

# Chronological and Archaeological History of Barranco Colorado – a Military Post along the lower Lavaca River (1830-1832)

... an illustrated narrative by Chris Kneupper

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## PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this document to organize and publicize information about the Mexican fort or post named as “Barranco Colorado”, founded on the lower [Lavaca River](#) in the summer of 1830, and operated for a period of two years or so, until it was abandoned along with several other military posts in the eastern and southeastern part of [Mexican Texas](#) in the middle of 1832.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The vast majority of information about Barranco Colorado was derived piecemeal from individual letters and dispatches in the [Béxar Archives](#) found at the [Dolph Briscoe Center For American History](#) (CAH), whose staff was extremely helpful in allowing the author to gradually assemble copies of microfilm and photo-duplicates of originals over the last several years. The [Texas General Land Office](#) was also most helpful in locating old documents in their [Spanish Archives collection](#). Unless otherwise stated, the author made transcriptions and English translations of many of these handwritten Spanish-language documents, with the assistance of James E. “Jake” Ivey, Xavier Sendejo, Sonia Bennett, Flor Leon, Paul-Michael Dusek and Gregg Dimmick. Frank Condron of the Jackson County Historical Commission, Dr. Robert W. Shook of Victoria and Gary Ralston of Calhoun County provided local information and encouragement. Michael Bailey of the Brazoria County Historical Museum (BCHM) and the staff of the Brazoria County Library System were most helpful in locating books and other documents bearing on this topic. The author expresses gratitude to all of these key resource personnel.

A key resource tool has been the [Béxar Archives](#) Calendar as a useful finding aid for microfilm copies, although it is no longer maintained online by the Briscoe Center ([use Wayback machine instead](#)). Another document on Wayback shows the [archived locations of the original documents](#).

## INTRODUCTION

As the 1830’s dawned in southeast Texas, significant but mostly rural settlement had been underway for almost a decade in this previously undeveloped area, largely through the colony established by [Stephen Fuller Austin](#) known as Austin’s Colony, with his original settlers known as the [Old Three Hundred](#). The only towns of note were [San Felipe de Austin](#), [Brazoria](#), [Matagorda](#) and [Harrisburg](#), each only a few years old, as shown in the original 1830 version of a map created and commissioned by the empresario himself (Figure 1 below). This map shows that the southwestern boundary of Austin’s Colony was the Lavaca River.



**Figure 1: Portion of original (1830) version of Austin and Terán map published by H. S. Tanner**

A Mexican general officer, [Manuel de Mier y Terán](#), visited Texas as leader of a [boundary-commission expedition](#) and inspection tour from late 1827 to early 1829, visiting Laredo, San Antonio de Béxar, Gonzales, San Felipe de Austin, Nacogdoches and the east Texas border area (boundary line set by the [Adams-Onís Treaty](#) of 1819), before returning via the [Coushatta Trace](#) through San Felipe, Guadalupe Victoria and La Bahia to Matamoros [Morton 1944, Terán 2000]. Terán was considered “... *one of the most admirable men of the Mexican revolutionary era ... a brilliant tactician, a broadly interested scholar, a sympathetic leader, and an outstanding patriot*” [Berlandier 1980