders of any persuasion. Indeed some of valuables transported north may have belonged to Yturria.

Iowa records show that after resting a few days in Brownsville some of the 34th marched with Forest's Battery F, First Missouri Light Artillery to Point Isabella where they arrived on November 14. The account says, "Our first duty after arriving at this place was to boil every coat and shirt, each pair of pants, socks drawers, and blankets. I need not explain why." [Lice were an ongoing headache for soldiers everywhere throughout the war] The Thirteenth Maine that commenced a march from Brownsville to Point Isabel on the 13th while the Fifteenth Maine had crossed over from Brazos Island. These soldiers then constituted part of an expeditionary force under the command of Brig.-Gen. Ransom, a brave, dashing, and intelligent general who wounded many times during the war, died in Tennessee, just at its close. Ships would carry them north to see action on Mustang Island.

The 13th Maine's movement to Point Isabel was again a hardship one. Lufkin tells us: Nov. 12, we at last received our knapsacks, which had been left at the mouth of the river, and also received orders to march the next morning for Point Isabel. The men on detail having returned, the regiment left Brownsville about 8 a.m., Nov. 13th. The noon-day halt was made at Resaca de la Palma, and in the afternoon we crossed the plain of Palo Alto, both famous battle-fields of the Mexican War. At Resaca de la Palma there was a small spring, but where we stopped for the night there was no water, and we were obliged, as the plainsmen say, to make a dry camp. In the morning there was issued a small supply of water, which was hauled from Brownsville; and then the regiment started to cross a desert, where for more than twenty miles, there was no water, and no vegetation but scattered bunches of prickly pear. The scanty ration of water was soon gone, and for the rest of the day the men suffered the torture of thirst; this being aggravated to the highest degree by the desert mirage, which for several hours was very brilliant. Beautiful lakes, surrounded by groves of trees, could be seen on all sides, some of them apparently but a short distance away; and it required all the authority of the officers to keep some of the men from leaving the ranks to fill their canteens. When our march led us toward one of these lakes, it would fade away and another would be seen further on, and soon all realized how great was the delusion.

Just before dark, weary, thirsty, and foot-sore, the regiment reached Point Isabel, where we found an expedition organizing in which we were to take part. We remained in Bivouac, not far from the Point Isabel Lighthouse, till about noon the next day, November 15th, when the regiment embarked on the steamers Matamoras and Planter, six companies on the former and four on the latter. The Matamoras was a light-draft, stern-wheeler, built at Pittsburgh, Pa. For use on the Rio Grande, and had been loaned Gen. Banks by the Mexican General Cortinas; the Planter was an Alabama River steamer, which had been captured by the blockading fleet while trying to run across from Mobile to Cuba with a load of cotton.

Hodnutt's Iowans didn't reach the town until the 9th. Prior to that he gives a description: By the river we camped for the night and after breakfast resumed our march 11 miles through the chaparral to Brownsville. The first object that met our gaze was a Spanish dog without a hair on its hide; the next a leather colored Mexican child, perfectly nude, and here the dust mercifully blinded us, till we reached the center of town, else there's no knowing what we may have seen. Col. McNulta of the 94th Illinois has preceded us a day or so, and the streets were filled with blue coats and Mexican blankets in picturesque hues. Camp was selected about one mile up the river just opposite the famed or rather infamous town of Matamoras, Mexico.

A soldier in Bones (B) Company writes home: It is expected that our brigade will move up the Rio Grand, about one hundred miles as soon as the water rises, to Ringgold Barracks, and perhaps further. The 91st Ill., 38th Iowa and 1st Mo. Battery, compose the Brigade. The new recruits for the 38th have not yet arrived, but I have understood that they are on this side of the Gulf. If so they will soon be with us. He adds: Colonel J.O. Hudnutt is now in command of the brigade. Captain Rogers of Co. "F" commanding our regiment and "The camp is kept very clean and tidy, all the rubbish is buried, and nothing allowed to remain above ground that would cause a stench. Every precaution that can be, is taken to preserve the health of the regiment. I trust that in the future we shall have good health." Wildman is to note: During its stay at Brownsville, and for the remainder of its service, the percentage of loss from sickness was no greater than that of the other regiments with which it was associated. The men had become acclimated, and were inured to the hardships of army life. They had learned how to take care of themselves in camp and on the march, and were less susceptible to disease.

The Civil War Archive site provides a brief time line for the 13th and 15th Maine in Texas:

13th Regiment Infantry Moved to New Orleans August 1. Company "K" moved to Fort Macomb July 5, and duty there until August 30, 1863. Moved to New Orleans. Region duty at New Orleans August to October, 1863. Expedition to the Rio Grande, Texas, October 27-December 2. Advance on Brownsville, Texas, November 3-6. Occupation of Fort Brown November 6. Expedition to Aransas Pass November 17. Capture of Mustang Island November 17. Fort Esperanza November 25-27. Matagorda Bay December 29-30. Companies "C," "H" and "K" duty at Pass Cavallo, Matagorda Island, until February, 1864, Moved to Franklin, La., February 12-16, and duty there until March 15.

15th Regiment Infantry At Camp Parapet until August, and provost duty in New Orleans until October. Expedition to the Rio Grande, Texas, October 27-December 2. Advance on

Brownsville November 3-6. Occupation of Brownsville November 6. Expedition to Aransas November 14-21. Aransas Pass and capture of Mustang Island November 17. Fort Esperanza November 25-27. Cedar Bayou November 23 (Detachment). Duty at Pass Cavallo, Matagorda Island, until February 28, 1864. Moved to Franklin, La., March 1-5.

Any footnote to Texan participation in the war has to include the strange tale of Adrian J. Vidal. He was born in Monterrey, Mexico in 1845. After his father, Col. Luis Vidal, died his mother Petra (Vela) moved to Mier on the Rio Grande. Steamboat entrepreneur Mifflin Kenedy was smitten by her, and they were married in Brownsville in 1852. Adrian entered a period of debauchery and at age 17 traveled to San Antonio where he enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army. It soon promoted him to lieutenant and because of his border knowledge sent him with a militia to guard the mouth of the Rio Grande. Shortly rising to the rank of captain he captured a Union gunboat but, impatient and fractious, he mutinied and took his command with him in October 1863. When CSA soldiers were sent to rein him his company's soldiers killed one of them and wounded a second who managed to escape and report back to Fort Brown. Now deemed a traitor, on October 28th Vidal's company swept around Brownsville killing three more, including former Cameron County Sheriff Barthelow, CSA Captain King, and a Mr. Cruz. The party then crossed south into Mexico. Vidal commenced a period of banditry using Mexico as a sanctuary. By early November 1863 the Union had occupied the area, so he enlisted himself and his men as "Vidal's Independent Partisan Rangers". An enlistment bonus of \$100 brought the force up to 89 in number. Frustrated once more, it is said by the paperwork requirements of his position, he deserted the Union army just before an honorary discharge was to be issued him. He returned to Mexico to join Benito Juárez along with Juan Nepomuceno Cortina and his fight to drive Emperor Maximilian from Mexico. Captured by Imperial troops at Camargo in June 1865, Adrian was put before a firing squad and executed on June 15, 1865. His stepfather, Mifflin Kenedy, arrived too late to negotiate a ransom and took Adrian's body to Brownsville for burial.

The irony for the pro-Confederacy Kenedy, who was also handsomely profiting from transportation and trading, did not end with his stepson's defection and death. From authors Monday and Vick we learn:

“Maria Vicenta Vidal, Petra Vidal Kenedy’s last unmarried daughter by Luis Vidal, attracted a great deal of attention among the young Union soldiers in the waning months of the Civil War in Brownsville. Vicenta was eighteen years old. Lt. Frederick Edward Stark (sic), a Union officer serving as the post adjutant at Fort Brown, won her hand. Fred Stark was from New York, and his father Carl, was an oboist in the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He also had been an accompanist for the famous singer Jenny Lind.”

“Fred Stark (sic) evidently made some powerful friends during his career. The day before the wedding Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand, who had recently been made commander of the 13th Army Corps, arrived in Brownsville with the intention of meeting with Tamaulipas Governor Cortina and jointly reviewing the Union troops. The Union was obviously intent on securing Governor Cortina’s support in helping to stop the

Confederate cotton trade. The next day, April 2 1865 he stood as one of Fred Stark's attendants, along with Col. James Klegiom, M.C. Garber, Capt. W. M. Clapp, and Capt. S.B. Morey."

Tilley, editor of *Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864*, relates: "B.F. McIntyre had grumbled about Adjutant Starck in his diary on June 3, "Post Adjutant Starck made himself particularly obnoxious to a number of our men today by having them regularly detailed to clean his dwelling, scrub the poarches [sic], clean out his privy and stable, and other things of alike character which will not redound to the Adjutant's popularity and which was disgraceful employment to the soldier and equally so to an officer asking it... later noted that he was happy to learn that Lieutenant Stark had vacated his office as post adjutant." Evidently between the officers and the enlisted men there was a difference of opinions about Stark.

Once Union forces had taken Brownsville, Andrew Jackson Hamilton was established there as Texas Military Governor. He had been a U.S. Congressman from Western Texas prior to the war. *The Handbook of Texas Online* tells us that after fleeing Texas: Hamilton became a hero in the north and delivered speeches in New York, Boston, and other northern cities. His rhetorical targets included slavery, disunionists, and the "slave power", which he believed was trying to subvert democracy and the rights of non-slave owners. After he met with President Lincoln in November 1862, he accepted a commission as brigadier general of volunteers and an appointment as military governor of Texas.

From the summer of 1865 to the summer of 1866 Hamilton would be Provisional Governor of Texas during its initial Reconstruction.

Major General Banks was already settled in Brownsville by November 9. In a dispatch on that date to Maj. Gen. H. W. Halleck, General-in-Chief, U. S. Army, Washington, D.C., Banks reported that:

"Affairs are quiet in Matamoras. Governor Ruiz [He was the Juarista (a supporter of Benito Juarez) military governor.] is in Brownsville, Cortina in power, and messengers have been dispatched for Governor Serna, who resides 200 miles distant. The friendship of the Cortinas party for the American Government has been signally manifested by his placing three Rio Grande steamers on this side of the river under our control. One of these, the *Matamoras*, is the only boat that can cross the bar.

General Dana arrived in Brownsville last evening. I shall remain here until our affairs are in a settled condition."

He then goes on to entreat for 5,000 to 10,000 men to be assigned him and who would be of "incalculable service in the restoration of Texas." He adds, "Our success, thus far, has exceeded my most sanguine expectations. The people on both sides of the river are friendly to the Government, and if affairs are managed with any discretion, the cause of the Government will be greatly strengthened throughout the whole Southwest.

The Fifteenth Maine Volunteers is at Brazos; the Twentieth Wisconsin at Point Isabel. Two regiments of the Corps d'Afrique, the First and Sixteenth, occupy Brazos Island. The balance of the force connected with the expedition is en route for this point."

At his point in time the cotton trade was suffering a considerable constriction. In an account titled "The Civil War Years in the Valley" compiled by John H. Hunter from material in the files of J.T. Canales and Harbert Davenport we learn of a subterfuge. According to the story set forth, Charles Stillman and his associates, who were major beneficiaries of the Brownsville/Matamoros cotton trade, advised Gen. Dana "that the only way the cotton trade could be broken up was to form an invasion entering on the middle Texas coast between Galveston and Corpus Christi." Dana was convinced of this approach and set about to convince his superior.

While awaiting a decision he continued his campaign locally. He wrote the following in December 1863 to the American Consul at Monterrey:

I desire to make the road from San Antonio to Eagle Pass and Laredo so perilous that neither Jew nor Gentile will wish to travel it. Please make this known confidentially only to good, true, and daring men, who will kill, burn, and destroy all that cannot be taken and secured.

On December 22, 1863 Col. Ford received confidential orders from Gen. Magruder. In short they said that Ford was to create the impression that his troops were destined for Indianola but in actuality would head south. Whether this added to the subterfuge or not is unknown, but Dana was transferred to the Matagorda Bay area near Indianola in January 1864. Gen. Francis Herron left in charge of the border area then took a "conservative view of his mission". Conditions in the Valley for the winter of 1863-64 proved to be one of the coldest on record and a drought also continued in the region. Low waters in the river would impede any plans to easily move upstream to cut off the cotton traffic that had been displaced to the northwest.

The expeditionary force under Brig. General T. E. G. Ransom met with success after departing the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Aransas Pass was captured November 17, 1863, Fort Esperanza on 11/27/63, then on the 29th the earthworks at Pass Cavallo guarding Matagorda Bay were secured. Lt.-Col. Frank S. Hesseltine of the 13th Maine was to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his leadership at Matagorda Bay, December 29-30, 1863.

Local military action was generally scant. One action recorded for the Rio Grande Expedition is that of November 21, 1863. Through that date only 382 bales of cotton had been intercepted. General Dana approved of an action to be led by Col. E. J. Davis. Davis left Brownsville for Rio Grande City on the morning of this date with 100 mounted cavalry men, 100 infantry in wagons and one howitzer. Two days later Col. Charles Black, who had embarked on the *Mustang*, reported to Davis with seven companies and one howitzer. Orders were to proceed no further than Rio Grande City. "The First Texas Cavalry under E. J. Davis, the 37th Illinois, and Battery B marched on Ringgold Barracks, some 200 miles above the Rio Grande, where a force of rebels were said to be and of this date, 11/30, still absent." [Confederate Col. Santos Benavides and his small army were forced to flee across the river to Reynosa. The Second Texas Cavalry USA went on to destroy the salt works at El Sal de Rey.] The excursion was largely a waste of effort. In 1863 a drought had commenced and lowered the river waters to the point that the steamer

could nor reach within 30 miles of Roma and took three weeks to return 180 men. The Fremont Rifles of the 37th Illinois Veteran Volunteer Infantry were in the LRGV from late 1863 and saw duty guarding the river until February 1864. Between 11/23 and 12/3/63 the regiment participated in the expedition to Rio Grande City. In its first two months in the Valley Union forces has managed to lay hands on a mere 800 bales of cotton here.

In December 1863, Col. Black of the 37th Illinois Infantry wrote that the *Mustang* owners had "afforded all possible comforts during the voyage [of Union forces to Rio Grande City]. I desire to call to the attention of the general to them as capable and accommodating gentleman in their line of business."

Maj. General Dana's 13th Army Corps staff at this time included: Major William Hyde Clark, Assistant Adjutant General; Captain William F. Milton, Aid de Camp; Captain George H. Dana, Aide de Camp; Captain William B Leach, Acting Assistant Inspector General; Captain John L. Routt, Assistant Quartermaster; Captain A. Hoepner, Engineer; Captain E. M. Emerson, Commissary of Subsistence; Captain A. Gillott, Ordnance Officer; Major C. B. Chapman, Medical director; and Lt. A. McDonald, Assistant Commissary of Muster.

By December 1863 hundreds of Texas Unionists refugees had assembled in Brownsville bringing with them families and household goods, cattle and horses. Captain Chester Barney of the 20th Iowa wrote of their desperate situation. In March some 100 destitute refugees had crossed to Bagdad to await evacuation by the *Honduras*. Some 60 refugee men who had crossed into Mexico earlier were sent by M. M. Kinney, the US consulate at Monterrey, to Matamoros and then transport to New Orleans as future US Army recruits. Equally unusual was that American Negroes sent by their masters into Mexico or perhaps from Texas itself were volunteering to serve in the Union forces. By early December, 33 had been mustered into the Corps d'Afrique, and 175 more were working on Federal defenses in Brownsville at the same time. In fact the Corps was busily engaged in enlarging the fort defenses by throwing up embankments already nearly ½ mile in length on its northeast side.

Tom Lea in *The King Ranch Vol.I* relates the notorious actions of a small force of Union cavalymen at King's Rancho. also known as Rancho de Santa Gertrudis Ranch just prior to Christmas Day 1863, 12/23/63 to be exact. That Richard King himself had been warned that a force was on its way and that he reasoned that his family would be best served by his flight is an off-reported fallacy, although he was a marked man in that he was a key player in facilitating the movement of cotton to the border and had profited greatly from the trade.[Lea's 1957 account was erroneous in the regard of King's absence. Lea's book has a detailed chapter on the workings of the cotton trade in South Texas.] King, in fact, was off pursuing cattle thieves into Mexico and also scouting for any advancing Yankee troops. He had placed Francisco Alvarado, one of the first *Kineños*, in charge of protecting his 31 year old wife Henrietta; children Nettie age 7, Ella 5, Alice 1,

and Richard Jr. 4; and father-in-law, the 66 year old Reverend Hiram Chamberlain who was chaplain of the 3rd Texas Infantry Regiment. The ranch complex itself supported forty Mexican and Anglo ranch hands, their families numbering around 120 women and children, and at least two slaves.

Union Captain James Speed led the raiders consisting of a troop of sixty to seventy armed horsemen, about half of whom were Tejanos and Mexican recruits from the First and Second (Union) Texas Cavalry. (King in a January 20, 1864 letter to Col. A. G.

Dickerson, C.S.A., San Antonio put the number at eighty.) Immediately upon arrival they killed the ranch carpenter and ranch hand, 63-year old Alvarado who came out of the house shouting "Don't fire on this house! There is family here__" They then searched the house for King and not finding him resorted to plunder and destruction, even going so far as to ride horses into the ground floor hallway. They then drove much of King's "beeves" to Brownsville to feed the troops there.

King's second hand account adds that the raiders "broke open trunks and took what they wanted. Stole quite a number of my best animals, all my wife's carriage horse, and made a free gift to my Negroes of all that was left—Said they would return in a few days." He added mockingly "They were in a dreadful hurry, and were worst frightened than the ladies in the house." Additionally he noted that Captain John Brown (of my bay steamboats), W.S. Gregory, Almond Dix, a cotton hunter, and several Mexicans were taken prisoners."

Bruce S. Cheeseman in a footnote in his *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Volume 101, July 1997 article titled "'Let us have 500 good determined Texans'; Richard King's Account of the Union Invasion of South Texas, November 12, 1863, to January 20, 1864" colors the Confederate concerns by stating:

Union General N. J. T. Dana, who assumed command of the occupation of Brownsville upon General Bank's departure in late November 1863, sought to destroy all Confederate commerce with Mexico. Rumors spread that he issued a public proclamation that the land between the Rio Grande and Nueces was "Public property and free to all" as is quoted here by King. Indeed Dana moved outside the realm of military operations, hiring border thugs, bandits, and killers to terrorize the cotton roads. He wrote to the United States vice consul in Monterrey that "I wish to kill, burn, and destroy all the rebels own that cannot be taken and secured." General Dana to M.M. Kimmery, December 18, 1863. *Official Army Records*.

One action of note involved the 91st Illinois Infantry. It departed Brownsville on 12/31/63 and then conducted its famous raid on Salt Lake, 90 miles out in the enemy country. The Illinois Adjutant General reported: "It captured a lake of salt two miles square, a few hundred horses, mules, and cattle, which were promptly confiscated for the good of the command. The lake we left behind, for the use of future generations.

January 9, 1864, arrived safely back on the Rio Grande, after a march of over 260 miles, without the loss of a man. Here the regiment remained doing frontier duty until the 28th day of July, when it left Brownsville, and on the 30th day of July, 1864 arrived at Brazos de Santiago, Tex., and was left to do duty as a garrison of the place until the 11th day of September, 1864, when the regiment had quite a fight with the rebels near Bagdad, on the north side of Rio Grande River, and it was said at the time a squadron of French troops forded the Rio Grande to help the rebels, but all to no use, for they were driven back on the southeastern portion of the Palo Alto Plain. Rebel loss, 20 killed and left on the field.

Our loss, two wounded." The 91st was to remain in the Valley until December 1864 after which time it was sent by steamer to New Orleans and was later to advance on Mobile, Alabama.

The importance of La Sal de Rey is outlined in the *Handbook of Texas Online*. It states, "In the Civil War a huge increase in the demand for salt caused the state government to take control of its mining and export. Governor Francis R. Lubbock appointed Antonio Salinas of Brownsville as controlling agent, and after allowing Jesus Cardenas, owner of the lake, to sell the salt already mined, the confederate government rushed salt to designated points by camel caravan, each camel carrying 600 pounds. Freight thefts, however, caused so many problems that the camel project was abandoned." Eileen Mattei writes that the price for salt rose to \$8 a bushel and that "The wagons that smuggled southern cotton to the Mexican border port of Bagdad returned home with cargoes of salt and guns until the Yankees captured the salt lake in 1863."

Ketzle in his diary briefly reports that his Illinois Greyhounds had camped in the neighborhood of Brownsville from November 9 until the 21st.

Then receive orders to march. Company A, F, and G taking the overland route with teams under Major Payne, while the rest of command embark on a river steamer (Mustang). The three companies named reached Ringgold Barracks on the 25th of November (ahead of those on the steamer) seizing over 80 bales pf cotton—flour and other stuff. Remained here for two days. Then return to boat which was aground on one of the numerous sandbars some 30 miles below the barracks. Reaching the boat they embarked for the return, but owing to low stage of water made slow progress but finally got to Brownsville December 12th, being 22 days on a 12 day supply of rations, but beef was plentiful along the river, also raw sugar. We remain in camp fro December 12 to the 31st, receiving on the 26th a Christmas present in the shape of two months pay.

In an Expedition report covering November 1863, it was noted, "The remainder of the troops are at Point Isabel and Brazos Island, engaged in fortifying and holding those posts. Health of the troops generally good. A large amount of cotton and valuable stores have been captured and turned over to proper departments, for which the various staff reports will account." In reality the quantities of cotton the Union would secure over time were scant compared to the totals being shipped through the area.

The winter of 1863-64 was one of record breaking cold. Coupled with the drought this brought a shortage of forage for the cavalry livestock. Bone rattling northers curtailed military movements. A strange phenomenon occurred in this period. Cattle in search of grass and escape from the cold moved aggressively south in what has been termed "The Big Drift."

In 1876 an old-time Brownsville resident gave a "Centennial" address. This was William A. Neale, an Englishman who had come to Mexico in 1820 to serve in the navy of that country. Before Brownsville was even established Neale had crossed the river from Matamoros to the area north of that city. Years later he operated the stage coach line between Brownsville and Point Isabel. Soon after its start he constructed a hotel near what is now 14th Street between Adams and Washington. It was a rambling structure

covering nearly a quarter block. "During the Federal occupation of Brownsville in the Civil War the soldiers started tearing down the building, taking lumber to Fort Brown to build barracks."

Neale, still an English citizen, in an appeal to the general in command demanded that the troops be stopped at once. Alas, only the tail end of the structure remained when removal operations ceased. That part was repaired and retained as the Neale home. Being of fine material and construction, the low frame house still exists today.[As development in Brownsville progressed the house was moved to the Fort Brown area across from the resaca. With the erection of a border fence in 2009, it is scheduled to be relocated a second time.]

In January 1864 Maj.-Gen. Francis Jay Herron assumed command of the XIII Corps and occupied the Texas coast with headquarter in Brownsville. There were about 6,500 troops in South Texas. This Medal of Honor recipient had been a hero at Prairie Grove, Arkansas and Vicksburg. While here he provided aid to Mexican President Benito Juárez and prevented French troops of Emperor Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria from establishing themselves along the Rio Grande. Herron was scheduled to depart in July for Alabama when the Department in South Texas was divided and given to the Trans Mississippi Department. Serving under Herron at times were Col. Edmund Davis, Texas Cavalry; Lt. Col. Joseph O. Hudnutt, 1st Brigade; Col. John McNulta (94th Illinois Infantry), 2nd Brigade; and replaced by Col. Henry Bertram; Capt. Martin Welfrey, artillery.

The 94th Illinois Infantry had seen warfare first hand at Prairie Grove, Arkansas and Vicksburg, Mississippi. In the Illinois Adjutant General's Report, he wrote " On October 25th (1863), the Ninety-fourth embarked for the Rio Grande, where, at Brownsville and in that vicinity, the men spent nine of the most miserable months of their enlistment, the monotony only being relieved by an occasional revolution on the Mexican side of the river at Matamoras, during one of which they were called upon to spend a night upon the streets in that city guarding the American Consul.

Under the policy of concentration inaugurated by General Grant upon assuming command, in July 1864, the Regiment was withdrawn from Texas, and during the first of August took an active part in the siege of Fort Morgan, which surrendered after sustaining a most fearful bombardment from the fleet and mortars on shore."

It was on February 18, 1864 that President Lincoln issued a proclamation removing the Brownsville area naval blockade. The blockade however would be reinstated in September 1864 following the withdrawal of Union troops after the battle of Palmito Ranch.

In March 1864 Union forces moved against Laredo in an attempt to seize thousands of bales of cotton there. Late in November, a force of 1,500, consisting of the 1st Texas (Union) and 2nd Texas (Union) Cavalry regiments, under the command of Brigadier General Edmund Jackson Davis, the Unionist Texan was assembled. The 1st was a unit

that came over from New Orleans while the 2nd was formed in Brownsville and composed of Unionist Hispanics. The force went up the Rio Grande aboard the steamer *Mustang* and seized Ringgold Barracks and the town of Roma with no resistance. As word of the advance spread up the river to the town of Laredo, a local leader, Santos Benavides, who was a local merchant and political leader, became concerned. As leader of Laredo's Hispanic population, and one time mayor in 1856, he had thrown in his lot with the Confederacy as other Hispanics became pro-Unionists. This was the condition along the river as various factions vied for supremacy. With the withdrawal of General Bee's troops, Benavides, a Confederate Colonel, had the only creditable force in South Texas, and that wasn't much. Fortunately, the Federals halted for the winter, allowing the Rebels to gather supplies for the fight that was surely coming.

An article in the *Civil War Times Illustrated* (August 1980) detailed what was to follow: Early in 1864, a reconnaissance force of 25 led by Lieutenant Martin Gonzales left Laredo and rode 200 miles into deep South Texas and managed to track Federal movements, revealing that Davis' troops were on the move and heading for Laredo. On March 17, 1864, Confederate troops under Colonel John "Rip" Ford left San Antonio on what was called the "Rio Grande Expedition" hoping to take back the lower Rio Grande Valley. The lead elements were ambushed by Union guerrillas under Cecilio Valerio, a pro-Union Hispanic attached to the 2nd Texas (Union), and stopped. This left Benavides with only a total of 72 militiamen in order to defend Laredo.

March 19, 1864: a relative of Benavides named Cayetano de la Garza rode into Laredo and reported that a force of 1000 was approaching the town. Benavides ordered bales of cotton, at the time being stacked for shipment into Mexico, be used as barricades in case of street to street fighting. He also ordered the cotton burned if things went against the Confederates. As citizen volunteers lined the roofs of Laredo, Benavides, also ailing, led his small force out to face the enemy.

The Federal force approaching Laredo actually consisted of 200 men, half under Valerio and the other half under Jim Fisk, another guerrilla. In order to get to Laredo, the Federals crossed into Mexico and rode up the south bank until they were within a few miles of their objective, then they crossed the river again and soon was within a half mile of the town. Benavides placed his 42 men into a corral east of town and sent the remainder into Laredo as a final defensive line. As the Union troops approached the corral, they split into groups of 40 and began to launch their attack. Through three hours of fighting, Benavides' men held off the Federals with no Rebel casualties, but managed to inflict substantial losses on them. After three heavy assaults and with night falling, the men of the 2nd Texas (Union) had to retreat to the southeast and make camp three miles away. In the early morning hours of March 20, Confederate cavalry, who were in a camp 25 miles to the north, arrived to reinforce Benavides, with the added effect of forcing the Union force to break camp and retreat further away. On March 21, a scouting party sent from Laredo and commanded by Benavides' brother Refugio found a trail of abandoned equipment, some of it bloody, and spotting several groups of Federals who were running back toward Brownsville. The Federal force had totally broken.

Benavides' illness caught up with him and he collapsed while checking out a report on another force of Union troops approaching Laredo (this turned out to be one of his own scouting parties). Soon, help arrived in the form of Colonel Ford's troops from San Antonio, the ambush only delaying them. Laredo became the staging area for a new Confederate offensive to drive the Federals from South Texas. Benavides had to sit out the first stages of the offensive due to his illness, but recovered in time to participate in driving the Federals from Brownsville and ending Edmund Davis' dream to re-conquer Texas for the Union. Benavides would be promoted to colonel for his actions.

A Wikipedia article has Major Alfred Holt as leader of Union forces whose objective was to destroy an estimated 5,000 bales of cotton being stored in San Agustin Plaza, Laredo. Benavides with 42 men was able to repel three Union advances at Zacate Creek. The

cotton was then successfully transported to the Mexico side of the Rio Grande.

Col. Benavides had defended the town and forced Federal soldiers to retire down the river. In their hasty retreat they abandoned rifles, pistols, and ammunition at the Ringgold Barracks. These fell into the hands of Col. Ford on May 4 as his troops entered the town with no opposition, since the Federals had withdrawn to Edinburg [now named Hidalgo]. Ford, although not officially commissioned, had been placed in command of the "Rio Grande Expeditionary Force" by General Magruder. Its mission was to restore the Valley to the Confederacy.

A minor skirmish warrants recording. On March 15, 1864 a force of 25 men of the 2nd Texas Cavalry (U.S.) -- as opposed to and not to be confused with the the 2nd Texas Cavalry (Confederate States of America)-- had ridden from Brownsville and were in the vicinity of Charles Stillman's Santa Rosa Ranch [about three miles east of present day Sebastian, Texas]. They may have been on a mission to secure cattle (beeves) to bring back to Fort Brown to provision the Union troops stationed there.

In any event, the party under the command of Second Lieutenant Santos Cardena were met and attacked by a "largely dispersed force". It is very likely that these men were part of a reconnaissance force sent out by the CSA's Col. John "RIP" Ford to feel out the Federals in the area. A two hour gunfight ensued. The reported casualties for the Union soldiers were one killed, two missing, and one wounded. The extent of enemy casualties was unknown. The 30-year old Cardena had been recruited and commissioned by Texas Unionist Brig. General Edmund J. Davis on December 10, 1863.

A member of the unit was a former cowboy, Sgt. Ignacio Zamora, who had been born August 1, 1835 in Mexico and would remain in the service until he was mustered out in San Antonio in November 1865. Having been promised a \$100 bonus for each year he served, Ignacio was given the princely sum, for that time, of \$300. This was generous on the part of the government seeing that Ignacio had only served 22 months of his enlistment hitch. He would die in 1917 at the age of 82 and be buried in the Penitas, Texas Cemetery.

The political and social upheavals occurring in Mexico, coupled with the incursion of Emperor Maximilian, made that side of the border ever bit as volatile as the U.S. side where battle tides of the Civil War caused uncertain and fluctuating events. Juan Cortina with his ever-changing alliances in the state of Tamaulipas only added to the confusion and challenges facing Union military leaders in the region. It is little wonder that in the Wisconsin Adjutant General's history confusing and prejudicial statements were made. Still they reflect the attitudes at he time and are deserving of attention. Several passages are of note in portraying the Brownsville area of the period. They state:

For years, a kind of guerrilla warfare had been waged along both sides of the Rio Grande, in which Mexicans, Texans, and Indians had taken a part-- the Mexican a cross between the Indian and Negro, and the Texan, an outlaw, who fled from civilization to save his head. The poorer Mexicans lived in houses of cane and straw that resembled cow sheds rather than human dwellings. Many of them obtained a livelihood by selling wood which they transported on the backs of poor, wretched, little, lean donkeys, the crooked limbs of the wood being adjusted to the animal's ribs.

Hay was carried in the same way, and also upon carts drawn by oxen hitched together at the horns, oxen poorer than Pharoah's lean kind. Half-naked Mexicans harnessed themselves to barrels in which they drew water about the streets for citizens. The common dress was of leather, horsehide tanned with the hair on being preferred as most genteel. Deer skin jackets, hats with enormous brims, belts with concealed knives, and red sashes, constituted some of the articles of clothing seen in the streets of Brownsville. During their stay of eight months, the regiment enjoyed excellent health. The water of the Rio Grande was more than any they had drank except that of the Mississippi, since leaving Missouri. They built an ice house and cleaned the filthy streets of Brownsville. Only five deaths occurred in the regiment while they remained.

With the changing tides of war, politically the citizenry of the LRGV were between a rock and a hard place. During the Civil War, political prisoners and prisoners of war were often released upon taking an "oath of allegiance". Two examples of these are:

Oath of Allegiance

I, _____, do solemnly swear or affirm, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Union of the States there under.

Signed: _____

and:

Oath of Allegiance

I do hereby solemnly and sincerely swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign, and that I will bear true and faithful allegiance and loyalty to the same—any ordinance, resolution, or law of any State, Convention, or Legislature to the contrary notwithstanding; and further, that I take this oath, and assume all its responsibilities, legal and moral, of my own free-will, and with a full determination, pledge, and purpose to observe and fulfill it, and without any mental reservation or evasion whatever; and, further, that I will well and faithfully perform all the duties that may be required of me by law, as a true and loyal citizen of the United States. And may God help me so to do!

Signed: _____

In early April 1864 Illinois politician turned soldier and more importantly a friend of President Abraham Lincoln, General John Alexander McClernand had his rank restored and was given field command of the XIII Corps. He was in ill health and would resign from the Army on November 30, 1864. The wily Tamaulipas General, Cortina, sent an aide, Jose Maria Silva to meet McClernand in the first week of April. Cortina wanted arms for which McClernand had no authority to negotiate. McClernand took the opportunity to ask Cortina to close the Mexico side of the upper reaches of the Rio Grande to the Confederate cotton trade. While Cortina indicated that he was in favor of the American Union, he related that he was powerless to stop Rebel movement on the

river itself. Thompson in his book "Cortina" records that McClernand, upon hearing almost immediately that Cortina was going to meet with Confederate cotton speculators, crossed the river to meet Cortina in person. Thompson writes:

The success of the Union army in Texas, Cortina told McClernand, 'was necessary to the security of Mexico, not only against trans-marine nations but against the ambitious aims and aggressive spirit of the so-called Confederate government.' McClernand was excited by what he heard in Matamoros. Cortina not only professed friendship but also issued a *pronunciamiento* that amounted to 'little less than a declaration of war against the rebels.' As a reward the Federals officially gave Cortina ten artillery pieces in a formal ceremony on Plaza Hidalgo in Matamoros. On the occasion McClernand also presented Cortina an elegantly engraved sword.

That Cortina was an unreliable ally as was evidenced the following month. Union forces had seized the English schooner *Maggie Jane* as it was tied up on the north bank of the river near its mouth. Its crew was searching for a deserter. Upon learning of the incident Cortina complained to federal authorities. He feared that Union Navy activities might interfere with Mexico's foreign commerce, in short its cotton smuggling.

Facilitating better communications was the telegraph line strung between Point Isabel and Fort Brown. It was in place on May 26, 1864. By June 1864 army engineers, with Col. Hodnutt in charge, began to construct a railroad from Brazos de Santiago to the river in order to facilitate the movement of supplies. [See the Cameron County Historical Commission website's online essay "Nathaniel White, La Feria's Man of Mystery" for more on this railroad completed the following year by Gen. Phil Sheridan.]

To administer affairs of occupied territory west of the Mississippi the Federals established the Trans Mississippi Department. On May 11, 1864 Gen. Edward R. S. Canby was assigned command of the Military Division of West Mississippi. He would then have to go on to organize it and select a headquarters for it..

CSA forces under Ford kept prodding. On June 22 at the Ebonal Ranch his men forced Union pickets to retreat towards Brownsville. Three days later Ford's advance party led by ex-ranger Captain James Dunn encountered Union cavalry at the Las Rucias Ranch of Grey Mares (now just west of the current community of Los Indios). Under a brisk rain he was soon reinforced with Showalter's regiment and the additional Confederate battalions of Cater and Benevides. Col. Ford and twelve other officers leading 250 men had crossed the Arroyo Colorado at the shallow Paso de Gigante south of the El Gigante Ranch [this is currently the very south end of Dilworth Road, Harlingen. A small bridge now spans the arroyo at this point.]

Captain Phillip G. Temple was in command of troopers of companies A and C of Col. E.J. Davis' First Texas (Union) Cavalry of Herron's force. They were assigned picket duties. Outnumbered and also fearful of the CSA Texans treating them as traitors, they took refuge in the only brick building in the area. They then fought a short desperate skirmish only to flee through the brush and to escape across to the Mexico side of the river. The panic was initiated in part when the Union commander was wounded in the face. This was just before Giddings and his battalion arrived on the scene.

The casualty figures from Ford's *Memiors* noted that only eight, including Temple who "left early", of the more than 100 Union cavalry returned to Fort Brown. Thirty-six Federals were taken prisoner and twenty counted dead, including some who had drowned. Two complete wagons and teams, 28 horses, and a number of saddles and arms were taken. The CSA lost three out of its 250 man force and eleven were wounded. Union figures are at odds with those of Ford. With many having fled across the river, its statistics have a loss of two killed, five wounded, and 28 taken captive. In his account Texas historian Fehrenbach relates that many Union men were killed and 30 captured while only eight escaped to report the incident to Gen Herron. Still another historian gives the figures of 36 taken prisoner, 20 killed, 20 horses recovered along with arms and equipment. Herron did not respond with an offensive move. Ford then tried to cut off communications between Brownsville and Brazos Santiago but failed in this tactic.

On July 25 Ford advanced to Brownsville's outskirts. From a natural depression, named Dead Man's Hollow, about one-half mile west of the town he commenced a long-range artillery exchange. Neither side accomplished much.

Meanwhile the Union army began to retrench in the area and cut its manning to about 2,500 soldiers and, while abandoning Fort Brown on July 28, 1864, kept a presence on Brazos Island for the remainder of the war. In January 1864 McIntyre's diary put the number at 4,400 including one regiment of Corps d'Afrique who were on fatigue duty. The numbers were slowly increasing due to new recruits and the return to the ranks of Union soldiers who had escaped from Confederate prison camps. One account says that 2,000 refugees accompanied the retreat. This number appears inflated because Herron reported to his superior on July 23 that "250 refugees, 200 sick, and a number of ladies had gone or would immediately go to New Orleans." He added "Brownsville has been entirely evacuated by the citizens, not one single family remaining." The fact was that a number of families with mixed allegiances had fled to Matamoros. Here too the situation was perilous, since an invasion of the city from Imperialist forces was possible. The security that had built up in Brownsville was now again lost. Belatedly the troops learned from Secretary of War E. D. Townsend that under a presidential order of June 11 "the 13th Army Corps is temporarily discontinued."

When Ford's men reconnoitered on July 30 they found that the U.S. forces had departed leaving a trail of discarded equipment indicating the haste of their retreat. In truth, this was not the case. The Union departure had been orderly and thorough. Teams and steamboats had transported most of the men and equipment. What Ford and others had observed was this. A portion of the 1st Brigade were compelled to carry knapsacks. In the July heat this was too much to ask. Many became prostrated by heat stroke. In order to continue their march they had to discard excess articles. These included overcoats, blankets, and other articles of clothing. Some of these articles were shredded or torn to keep them out of Confederate hands. There is no question however that Herron and his staff erred in logistics for this part of the evacuation.

The Iowa 19th brought up the rear in the retreat. It camped one night at Union Ranch and four at White Ranch. On the third day at the ranch a scare was thrown into the little force. During the withdrawal 1st Texas Cavalrymen were employed as skirmishers and for picket duties. In mid-afternoon a rider dashed in with news that a force of several hundred rebels were moving forward to engage. A defense line was immediately formed and soon shots were heard in the not too distance. Tents were dismantled and loaded on the nearby steamer along with some wagons. The firing of arms turned out to be a ruse perpetrated by Maj. Edward J. Noyes, who was in charge of three companies of the 1st Texas Cavalry Brigade. The carbines had been fired with no enemy whatsoever in the vicinity. This "miserable foolish folly" was what we now might term sophomoric and disgraceful.

On August 3 the contingent marched the 10 miles to the island and arrived, at nearly the same spot they had landed nine months earlier. In the distance they could see a fleet of forty ships anchored off Bagdad. The *Corinthian*, a fine steam propeller ship evacuated a good number of troops, but the little lighter, *Mary Winslow*, was deemed a sorry alternative for others of the regiment. The remainder of the regiment would have to await another vessel or two as they consumed water hauled from the Rio Grande or distilled from a steam condenser transforming sea water into fresh at Brazos Santiago.

Col. Henry Martyn Day was left in command of this residue force that included a number of Black soldiers protected by eleven artillery pieces. In early May 1865 there were 1,600 Federal soldiers on the island. Day, from Washington County, NY, was with the XIII Corps, Department of the Gulf from 25 August 1863 until reassigned to Alabama on 26 March 1865. Herron was to depart his command in August 1864. His replacement was to be Brig.- Gen. Fitz Henry Warren. Warren was a Massachusetts native who had moved to Iowa. He was an assistant postmaster general in 1849, famed editorial writer, politician, and had organized the 1st Regiment Iowa Volunteer Cavalry among his other accomplishments.

By July 30 Brownsville was then in the possession of a group of armed Confederate citizens before the arrival of the Cavalry of the West and Lt. Colonel Daniel Showalter. In less than five months Ford, and circumstances, had removed the Yankees from Laredo to Brownsville and, in fact, to an area below Orive Bend. Ford, who had earlier relinquished his officer's commission, accomplished this without help from the organized Confederate army in Texas. The then forty-nine year old did it by dint of his strong personality, his leadership, his previous accomplishments, and his magnetic attraction for men who would follow him despite numerous depredations they might, and would, encounter. Ford, in fact, was suffering much of the time from malaria and other adverse physically debilitating health conditions.

Rear Admiral David G. Farragut dispatched Commander Henry French to the mouth of the Rio Grande with a mission "of a most delicate character... to prevent the introduction of munitions of war... and the exit of cotton from Texas." Naturally the cotton trade

resumed despite the blockade of warships on the coast. Commander French of the *S.S. Albatross* would, like other US Navy commanders, board foreign vessels to check papers, but always found them in order. Cargo ships at the mouth of the river in Mexican waters came from Britain, Spain, Prussia, Denmark, and Brazil among other nations. Hunter clarifies what was transpiring. The Federal blockade commander wrote the American consul in Matamoros as follows:

In regard to the cotton which is daily coming out of the river under the Mexican flag, he (a Mexican official) assured me that it was all bona-fide Mexican property and that it had been in Matamoros for a long time, and that this shipment has been going on since May during the presence here of our blockading vessels. Now, my dear sir, it appears to me that this is all wrong and I cannot but think every ounce of cotton here is really liable for seizure, and I would not hesitate one moment but for your certificate on the bill-of-lading that it is Mexican property shipped from a Mexican port.

U. S. Consul Leonard Pierce honestly replied (9/16/62) to the remarks as follows:

As to the cotton, there is not one pound in fifty that ever belonged to a Mexican, neither is there one bale in ten that has ever remained a week on Mexican soil. It is true that cotton has been shipped from this port while our blockading ships were here, as it was decided that when cotton paid an import and export duty to Mexico, it became naturalized, and the only way to stop it would be to prevent its crossing the frontier, which could be done by occupying Fort Brown with a small force. In my certificate I merely certify that they declare the cotton to be legally shipped from Matamoros. There is no doubt that most of the trade with Matamoros is illegal.

By 1864 cotton was bringing 75 to 82 cents gold per pound. It had risen steadily from 16 cents in August 1862.

With Federal troops encamped at Clarksville in August 1864, they were able to somewhat impede the easy flow of cotton into Mexico. However, when they removed themselves to Brazos Island, the trade by the spring of 1865 had risen to about 2,000 bales per month.

Theresa Clark Clearwater was the daughter of W. H. Clark, once an officer in the Mexican-American War who had brought supplies to the border, and at war's end became a successful property owner and merchant. It was from his name that Clarkville derived. In material she authored, she recounted an incident named the "Bagdad Raid." She writes: The Union Army took Brazos de Santiago in May 1863, and it was so well fortified at Boca Chica that the Confederates were never able to dislodge them. The island was guarded by large forces of Negro troops, as well as white men. Two American citizens were arrested and thrown into prison in Bagdad [Tamaulipas, Mexico] as there was no law or justice for anyone at this time. Friends of these men called upon the United States to help them. Not the least daunted by Army regulations ten or twelve commissioned officers led their Negro soldiers across [the Rio Grande] during the night, opened the jails, and set their countrymen free. But the Negroes who were fresh from slavery and the cotton plantations, and who found themselves free went wild, broke into the fine saloons of which there were a good number stocked with the finest French liquor. Under the influence of strong drink and heavily armed, they shot at those who opposed them, looting and killing many men, women, and children. Many of the Negroes were killed by the Mexican police and private citizens. The white officers were days getting what was left of their men together. This was known as the "Bagdad Raid." A blot upon the U.S. Army but no official report of it was ever made to Washington so it is just one of those frontier stories, only this is a true one.

How objective this account is we shall never know. She does not mention the actions of filibuster R. Clay Crawford, a former captain in the 5th Tennessee Infantry, who organized the attack on the Imperialista-controlled town. It was true, however, that of the 150 or so attackers some were Black soldiers in blue uniforms. Theresa's recall might

have been colored by the fact that her father operated a store in the boom town. Another short incident she recalled also indicates she had little love for the Yankees. It is 1865 and the war is over.

"We had a very large house in Clarksville which was well furnished. Mother was a rank Confederate and took no pains to conceal the fact though she did not make her self disagreeable to anyone. A captain in the army (U.S.) came to her one day and told her he wanted three furnished rooms in her home, of course she was obliged to him what he desired or have him take by force. He occupied four rooms, he and his wife demanded house and bed linens and when they were ordered away, packed and took every article with them. They also took side saddles and a riding habit hat were the property of mother's daughter. My father moved his merchandise over to Bagdad when the Union forces made it unsafe."

Different volunteer units were also experiencing the end of their commitments to military service and Fort Brown saw the mustering out of numerous veterans. These included Battery E of the 1st Missouri Light Artillery (Cole's) mustered out in June 1864. Soldiers of the 37th Illinois Veteran volunteer Infantry were veteranized 2/28/64 but given a furlough until April after which time they were moved to Memphis, Tennessee. The 26th Indiana also re-enlisted and was sent home on furlough. As a result, by February 1864, the First Brigade, now under Col. Hodnutt, consisted of only the 38th Iowa and 91st Illinois.

While the battlefield had slight dangers here, the threat of disease was ever present. Soldiers were to die of typhoid fever, pneumonia, tuberculosis (consumption), chronic diarrhea, congestive chills, cholera, and malaria [also at the time called ague]. Small pox was also a visitor. Gen. Herron himself was afflicted with it but survived the ordeal after being incapacitated for about three weeks. In Matamoros and then in Brownsville on December 20, 1863 smallpox had broken out. As it spread over a month's time soldiers were hospitalized. One weakened one died and two more by late February.. Finally Herron ordered afflicted Brownsville residents to be collected and isolated in a separate hospital. He also initiated sanitation efforts, not only in the post, but also the town. Refuse, dead animals and slops were targeted. As continental cold fronts occasionally blew through and when the usual accelerated March winds arrived, the area was filled with blown dust and sand. Drought conditions exacerbated this phenomenon. Many of the troops then came down with sore eyes and ophthalmia. Although yellow fever was the scourge of many ports during the war and had hit New Orleans, there is no record of it affecting Valley soldiers. By mid-summer 1864 fresh vegetables were in short supply for the diet at the fort and cases of scurvy broke out. In early August Col. H. M. Day reported two-thirds of his men on Brazos Island were in the hospital due to scurvy.

Another non-combat cause of death was drowning. Whether for pleasure or hygiene soldiers dipped into the Rio Grande. Its unpredictable currents were to claim a handful.

It wasn't until late 1865 that supplemental medical aid was sent to the Valley by the Northwest Sanitary Commission. This was a private agency that through volunteer efforts supplied food, medical dressings, and other supplies to military hospitals. The famed Eliza Emily Chappell Porter traveled to the Valley to aid facilities in Brownsville and Brazos Island. Her husband with the 1st Illinois Light Artillery Regiment would later

become chaplain at Fort Brown and she head of the Presbyterian-sponsored coeducational Rio Grande Seminary in Brownsville.

Gen. Dana would make note of the low morale of the Union troops in this period. The low spirit manifested itself in the lack of discipline brought on, in part, by erratic pay periods, idleness, inactivity, and a pay differential between white and Black soldiers. The former were compensated at \$13 per month the latter \$9. On February 11, 1864 Gen. Herron would note that there were 632 Negro soldiers stationed at Point Isabel and Brazos Island.

Gen. Dana was said to be allowing the men only a half-ration of soft bread. The remaining flour was used in baking bread to be sold for cash. Dana was suspected of pocketing these funds as well as some from beef sales. He turned none over when he departed South Texas. When Gen. Herron took command the sales continued, but through the intercession of Col. McNulta the funds from bakery profits were pro-rated and dispensed to each regiment. A July 1864 disbursement amounted to 66 cents per soldier. McIntyre's table is most interesting because of the regiment numbers provided: 38th Iowa 425 men; 20th Iowa 536; 91st Illinois 565; 19th Iowa 442; 94th Illinois 623; 20th Wisconsin 554; 37th Illinois Det. 161; 26th Indiana Det. 70; 1st Mo light artillery Bat. B 130; 93rd Engineers Col. 159; and 1st Texas Cavalry Cos. A & C 93. This is a total of 3,758 soldiers. Local food items were exorbitantly priced and out of the reach of the common soldier.

McIntyre in his diary entry of early December 1863 describes a disciplinary action taken on an Iowa soldier. He writes:

I witnessed today the first severe punishment that has been inflicted upon a soldier for disobedience of orders—A soldier of Co "E" for refusing to do his duty was ordered by the commander of the regiment to be tied by the wrists and stretched to a timber above his head at arms length for some hours. The order of the commanding officer was obeyed but the culprits company armed themselves, proceeded to the spot, drove

the guard away and rescued the unfortunate man—taking him to his quarters. Of course it was not helping the man and involving themselves in trouble for he was again stretched up and a double guard placed around him while half a dozen of Co "E" are placed under arrest for mutiny. I know not where the matter will end and only feel sorry that anything of the Kind should have occurred.

In early January the four offenders were tried. The youngest one was dishonorably discharged but still committed to labor without pay for two years. The other three were sentenced to one year of hard labor at the isolated island fort of Dry Tortugas near the Florida Keys. Later in April 1864 the imprisonment site was changed to Fort Jefferson in Florida but President Lincoln granted them a free pardon, and they were to return to their unit.

While the majority of Texas Hispanics sided with the Confederacy or remained neutral, others joined the Union forces. Jerry Thompson in his "Mexican Texans in the Civil War" in the *Handbook of Texas Online* wrote: "Other Texas Mexicans, resentful of growing non-Hispanic political dominance of their communities, enlisted in federal blue. Many joined the Union Army for the bounty money offered upon enlistment, but some enlisted because they opposed slavery or to satisfy grudges against landowners, attorneys,

and politicians who had used the American legal system to take valuable land from Tejanos during the preceding decade. The federal Second Texas Cavalry, commanded by Col. John L. Haynes, a resident of Rio Grande City, was composed almost entirely of Tejanos and Mexican nationals recruited from the small villages along the banks of the Rio Grande. The regiment, which suffered an exceptionally high desertion rate, fought in the Rio Grande Valley and later in Louisiana. Company commanders included George Treviño, Clemente Zapata, Cesario Falcón, and Mónico de Abrego. A number of Tejanos, acting as Union consorts, were actively engaged in the Nueces Strip. The most famous of the Union guerillas were Cecilio Balerio [also spelled Valerio] and his son Juan, who fought a bloody skirmish with Confederates at Los Patricios, fifty miles southwest of Banquete, on March 13, 1864." The 2nd took on the moniker "Mustangs."

Col. Haynes' background taken from a Haynes family genealogy site explains his involvement. He was a state legislator representing Starr County. As the war began and with his pro-union sentiments "John's position as a legislator was now untenable, and he resigned in the spring of 1861. His friend Edmund J. Davis was forced to resign his judgeship, and John and Edmund Davis fled the state. They traveled to New Orleans, then on to Washington, where they met with President Abraham Lincoln, who agreed to provide arms if they could raise troops. On October 26, 1862, Davis received a colonel's commission and authority to recruit the cavalry which became the First Texas Cavalry (U.S.) John Haynes was commissioned as a Colonel and served under Davis until Davis was captured by Confederate troops in March 1863 in Matamoros. Col. Haynes was then decommissioned with an honorable discharge.

In August of 1863, John wrote General A.P. Banks stating he could raise a regiment, and requesting he be re-commissioned as Colonel, a request which was ultimately successful. He then led the combined First and Second Texas Cavalry units in campaigns in the Texas-Louisiana region until mustered out on November 4, 1865. While they never met in battle, John and his brother James fought on opposite sides, for James served the Confederate State of Mississippi as a member of the Fourth Regiment of the Mississippi Volunteers Infantry, rising from private to Captain in the Quartermaster's Department, serving later in F Company, 1st Mississippi Cavalry."

A University of Michigan American Culture course, *Introduction to Latina/o Studies*, relates that " John L. Haynes was a major factor in the recruitment of both native Mexicans and Mexican Americans on behalf of the Union Army. Haynes was born in Virginia, but migrates to southern Texas following the Mexican War. He was soon elected to the Texas Legislature and was known as one of the few Anglos who felt compassion for the Tejanos. After traveling to Washington and alerting President Lincoln of Jefferson Davis' plans for succession, Haynes turned his attention toward the formation of a Second Texas Regiment, which would be comprised exclusively of Tejanos and Mexicans. Aided by Lieutenant Antonio Abad Dias and fellow Tejano Eugenio Guzman, new recruits enlisted in great numbers." And that " More than 75 percent of the men who joined the Second Texas Cavalry were born in Mexico. The vast

majority of these recruits listed their occupations as herdsmen, farmers, and laborers, and only a meager 10.79 percent were literate. The men being recruited for the cavalry were not enlisting for moral obligations or other ideals that caused most northern recruits to join. Many joined seeking revenge against their old enemies in Texas, and the promise of money was also a major driving force. It is also important to note that the regiment was not comprised solely of Mexicans. It also contained immigrants from countries all over the Western Hemisphere and Europe."

If the unit of an estimated 958 ethnics did not distinguish itself, one can find many reasons for its mediocre performance. Provincial and hardly knowledgeable about the outside world many of the recruits had at most been US citizens for but a decade and a half and very isolated from mainstream America at that. The complement was poorly trained, lacked proper uniforms, shoes, equipment, and regular pay. To top this off, the unit was subjected to "rampant racism" by other Union military. Haynes himself did not help matters when he appointed his friend, George Washington Paschal Jr. as regiment commander, even as all the officers in the cavalry opposed this move. Finally as correction to these negative elements were either slow in coming or not coming at all, the number of desertions mounted. Only a few by the end of 1863, by the end of the war about one-third or 297 *Tejanos* and *Mexicanos* had departed, most to Mexico. Those that fled could sell their weapons in Mexico and satisfy themselves for their lack of military compensation. Recruits had been promised a \$100 bonus, a jacket, raincoat, boots, shoes, and \$13 per month pay. Most, largely illiterate farmers with little communication skills, had enlisted to obtain the monetary benefits and, when Haynes did not fulfill his promises, these very poor men left the ranks. Some who were issued saddles, bridles, sabers, guns, and other military supplies sold them after absconding to Mexico.

Desertions by Anglos also occurred. A private Strother of the Texas Cavalryman was shot by two guards the night of January 25, 1864 while attempting to desert with stolen property.

One solution, with which Haynes concurred, was to transfer the unit to Louisiana. Upon hearing of this, turmoil in the camp crested. To emphasize the importance of military discipline the army would need an object lesson and found it in the case of Pablo Garcia, who was part of the Second Texas Cavalry Regiment.

Private Garcia was charged with leaving his sentry post at Punta del Monte on 5/10/64 before being regularly relieved. To this he plead guilty but not guilty to charges of desertion and to conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. Captain Edward G. Miller presided at Garcia's court-martial. Garcia was found guilty of all charges and sentenced to be executed by a firing squad on 6/22/64.

On the late afternoon of the scheduled execution fully equipped brigades accompanied by several bands marched to Washington Square. Accompanied by a priest Garcia was apparently then at peace with his Maker. He pushed away the bandage blindfold and

bravely faced the twelve man musketry. He was not dead after their action. Two soldiers were called forth, one putting a bullet into his heart and another into his brain. To the solemn tune of the Dead March soldiers of the fort were then paraded by to view the grisly scene of Garcia's body. They could not help but be stunned by the justice meted for a seemingly minor offense. The citizens of Brownsville also witnessed this sobering scene.

For a period of nine tranquil months the 38th Iowa Volunteer Infantry remained on duty in Brownsville. A series of letters written by 27-year old Capt. Horace Baldwin to his 20-year old wife Catherine (Katie) traces his life in Brownsville in the year 1864. Mainly professing the love of his wife, the letters touch on the temptations here of liquor and loose women. Some of the latter had come from New Orleans to conduct business. Also the soldiers could daily get an eyeful of Mexican women bathing unabashedly in the river along the Matamoros shore. Periodic rumors would arise about the Rebels organizing a force to attack the Union troops, but nothing ever came of them. Soon the excitement would recede and the soldiers would settle back into the old dull and monotonous camp life.

Baldwin frequently complained about the boredom and of "old Maj. Chadwick", an officer over him that he considered incompetent. He also expressed no admiration for the hard-drinking Herron and indicated he was anxious for him to be relieved. He took notice of the malodorous smells wafting from across the river. "Over in Matamoros dead horses and cattle are allowed to lie around the streets, and if they are ever removed it is to a place just opposite our camp and there they remain until decomposed. The skeletons of hundreds of animals are now lying within a short distance of the Mexican city. I cannot see how they can bear the smell of them—as they are closer the city than they are to us and when the wind comes from that direction we can scarcely put up with the smell."

In mid-March 1864 Baldwin wrote home of the death of his fellow Iowan and neighbor Sgt. Sholts, who had suffered many months with chronic diarrhea. He wrote that he had "his boys put on their best clothes—and told them I wanted them to look and to do their best—and they done it—I never saw men do better. As we marched through the streets of Brownsville going to the grave, the people flocked out in crowds to see us—I have not written his wife yet...poor woman how I pity her and her two little one." He writes, "Thus it is that our comrades are passing away. Twenty-nine have gone—almost half of our number when we left Dubuque—but I am in hopes that our loss will not be so great in the next year."

By the end of April Baldwin wrote his wife that the cavalry was out scouting for Rebel activity, that Old Fort Brown had been thoroughly repaired and several heavy guns mounted in it, and that the available force was 2,500 men. Lastly, he expressed confidence in the ability of the soldiers to defend the fortification, even under the attack of a superior force. Col. Ford at this time vastly overestimated the Union contingent in Brownsville and accordingly acted cautiously.

Two very different worlds had met when Union northerners occupied the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Sgt. McIntyre's vivid descriptions of Brownsville and its inhabitants clearly define the cultural gap existing between Iowa and South Texas. On a beautiful late fall day in December McIntyre recorded this in his diary:

One of the finest days I ever experience but o how dull—I am sick of the sights that [I] meet daily with—hairless mexican dogs, bare breasted women, naked children, dirty orange women sitting on the ground with their fruit spread before them—tired of wide baskets of dirty looking sugar plumbs—tired of the sameness there is here day after day. If there is a city in all creation that should have been and richly deserves the name of Dog town it most assurdly is this same town of Brownsville.

There is in number the largest & of variety the greatest—you can count them by the hundreds. Go where you will they are in close proximity to you, be where you may. They make the night hideous with their eternal barking and howling. I believe a tax of 10 cents each on every dog once a year for five years would bring money sufficient into the treasure to build a schoolhouse in every ward.

Whites were few in number. McIntyre was condescending and ignorant when describing the appearance of the natives with their ubiquitous hats and shawls (ponchos) -- "but [at] home [it] is dispensed with, leaving arms and breasts exposed while thir children are perfectly nude—wearing no clothes until arriving at an age of 5 or 6 years" and of the working class "a mixture of 3 or 4 nations" who had "the Supersition, shrewdness, avarice, cowardice and [a] love for display—peculiarities of the distinct races they represent."

The fortifications at Fort Brown were minimal relative to other forts to be found across the country. In July 1861 Col. Ford had received some funds from Gov. Edward Clark to use in repairs of Old Fort Brown and some improvements were made at that time. In one dispatch to his superiors Herron had described the fort's defenses as consisting of a "series of small redoubts, connected by strong rifle-pits, extending across a peninsula just above the town. These works are constructed of sand, and, although not as strong as could be wished, would nevertheless enable the garrison to make a stout defense. They mount at the present time three guns, two 20-pounder Parrotts, and one 24, smooth."

A Parrott (rifle) was a type of muzzle loading rifle-bore artillery weapon. It was created in 1860 and manufactured with a combination of cast iron and wrought iron. A 20 pounder was the next to smallest size, having about a 3" bore and a range up to 1,900 yards with a trained crew. Its barrel alone weighed over 1,800 pounds. Although it had a welded wrought iron reinforcing band, it still retained a poor reputation for safety.

The 24 (smooth) was a muzzle-loading smooth bore cannon with a diameter of 5.8" and a tube length of 124". With a six pound explosive charge it propelled 24.3 lbs. of shot up to a range of 1,592 yards. Iron models weighed 5,790 lbs.

With pressing military concerns in Alabama requiring more soldiers, the Union forces in the LRGV had by 6/23/64 abandoned nearly all of their outposts along the river. Gen. Herron was relieved of his command in the Valley on 7/12/64 and in two days later sailed for Morganza, Louisiana. He took with him all the forces except the 91st Illinois, 1st

Texas Cavalry under Capt. P. G. Temple, 1st Missouri Artillery under Lieut. A. Hils, 19th Iowa Infantry, and the 81st Negro Engineers who remained at Brazos Santiago under Col. H. M. Day.

According to Captain Chester Barney "The construction of Ft. Brown being nearly completed, it was dedicated by hoisting the American flag over the works, on July 4th [1864], accompanied by a national salute, and a review of the army by General Herron." A more or less spontaneous celebration with a good dinner, ale and cider dispensed, games, and very short ceremonies and speeches ensued .

Col. J. O. Hodnutt, in command of the 38th Iowa Brigade, was to write:

Some worthy secesh has very kindly furnished me with a home—a good country house surrounded by fine old trees, and the grounds round ornamented with shrubbery, the whole known under the Euphonius title of Shannondale. On hearing of our approach the owner kindly vacated the premises and moved across to Mexico and so modest is he that he has never called to see how vandal Yank has cared for his premise.

This regiment had left Brownsville on July 28, 1864 and on the 31st at Brazos Island embarked on the steamer *City of Richmond* for New Orleans. It then moved on to Alabama for the successful siege of Fort Morgan. This was in line with Maj. Gen. Canby's order of July 5, 1864 "that Fort Brown and all of its dependencies on the Rio Grande be abandoned and that all troops in Texas not required for the occupation and defense of Brazos Santiago be ordered to New Orleans. He deemed a force of 1,200 men sufficient to hold against any force which the Confederates could bring against Brazos Santiago. He ordered that defenses of Brazos Santiago be put in good condition, a commander of the rank of brigadier general--chosen for intelligence and discretion because of problems of international law which might arise—be assigned, and that Herron remain there until all this had been accomplished."

National news items coming from South Texas were infrequent, so reproducing this one that appeared in a New York newspaper is an exception. It read:

Brazos Santiago, Texas, August 2, 1864, EIGHTEENTH NEW YORK CAVALRY Two companies, A and F, of the Eighteenth New York Cavalry, under the command of Captain Wiley, have been and are now doing picket duty at Whitehouse Ranch [This was White Ranch] on the Rio Grande. They have occasional skirmishes with the rebel cavalry, averaging as frequently as every other day. In one of these skirmishes Captain Wiley had a valuable horse shot out from under him. At another time Lieutenant Boyle, in charge of the picket, lost three of his men belonging to Company A by a dash, which the rebel cavalry made upon them. The rebels also captured a wagonload of rations and four mules. Another time seven men belonging to Company F, while the company was watering their horses at the mouth of the Rio Grande opposite Bagdad, were captured by the rebels.

The Confederates quickly moved in to fill the vacuum. The engagements that then ensued are best characterized by the term "skirmishes" rather than battles. One such event occurred on 8/9/64 when 75 men from the 81st Negro Engineers went to Point Isabel from the post on Brazos Island in order to collect lumber that had been landed there for their use. A small contingent of Confederates surprised them and then retreated. So did the Federals under Captain Jordan. They retreated and embarked on the little steamer *Hale* that had brought them across the bay. The following day Capt. William M. Shepherd of

the 91st Illinois took a detachment from his regiment and also soldiers from the 19th Iowa back to Point Isabel. The few Confederates retired upon being confronted by this larger force. The fact was that by 8/1/64 there were probably about 1,200 Union soldiers now stationed at the Brazos de Santiago post under the command of Colonel Day. Historian Stephen B Oates breaks down part of the number as perhaps 350 Negroes in the Sixty-Second United States Colored Infantry and the Eighty-First Corps d'Afrique Engineers and about 600 "unpredictable ruffians" in Hayne's Second Texas (Union) Cavalry.

On August 8 forces of Lt. Col. Showalter had captured on the river the small Yankee steamship *Ark*. Union forces made no effort to recapture it, and after it was condemned as a prize of war, it was sold to a Thomas Gilgan of Matamoros for about \$23,000.

The scenario of military action becomes confusing at this point, for in the region Liberal Mexican soldiers were confronting the Imperialist army of Maximilian. In the meantime Cortina's Liberal forces had moved downriver on September 3 to initiate a feint attack of the French forces at La Burrita, north of Bagdad. They engaged on September 5 with no real intent. In a deceptive and planned retreat, Cortina forces were soon lobbing bombs into Confederate forces across the river. Juaristas generals, upon learning of Cortina's plans to move his troops north of the river, soon broke ranks with him and returned to Matamoros.

Having heard that the Confederates were herding cattle at White's Ranch to turn over to Imperialist forces across the river, and possibly with a hidden agenda, Col. Day on 9/6/64 set off with 300 men of the 91st Illinois and First Texas Cavalry together with one 12-lb. howitzer from the 1st Missouri Artillery. At Palmito Hill, Day encountered a small detachment of the 33rd Texas Cavalry Confederate under Capt. Richard Taylor. It was soon driven off and the cattle confiscated. After Taylor retreated to Brownsville and recounted the circumstances, Baird's regiment and Lt.-Col. Showalter with a force of 600 moved south to retake the cattle. Ford had ordered Showalter to hold the lower line because he feared Cortina might cross the river from Matamoros in an effort to capture Brownsville. A high flood stage river fortunately hindered any such move by the Cortina Brigade of some 1,500 men regiment.

On the evening of September 8, Col. Day dispatched a detachment of the 1st Texas Cavalry to help provide safe passage to the Cortina forces. Day demanded that the 300 or so turn over all their arms. The Cortinistas did so, but when Showalter's forces showed up at Palmito Hill the arms, including three 6-pounder brass cannons, were returned so the Mexicans could assist the Federals in the ensuing confrontation. The combined forces took the day after two days of fighting. Cortina's artillery shelling of Showalter's ranks helped to turn the tide of battle. The routed Arizonian Confederates retreated towards Brownsville. Day had characterized it as "flying in confusion." On the way the Arizonians encountered Giddings' Battalion that Ford had sent south to reinforce Palmito Hill. When George Giddings came up to the fleeing Confederates he was able to stabilize

a defense. He relived Showalter, who had alcohol problems, on the spot. Dan Showalter apparently used liquor to remove memories of his unfortunate love affair.

Col. Giddings received reinforcements. His first two attacks were repulsed. Giddings then counterattacked using 200 men on the enemy's right flank. The Union forces, now short of ammunition, retired eight miles to the southeast from the Palo Alto Prairie. Giddings then attempted to cut off the Union troops from the north while attacking the center too. Night fell before this could be achieved, then the next morning ammunition supplies were late to arrive. Meanwhile the Federals had retreated to Palmito Hill leaving a picket line there on September 10 while they moved east to Brazos Island. The next morning Day's forces crossed back over swampy terrain to the island along with what remained of the Exploradores del Bravo. Ford proclaimed that the Union forces had suffered 550 casualties, a wildly exaggerated number. An official Federal report noted casualties at San Martin Ranch at 86 killed, wounded and missing. Meanwhile Cortina himself returned to Mexico and headed for Matamoros along with some of his troops who made it across the river.

Fourteen of Cortina's men had been captured in the contest however. A week later under a flag of truce Ford sent an emissary to Day to ascertain the military status of the Mexicans captured. This action in of itself had negative repercussions. Day learned that Lt. Col. H. S. Smith of the 91st Illinois allowed the couriers to traverse the length of Brazos Island without being blindfolded. This, of course, allowed them to see the number of Union troops, their placement, and the number of artillery guns distributed there. Smith was arrested and charges placed against him.

Day was to claim that the Mexicans were regularly enlisted soldiers. Southern records would later claim that the whole episode had been orchestrated and that Cortina was supposed to advance and take Brownsville for the Union. By 9/22/64 the evasive Cortina, who controlled Matamoros, had made an agreement with Ford allowing the Confederates unlimited passage between Brownsville and Matamoros.

John H. Hunter's account of the foregoing has a slightly different twist as could be expected with anything connected with the mercurial and opportunistic Cortina. According to Hunter the following transpired after Cortina came to believe the French would soon take Matamoros:

On the night of September 9, 1864, Cortina crossed with some 500 to 600 men and joined Federal forces approaching Brownsville from Brazos Island. The Confederate outposts near Palmeto Ranch discovered the move and called in reinforcements. A pitched battle was fought and Cortina's force was split. He and approximately half of the force recrossed into Mexico to make their escape. However, Ford managed to capture 12 known Cortina men. These twelve were important because Ford called on the Union commander, Col. Day, to state definitely whether these men were actually Union soldiers or plain bandits. On September 13, Col. Day gave a written reply to the effect that these men were formerly members of Cortina's Brigade but were regular enlisted men in the service of the U. S. flag and entitled to treatment as other prisoners of war. This admission saved them from the firing squad and, at the same time, confirmed the information passed over by Gen. Servando Canales.

Exchanges would continue. On 10/14/64, fifty Confederates reached Boca Chica and met an equal force of Day's. When Federal warships were thought to enter the fray, the Confederates retreated. Neither side sustained casualties.

With a lull in the action, it is worth a little levity and empathy too to reproduce here a letter, misspellings and all, sent by a Confederate soldier to his sister. It belongs to Mrs. George Miller of Harlingen, TX. Dated January 28, 1865 and at Palmeto rancho, it reads: Dear Sister I seat my selfe this morning to write you a few lines and by doying I Can informe you that I am not very well but I hope this will find you all Well. I have no news to relate to you we air incampt about 8 ot 10 miles from the Yanks our pickets is 2 or 3 miles aparte we expects to have a fighte with them be fore longe or that is the talk in campe at this time on the night of the 22 about 10 oclock a courier came in-haste an reported the Yanks was coming on if we was orded to Mount our horses an fall in line of battle which was abade in haste Notwithstanding the night was darke and the north wind bloid frising and nota stick of timber to broke it off: we set on our horses till son rise the nexte morning and returns to campe an did not see the firste Yank now Sallie I will tell you something about How we air clothed thear is not one man out of ten that has got a hole paire of Pants to put on an scursley a Coat in the Battalion an it is rainy now we have a heepe of hard duty to doo heare

Well this is a nough this poor army fore it is so down it is not worth talking about. I think I will come home in the Spring if I live an am able to ride whether I get a Furlough or not Well Sallie you said I must write to Miss N.B. I did so an she ancered it in due time an very nice at that. I am looking fore letter frome hur now I thin I will quite writing to the girls For I am too olds to Flatter them in that way so I will quite I think I have hur pickout now I know I want to see her profile bad right now

Well Sallie you mit excuse bad writing and speling. Write soon an long letters Nothing more at Present I remain your Brothwer F.W. Wously

There was to be one last major military engagement in the LRGV. When the end of the Confederacy was evidenced in March 1865," local Confederate commanders, Brig. Gen. James E. Slaughter and Col. John S. Ford accepted Maj. Gen. Lewis Wallace's invitation to meet at Point Isabel on March 6 to discuss terms of peace. [Slaughter, in November 1864, had established the Western Sub District Headquarters in Brownsville.] An informal truce was established and a formal peace seemed at hand." Wallace had wined and dined his guests with \$600 of vittles and libations. The meeting was amiable.

Hunter provides the background behind Wallace's actions. He relates:

Gen. Lew Wallace of the *Ben Hur* fame, convinced Gen. Grant that he could obtain the surrender of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Department if given a free hand to make contact and spread his diplomatic pitch. Grant issued a formal order for Lew Wallace to "inspect" forces at Brazos Island. He sent Wallace without any formal credentials and clearly told him not to make any proposal in the name of the U.S. Government. It was purely a "fishing expedition", but Grant put a warship at his disposal for the trip and assured him that, if he could arrange a surrender offer, it would have Grant's support in order to get government official approval. His trip and proposal are well documented. The bait being offered to Confederates was a plan to join forces and drive Maximillian out of Mexico. A large portion of the Confederacy had nursed that idea with hopes that a slice of Northern Mexico could be taken over and set up as a new slave territory.

Among other things Wallace did offer that the Texas Confederate forces would be permitted to retain their arms for use in Mexico. Slaughter and Ford stated that they were not authorized to act in any manner regarding any proposals. When they forwarded transcripts of the talks, marked "top secret" to Gen. Walker in Houston, he was outraged by its contents and criticized both for transmitting it to him. He soundly rejected any "proposal of surrender apart from a general surrender of the Confederate Government."

All later learned of Gen. Lee's surrender of his Army of Virginia to Gen. Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. This didn't occur until May 18. According to Pierce, on May 1, 1865 the total number of Union soldiers in Cameron County and under the command of Brig. Gen. E. B. Brown was 1,915 of which 1,165 were Colored.

The Colored soldiers who would later take part in the final battle were the 62nd Regiment, United States Colored Infantry from Missouri. The regiment's service record is summarized as follows:

Organized March 11, 1864, from 1st Missouri Colored Infantry. Attached to District of St. Louis, Dept. of Missouri, to March, 1864. District of Baton Rouge, La., Dept. of the Gulf, to June, 1864. Provisional Brigade, District of Morganza, Dept. of the Gulf, to September, 1864. 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, United States Colored Troops, District of Morganza, Dept. of the Gulf, to September, 1864. Port Hudson, La., Dept. of the Gulf, to September, 1864. Brazos Santiago, Texas, to October, 1864. 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, United States Colored Troops, Dept. of the Gulf, to December, 1864. Brazos Santiago, Texas, to June, 1865. Dept. of Texas to March, 1866.

SERVICE.-Ordered to Baton Rouge, La., March 23, 1864, and duty there till June. Ordered to Morganza, La., and duty there till September. Expedition from Morganza to Bayou Sara September 6-7. Ordered to Brazos Santiago, Texas, September, and duty there till May, 1865. Expedition from Brazos Santiago May 11-14. Action at Palmetto Ranch May 12-13, 1865. White's Ranch May 13. Last action of the war. Duty at various points in Texas till March, 1866. Ordered to St. Louis via New Orleans, La. Mustered out March 31, 1866.

This agreement was broken when 30 year old Col. Theodore Harvey Barrett, who commanded the forces at Brazos de Santiago, precipitated an attack on Rebel forces at White's Ranch. Barrett, a native of New York, was a new politically-appointed officer who possibly had political ambitions for the postwar period. Barrett had enlisted in the army on September 15, 1862 as a 2nd lieutenant of the 9th Minnesota Infantry. This unit had seen little action except for skirmishes with Native American tribes. Barrett was promoted to captain in the regiment on August 29, 1863 and on December 29, 1863 colonel of the 62nd Infantry U S Colored Troops.

He may have wished to pad his resume, which to that time had little of merit in it. Another theory posited was that he wished to capture Brownsville before the valuable cotton bales there could be moved across the river to Matamoros. Still another theory holds that his action was commenced with the idea of gaining control of the custom

house in Matamoros. The custom house remained a lucrative entity despite the city's unsettled governance. In addition to his command of the 62nd Infantry (Negro), he was in charge of the 34th Indiana, the Morton Rifles, a New York regiment commanded by Lt. Col. Robert G. Momsen, and some Texas cavalry commanded by Brownsville man, Col John L. "Jack" Haynes.

He asked his commander General E. B. Brown "for permission to demonstrate against the Confederates." This request was denied, but Barrett moved ahead despite the orders given to him and over the protests of Lt. Colonel David Branson of the 34th Indiana. One historian goes so far as to contend that Brown himself may have ordered the attack in order to seize the valuable 2,000 cotton bales stored in Brownsville warehouses. Initially Barrett had planned to move into Point Isabel and likely on to Fort Brown which he may have believed would soon be evacuated by retreating Confederates. Bad weather had changed this strategy. On 5/11/65 Barrett had dispatched 250 men of the 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment (Missouri) and 50 unmounted men of the 2nd Texas Cavalry Regiment USA under the command of Lt.-Col. David Branson. First Lieutenant Hancock and Second Lieutenant James were officers on the scene. The Rebels, believed to be 65 in number, were not at White's Ranch when the Union soldiers arrived at 2 a. m., so they moved about a mile and a half further and settled down for the night in brush along the river. Sympathetic Mexican forces alerted the Confederates to the Union soldiers' presence. The next morning (the 12th) Branson sought action with a group of Confederates at the Palmito Ranch about 1 ½ mile above White's Ranch. In a brief morning skirmish concluded by noon, the Union soldiers drove Confederate Capt. John H. Robinson and his 190 men of Lt. Col. Giddings's Texas Cavalry Battalion back toward Brownsville. Three Confederates were captured along with two horses, four cows, and the 10 days rations which had just been issued.

Giddings, upon being confronted, had sent word to Brownsville requesting help. Reinforcements for them lingered at Fort Brown. These were General James Edwin Slaughter and Col. John S. Ford with 600 men commanded by Capt. D. M. Wilson and a section of Capt. O. G. Jones' light artillery. Slaughter and Ford were not in agreement as to what action to pursue. Slaughter favored a retreat while the diehard Ford wished to attack.

At this point, it is necessary to reflect on what the CSA leaders in the Valley may or may not have known about the progress and important events of the war in general. Jerry Thompson and Lawrence T. Jones III write in their book *Civil War and Revolution on the Rio Grande Frontier, A narrative and photographic history*: "In late April 1865 news reached Brownsville that General Robert E. Lee had surrendered his once grand but now decimated and starving Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia." They go on to add "On May 1, 1865. a passenger on a steamer headed up the Rio Grande tossed a copy of the *New Orleans Times* to Confederates camped at Palmito Ranch. The newspaper gave not only a detailed account of Lee's surrender, but of President Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theater and the fact that

General Joseph E. Johnston had surrendered his army to General William T. Sherman in a North Carolina farmhouse.” At this point in time, reasonable CSA soldiers in Brownsville were departing for their homes. Looting by them was common. Thompson and Jones go on to comment “Yet on the river, Ford and many of his men were determined to resist to the very end, although they would later claim they did not know the war was over. With a stubborn reluctance to admit defeat Ford asserted that the “honor and manhood” of his men were at stake.” More likely it irked him that black troops would be invading the area and accepting the surrender and secondly there was a concerted effort to move a large quantity of cotton across the river before the Yankees could confiscate it.

No action occurred as Branson retreated to White's Ranch for the night. Once here he sent a messenger to the island requesting reinforcements. These appeared at daybreak of the 13th as 200 men of the 34th Indiana Volunteers under the command of Lt. Col. Robert G. Morrison. Lt.-Col. Barrett also joined the force and assumed overall command. This brought the Union force total to 550. However, the late arriving soldiers were exhausted from the forced nighttime march and the humid heat they experienced. Two six-mule teams hauled surplus ammunition and supplies. The contingent had crossed Boca Chica at 9:30 p. m.

The Union forces advanced this day to Palmito Ranch, reaching it between seven and eight a. m. and again encountered Robinson, who had been instructed by Ford to maintain contact with Union forces until reinforcement could be sent. A skirmish ensued after which the Confederates retreated. All stores found were burned as well as the ranch buildings after which time the Union forces then moved forward against a resisting but outnumbered CSA force. With his troops needing rest Barrett fell back a mile and a half to a bluff on Tulosa Ranch and dug in at this point. The 34th had already taken its position here. The ranch was southwest of Palmito and 12 miles east of Boca Chica.

Ford assembled the Second Cavalry troops loyal to him and Col. Santos Benevides' Texas Cavalry Regiment (all told about 300) and six pieces of artillery. Barrett in his later report characterized these as 12 pounders. These were augmented by Robinson's men. By 11 a. m. May 13 Ford's cavalry was on the scene. By mid-afternoon near Rancho San Martin, Ford sighted Col. Barrett's force. He issued orders for a two-pronged attack. At 4 p. m. Jones' artillery, some manned by French volunteers, commenced a bombardment creating considerably terror in Union ranks. The Union force had no artillery to answer back. Ford's aggressive cavalry in its flank attack quickly had the 34th Indiana and the 2nd Texas on the run. The Union skirmish line was broken. One hundred ten men under captains Miller and Coffin and lieutenants Foster and Mead had been left behind as skirmishers. A dramatic cavalry charge by Captain Robinson broke this defensive line. Forty-eight were captured. Within a few hours the outcome was clearly in favor of Ford. Erroneously Barrett had come to believe that he was outnumbered by a two to one margin. He ordered a retreat, but picket lines to be manned by soldiers of the 62nd were not initially established to slow the attacking Confederates. Three times through the seven mile retreat the Union troops made temporary stands. Chaos prevailed as Barrett

ordered the retreat of his Indiana forces but failed to do so for the skirmish line Morton Rifles under Lt.-Col. Morrison. Ford pursued the enemy to Cobb's Ranch, which was two miles from Boca Chica. He then broke off the engagement, as thoughts of cutting off the Union troops with his small force might have imperiled them if they were trapped between the retreating force and reinforcement coming from Brazos Island.

After a victory had already been assured the Confederates, Gen. Slaughter was to arrive late in the day along with the battalion commanded by Col. Thomas C. Cater. He now exhibited the desire to take full advantage of the chaos and ordered the tired troops to resume battle. Ford however was commanding both exhausted men and horses. He felt that the firing would alert Union forces on the island who would then reinforce Barrett. Slaughter with a somewhat fresher force moved to cut off the retreating Union soldiers who would have to move across a narrow levee that spanned a tide-water slough. Fortunately for them the Federals were able to move the majority across the morass to where a bluff afforded a defensive position. As the sun set that day the Federal forces had been driven all the way back to Brazos Island. Were it not for 140 men of the 62nd Colored Infantry who formed a skirmish line, said to be a little more than a mile in length, north from the river to effect a somewhat orderly retreat by the remaining Union soldiers, losses would have been greater. The CSA's Captain Carrington, perhaps with overtones of racial prejudice, later stated "Branson's Negro regiment was quickly demoralized and fled in dismay." This was certainly not the actual case. Once on the island the Federals could be covered by fire from a Union sloop of war and the confrontation drew to a close. The vainglorious Slaughter with his belated arrival would ride toward the island and empty his pistol in a showy display of bravado. Union soldiers were fully 300 yards away.

Scattered fire from both sides was exchanged for a short period. A shell, possibly from the *S. S. Isabella*, landed between the two forces. A 17-year old Reb got overexcited and blasted away with his Enfield rifle in the direction of the explosion. "The last gun had been fired."

John Jefferson Williams of the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry is documented as the last man killed at the Battle at Palmito Ranch and hence the last soldier to die in an active skirmish of the Civil War. In the four-hour fight, twenty to thirty Federals were said to have died (some drowning while attempting to swim the river to Mexico and some even killed by Mexican sympathizers). Barrett's August 10 report to headquarters of the Third Brigade noted 111 Federal casualties, both dead and wounded. Fehrenbach states that the 34th Indiana had lost 220 of its 300 complement. In fear of losing their lives some had thrown down their arms and surrendered though most of Hancock's company escaped capture. This statistics appears to be inflated. Nine Union men sustained wounds while one hundred eleven men and four officers were captured by the Confederates. Still another historian believed 30 Federals were killed and 113 taken prisoner. Supposedly more accurate details gleaned from Federal records put the Union casualties as such: 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment two killed; four wounded

34th Indiana Volunteers one killed; one wounded; 77 men and two officers captured
2nd U.S. Texas Cavalry one killed; seven wounded, 20 men captured along with officers
Lt. J. W. Hancock and Lt. Thomas A. James. Wide discrepancies in the above numbers
are unlikely to be resolved.

Captain Harrison L. Dean commander of Company E of the 34th later entered
Brownsville under a flag of truce and secured the release of prisoners with the exception
of two men whom General Slaughter ordered held as CSA deserters. The prisoners were
soon released by Ford regardless of their origin, that is, even the "Southern renegades"
among them. Later reports to the Union commander stated that many of Haynes' Texas
Unionists were shot after they surrendered. Haynes himself was spared. Other combatants
suspected that "most of these Southern deserters had died fighting rather than surrender."

Was it "lax discipline and lack of leadership" on the part of the 34th Indiana and Morton
Rifles under Col. Morrison that resulted in "the relative disorder of its retreat"? In a
calculated attempt to clear himself Barrett would later prefer charges of misconduct
against Morrison. At the court martial conducted in Brownsville, Ford crossed from
Mexico to testify. Morrison was exonerated. Ford later wrote that Barrett "seemed to
have lost his presence of mind" and to have led his troops off the field in a "rather
confused manner". It is with some irony that the last battle of the Civil War was a victory
for the Confederate States of America.

Col. Barrett was discharged from the army on January 19, 1866 and returned to his home
in Herman, MN where on July 20, 1900 he was to die about a month shy of his 66th
birthday.

In May 1965 on the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, United Daughters of the
Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans organizations met in Brownsville. A
pamphlet titled "Battle of Palmito Ranch" was published. Its synopsis of the last battle
ran as follows:

May 11, 1865. – Col. Theodore H. Barrett, commanding Brazos Island, ordered Lt. Col. David Branson,
with 250 men, by ferry to Point Isabel at 4 A.M. Due to a storm and ferry trouble, the troops could not
cross. Later Branson was ordered to cross at Boca Chica with 250 men of the 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry
and 50 men of the 2nd Texas non-mounted Cavalry. Crossing was effected at 9:30 P. M.

May 12, 1865. – At 2:00 A. M. they arrived at White Ranch expecting to capture a Confederate out-post of
65 men who had left a couple days before. At 8:30 A. M. Branson and his men started for Palmito and soon
skirmishing started with some 190 Confederate cavalry. The Confederates were pushed back beyond
Palmito and the Federal Forces stopped to rest at Palmito. While there, strong Confederate forces appeared
and Branson fell back to White Ranch for the night. He sent a message to Barrett that night telling him of
the situation.

May 13, 1865, -- Col. Barrett and 250 men of the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, under the command of
Lt. Col. Morrison, arrived at daybreak. On Barrett's order the Federal troops advanced and soon
skirmishing commenced. The Confederates were pushed back towards Fort Brown beyond La Tulosa.
Afterward, the Federals fell back to the high ground at La Tulosa. At about 3:30 P. M., the Confederates
under Col. John Salmon (Rip) Ford, now in command, opened their cannon fire and their cavalry tried to

turn the Federal right flank and gain their rear columns. The Federals started falling back, leaving 48 men of the 34th Indiana Infantry deployed as skirmishers. These men were captured by the Confederate flanking movement. The federals continued retiring towards Boca Chica using 140 men of the 62nd U. S. Colored Infantry as skirmishers to cover for about 4 hours. Victory belonged to the South.

The most unusual occurrence in U.S military history had taken place in this battle. For the first and last time soldiers of four different nations had taken up arms on American soil. These were soldiers from the United States of America, the Confederate States of America, Mexico, and France.

Union officers committed themselves to educating the Blacks in their commands. It was done in a military fashion however. General Order No. 31 issued to the Missouri Black Regiment at Morganza, Louisiana, July 3, 1864 by Lt. Col. David Branson stated in effect that all non-commissioned officers of the command who should fail to learn to read by January 1, 1865 would be reduced in rank. It went on to say, "All soldiers of this command who have by any means learned to read and write, will aid and assist to the extent of their ability their fellow soldiers to learn these invaluable arts, without which no man is properly fitted to perform the duties of a free citizen."

Once encamped at Brazos Santiago Branson continued in the same vein with his Gen. Orders No. 35 of 10/29/64, to wit:

Hereafter when any soldier of this command is found to be, or to have been, playing cards, he will be placed in some prominent position in the camp with book in hand, and required then and there to learn a considerable lesson in reading and spelling; and if unwilling to learn, he will be compelled by huger to do so. When men are found gambling in any way, the money at stake will be seized and turned into the Regt. Hospital fund. No freed slave who cannot read well has a right to waste the time and opportunity here given him to fit himself for the position of a free citizen. This order will be read twice to this command, and copied in each order book.

On 1/25/65 Maj. J. K. Hudson, commanding the regiment, in his General Orders No. 4 provided a carrot rather than a stick when he ordered:

The Regimental Council of Administration having appropriated Fifty Dollars for the purchase of premiums for the encouragement of the enlisted men of this Regiment to learn to write it is hereby ordered that a gold pen be given to the Sergeant in each Company, who shall learn to write the best by the fourth day of July 1865; that a gold pen be given in each Company who shall learn to write the best by the 4th day of July 1865; that a good book be given the private of each Company who shall learn to write the best by the 4th day of July 1865, these rewards to be publicly given by a committee chosen as mentioned in orders.

It was in April 1865 that Gen Grant ordered Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan to the southwest immediately with a goal to cut off any fleeing Confederate soldiers and Confederate government officials while at the same time securing and sealing off the U.S.-Mexico border from French imperial forces under Archduke Maximilian who had installed himself as emperor of Mexico in 1864. Once in New Orleans Sheridan found Gen. Kirby-Smith, CSA, ready to surrender his remaining forces. Kirby-Smith did so verbally on May 26. On May 29, 1865 Sheridan announced his assumption of command of the military Division of the Southwest. The day before Union Brig. Gen. E. B. Brown had started all of his forces for Brownsville. When they arrived there on the morning of

May 30, any Confederate artillery to be secured had been turned over to the Imperialists by Gen. J. E. Slaughter, CSA.

Gen. Grant had promised Sheridan 25,000 men under Maj.-Gen. J. J. Reynolds. These would be from the 4th Army Corps at Nashville Tennessee and the 25th Army Corps at City Point, Virginia. Gen. Frederick Steele arrived with the bulk of the 25th Army Corps between June 6 and 9, 1865. Sheridan himself arrived on the scene on June 23. To improve supply logistics, one of his first acts was to complete the construction of an 18-mile railroad between Brazos and White Ranch. This became the Valley's first railroad.

In his *Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan*, General Philip Sheridan provides considerable information on his Texas activities. In Volume II, Part V, Chapter IX he especially details his operations along the Rio Grande and how they abetted the Juaritas Republicans of Mexico in overthrowing Maximilian and the Imperialists. The memoir is available online through the Gutenberg Organization.

The following four paragraphs are largely material from William Richter's book on the Army's role in Reconstruction in Texas.

It was on May 30, 1865 that the Confederates conceded the inevitable and surrendered Brownsville to Union forces without a fight. "Three days later, General Edmund Kirby-Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy surrendered the last Confederate army to the United States and brought the Civil War to a close." The Confederate soldiers, now released from any military obligations, quickly dispersed in all directions, taking their small arms with them.

The XIII Corps, under Brevet Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, was broken into three segments in May 1865 in order to handle the vast Texas area. Federal troops did not arrive to restore order in Texas until 6/19/65 when 2,000 troops arrived in Galveston Island. On this date he issued Gen. Orders No. 3 that simply said, "All slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired laborer." His Gen. Orders No. 4 "declared all acts passed by the state authorities during the rebellion to be null and void. Confederate civil and military personnel were ordered to report to Houston, Galveston, Bonham, San Antonio, Marshall, or Brownsville to be paroled. All public property seized after the surrender was to be turned over to the Federal officials in these same towns. Those who failed to comply would be arrested and held as prisoners of war. Granger declared that those who violated the law by committing acts of homicide or theft were "outlaws and enemies of the human race who will be dealt with accordingly."

Outside of Galveston the Union found the initial logistics of occupation difficult. Other Texas harbors simply lacked depth. Because the harbors were very shallow, men and matériel had to be off-loaded with lighters at all points except Galveston. Shallow-draft boats were in short supply and had to be requisitioned in order to get men and materiel

ashore. Granger accordingly asked Sheridan for shallow-draft boats to use at Indianola, Corpus Christi, and Brazos Santiago.

"Having accomplished his initial instructions, Granger then spread his forces across the vast Texas interior. The physical size of Texas was overwhelming to most soldiers stationed there and caused many mistaken notions about distances and travel time needed. More important, the size of Texas strained an already overtaxed supply and transportation system. The third division of Granger's corps landed at the mouth of the Rio Grande, under the command of Brevet Major General Frederick Steele."

Expecting further trouble, Granger had detached Steele's command from the XIII Corps to secure the border with Mexico. Steele accepted the surrender of Brownsville on May 31 and received orders from Granger to advance up the river as far as Roma. He was also assigned command responsibilities in Indianola and Corpus Christi. Marching from the coast on a northerly route, the army occupied Roma on June 20 but didn't reach the Ringgold Barracks in Rio Grande City until August 1 due to the lack of troops and transport.

Steele recommended further movement up the Rio Grande to Fort McIntosh, and Eagle Pass to seal off the Mexican border from refugees and bandits.

Soldiers of Gen. Frederick Steele's Third Division and its 25th Army Corps took possession of Fort Brown in the summer of 1865. Maj. Gen Steele, a West Point graduate, was to command the Western District of Texas with its headquarters in Brownsville from July through October 1865. Steele took part in the Red River Campaign and the Camden Expedition, where he was ultimately defeated at Jenkin's Ferry. In February 1865, he was transferred to the Department of the Gulf and led a division in the Union operations in the Mobile Campaign. At the close of the war received the brevet of brigadier-general of the Regular Army, for services in the capture of Little Rock, and that of major-general for services during the war. He was then transferred to Texas, and placed in command on the Rio Grande. The 27th and 28th Wisconsin were also sent to the island in June 1865. In the following two months they marched to Brownsville according to memoirs of Corporal Friedrich Buker. [Note: Frederick Herman Konrad Buker was born in Prussia 9/13/1840. He came to America in 1847. When the war started he was living in Wisconsin and was then 21 years old. He became part of the 27th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. His Company C was composed primarily of German ethnics, most of whom spoke little English. This extract from his German language diary begins in May 1865.]

Now we went back on board the ship, back to Mobile, back to the old camping place. And on the 14th of May (payday) we stayed there till the 31st of May. Note: something more. On the 25th, 20-30 tons of powder and bombs exploded at the landing near the ships. Three are said to have burned and 300 people had died in Mobile. The houses near the harbor were all standing crookedly on their foundations and the walls and the slate roofs were caved in. It looked dismal. We thought now we could go home, but we still had to go to Texas. On the 31st of May we again left camp and we boarded the ship in Mobile. On the 1st of June we were at the landing in Mobile, then we boarded the boat, 'Clinton of New York'. That brought us far... (?) On the 2nd of June we were probably no more than 100-150 miles from the 'sunline' (Tropic of

Cancer?). Lovely weather, but it was stifling on the boat. On the third day we saw flying fish. On the 5th we saw 40 ships in a line, and on the 6th we were in (Braso) Santiago. Here the general Whiskey Benton, he rode one morning, probably about 9:00 approximately 300 paces toward Mexico, and there rang out a shot from the hill, and he fell from his horse. It was said he had sold the things that were sent to the sick soldiers. Now he's selling no more...

We marched now to the Rio Grande. There we could at least fetch some water. The distilling machine was broken.

On the Rio Grande we put water into pork barrels in the evening. Then we were able the next morning to boil coffee or tea. There were sometimes up to 6-8 inches of dirt/mud in the barrel. Or we buried the barrels in the sand, then it was (?) cool. On the other side of the Rio Grande was the little city Bagdat (?) at the time the Red French were in it.

Now I said, "I have to take a look at Mexico." I fetched a pass (the only pass in the south?) and with that I had 18 men ferried over the Rio Grande with me. The boatsman took the pass again and again and (poled?) across the river until all of them had been transported. All of them had to, however, promise me that they wouldn't get drunk, and that they would all be back at the landing by five minutes to 2. Now F. Kölmer and I went together and we really had to force ourselves not to laugh, for wherever we went the French officers stepped to the side, took off their hats, and greeted (saluted) us with the greatest respect. "Well," said Kölmer, "now let us test to see whether they'll let us into their fort." We went there, but it was not possible to go into the fort. They made the most beautiful bows in front of us, and I said, "Ferdinand, that's enough. Let's go back." We thanked them as well as we could and marched back. We had never been accorded so much honor before. We had to restrain ourselves very much from laughing.

We bought ourselves pie and everything we wanted and we ate and our fill, and each of us took along one or two bottles of champagne. That was the day we drank the least water in Texas.

Now on one occasion we also had to load boards (lumber) and it was very hot and we had no good water. Now the boys wanted to have whiskey but the officers said they couldn't get any. "Well, send Büker, he can get it." "He can't," said the lieutenant. "We know better. We're exhausted. Send Büker." "Will you go, Fritz?" "Yes, but I can't promise you that I can bring any back for you."

I went to the quartermaster's tent and when I opened the gate a general was sitting there. I saluted and he was quite friendly. He asked me which regiment I was from. I told him everything and that Kretz was our Colonel. And he asked whether I perhaps wanted something or had to order something. I said yes, but that perhaps he would not be able to help me. Perhaps the thing that I wanted wasn't there. I told him now the whole business. Of course I can do that, if it's there. I called the quartermaster who at the moment was looking out the door and said, "Come here once." I didn't have to say anything more, when he knew that it was there. The general then said, "Give the corporal as much as he wants." I took a big bucketful along. I thanked General Sheridan for his friendliness and the favor.

When I got back to the boys and told them the story there were three big 'hurrahs' for General Sheridan. And I had said to them that I told him that no one would drink too much, and that I would make sure of that.

The board-loading went like steam (fast). Thirty men and 30,000 feet were soon loaded. Then I said take what is left along in your buckets. I brought back the bucket and Sheridan was still there and the two of us had time for a nice conversation. Then I too went to the camp.

I had also told him that there had been three 'hurrahs' for him. He made a friendly face, and he said 'that wouldn't (hurt?) the boys'.

Now I think we had (at that time) still thirty recruits. It was on the 12th of June (I think) in the evening and if I'm not mistaken they had just buried one of the recruits. I said to our general he should let the recruits go home. We didn't need them, and I'd be sorry if we had to bury them here. (before we left) I said they were all married men with two to four little children at home, and they were not accustomed to the hot climate, and now on top of that, the bad water. I thought we would end up burying many of them. And approximately 6,000 rebels who didn't want to surrender. We wouldn't obviously have enough on them for breakfast. We could catch them soon. "Well Biker," said the general, "I can't do that. I'm as much under orders as you are."

We spoke about that for a long time. I said he should do me the favor and write to the general, that he should write to him what I had said and that the old soldiers (or at least a few of them) had asked him to write to him. On the next day we had the answer, and he could discharge them and let them go home. Well I think I've never seen such friendly faces as those of our recruit soldiers. They had all been good comrades and were mostly from Manitowoc County. The boys weren't stingy with the wine on the last evening, and oh how they thanked me, although I said that I hadn't done that. "Well," they said, "we know better." And they promised me lots of good things if we ever saw each other again in Wisconsin.

And I didn't begrudge them that, but a few of the men were not quite in agreement with this until I explained it to them better. We old ones, after a few days, had to march to Brownsville, but we left our camp as quietly as if going to a funeral. We too were suffering from homesickness.

That day we only went fifteen miles, and so it went until we were not very far from Brownsville, and the six regiments had surrendered after all, when they had found out that they were surrounded on all sides. And we went then as far as Brownsville and were discharged only on the 29th (June?) – and still so far from 'home sweet home'. But on the 31st of August we were once again in Braso Santiago. We had come down the Rio Grande with a steam ship.

(margin note: On the whole march no bridge was necessary.)

Now we had to unload the whole ship one night. Thirty pontoon bridges.(margin note: Thirty pontoon bridges they said we had unloaded. Oh, what a swindle! No bridge was needed there, and no corn and oats either. And if the old ship had sunk, the government would have perhaps had to pay millions to the supplier. Oh, what swindling goes on during war!)

In Brasos we had to unload a ship and when we had unloaded it we weren't supposed to get on it. That was the cause of some hot blood to surge in the veins of the old soldiers. It was agreed among the soldiers that the ship should not leave the harbor, and they wanted to turn around the cannons on the batteries and drill it into the ground. I saw they weren't kidding. I went to the commander. I said he had to speak out. Now he said to the old soldiers they themselves should go up on the ship and inspect it. If they wanted to risk it, he wanted to be free of the blame if it sank, for it was an old ship. That cooled down their anger somewhat. One couldn't blame us either for the day before and then the whole night we had unloaded the ship with every last bit of strength that we had. And now not to travel home on it... It was inspected, and the soldiers wanted to go home... And, on the 2nd of September, in the evening, we were already at 7:00 already in Galveston, and the Gulf was as beautiful as it could be until we got to New Orleans. But ever onward to the homeland... Nothing else held any interest for us. We were now on our way home. Now we arrived in Cairo, Illinois, and we were supposed to travel to Chicago in cattle cars. That made us again somewhat annoyed.

Historian Richter tells us, "Fully one-half of all the soldiers sent to Texas were stationed along the Rio Grande to intimidate Maximilian and the Mexican imperialists and to suppress continued riding by bands of desperadoes on both sides of the river."

"Steele's ability to close off the Rio Grande depended on the arrival of the XXV (Colored) Corps from Virginia. Composed of some twenty thousand veteran soldiers, this unit had been organized in December, 1863. The corps had taken part in the Petersburg siege, was bloodied at the Battle of the Crater, and was the first unit to enter Richmond in 1865.

Commanded by Brevet Major General Godfrey Weitzel, the XXV Corps had the greatest distance to travel to reach Texas. To reduce the amount of shipping needed, Weitzel was ordered to take only one-half of his wagons and one-fourth of his mules to the Southwest, along with a "fair quantity of entrenching tools." The corps was to draw forty days' rations and embark from City Point, Virginia. By June, 1865, the XXV Corps had arrived at New Orleans, and Granger recommended that only one brigade be used to secure Indianola, another to land at Corpus Christi, while the rest of the corps would disembark at Brazos Santiago and be formed as a "movable column" to reinforce Steele."

Brevet Maj. Godfrey Weitzel's XXV Corps was moved to Texas and split, with some soldiers going to Corpus Christi and some to Roma. In addition the 28th Regiment U.S. Colored organized in Indiana embarked to Brazos Santiago and the LRGV (and also Corpus Christi) 6/10 to 7/1/65. They served there until 11/65 at which time they were mustered out. The fact was that as white volunteer regimental units were quickly mustered out at the end of the conflict, the Colored units were not discharged as rapidly. The Colored troops then filled the breach in Texas. This did not sit well with white Texans and became yet another sore point in the Reconstruction Era. On 11/14/66 Sheridan is quoted as saying, "The condition of civil affairs in Texas is anomalous, singular, and unsatisfactory." It was not until January 1867 that Grant gave orders to demobilize the last of the Negro volunteers.

A brief account in Pierce's book indicates that the Black soldiers in the area were being treated shabbily and reacted accordingly. In the terminology of the time, he relates: On October 9, 1865, at about 9 o'clock, a mutiny broke out among the negro soldiers in Brownsville. Having nothing but tents in which to live, suffering from mosquito pests, and finally chilled by a cold northern wind which had sprung up on the Saturday following, the negroes first entered a saloon on market square and there killed the proprietor. Then they rushed in parties through the city in quest of clothing, blankets, or lumber with which to protect their bodies from the cold. On the corner of 8th and Elizabeth the Dalzell house was in the course of construction. They pounced on the lumber there. William H. Putegnat in an effort to drive them off was attacked and severely wounded by a bayonet thrust on the forehead. Several Mexicans were killed. The negroes, about 60, ultimately returned to their quarters unmolested.

Some discharged Black soldiers were sympathetic to the cause of Benito Juárez and joined his forces to fight against the Imperialists. On the other hand fleeing Confederate soldiers would join the Imperialists in hope of gleaning French support for the CSA. Maximilian and his army were conquered in Queretaro whereupon Juaristas executed him before a firing squad on June 19, 1867.

Before concluding, one other item needs to be recorded since it documents an important role in subsequent Brownsville history. The Federal Government was poorly organized in its treatment of Union military wounded and sick. Once this was recognized private individuals and organizations came forward to fill the need for care and rehabilitation. The Rev. Jeremiah Porter and his wife, Eliza Emily Chappell Porter were among those who volunteered aid at the front. Seemingly always on the move, the Porters singly or together were to be in Little Rock, AK, Savannah, GA shortly after its capture, Washington, DC after Lee's surrender, and then Louisville, KY with Gen. Logan's army until July 31, 1865, and finally Alabama.

It was in October 1865 that the Porters came to Texas. He accompanied troops sent to the area ostensibly "to protect our border from aggressions of France under Emperor Maximilian." Mrs. Porter at the same time came to South Texas with supplies from the Northwest Sanitary Commission (also part of the United States Christian Commission). She visited army hospitals in Brownsville and on Brazos Island. Her visit to Brownsville allowed her to revive the Rio Grande Seminary, a Presbyterian coeducational school that had lapsed operations during the Union siege in the Valley.

The Porters were to return to Brownsville in 1868 when he became pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the city. Mrs. Porter together with the Grant sisters of Chicago took charge of the Rio Grande Seminary. It was in 1870 that the Rev. Porter was appointed by the United States Senate as Post Chaplain, U.S.A. at Fort Brown. He was to remain there in that capacity until 1873 when military transfers would take them first to Fort Sill, Oklahoma Territory and in 1875 to Fort Russell, Wyoming Territory. Mrs. Porter assisted her husband in his religious labors and conducted schools for children in the vicinities of the forts. He was retired by Act of Congress, June 30, 1882.

Some Civil War historians have characterized Gen. Bank's Rio Grande campaign as unsuccessful. Louis J. Schuler in his book *The Last Battle* writes: "The Yankee occupation of Brownsville was a disappointment to the Union. The border country at that time being in a drought condition and the Rio Grande being so low, it was impossible for river craft to navigate, making it impracticable for the Federals to pursue the Confederates. [That] supplies took two days by wagon train from Brazos Island and Point Isabel [to Brownsville] was the main detriment."

General in Chief Henry W. Halleck had been very displeased with Bank's unauthorized Texas operation. He characterized the Brownsville invasion as another "wild goose chase."

Obviously any assessment is complex. James A. Irby wrote a slim book titled "Backdoor at Bagdad: The Civil War on the Rio Grande". According to the blog of a Civil War buff, the book provides "a pretty good summary of the role the Rio Grande played in the Civil War" and "introduces readers to the complexity of the blockade at the river's mouth and the tangled web of political/economic interplay at the border between Confederate, U.S., Imperial French, and Mexican interests." He adds, "Irby comes down somewhere in the

middle of the debate over how important the Rio Grande trade was to the Confederate war effort. He blames the Confederate government's disorganized response for the general misuse of the economic opportunities the region offered. The Union war effort similarly failed to commit enough resources to choking off the cross border trade. On the other hand, he admits that the numbers needed to completely secure the border made such an effort unfeasible."

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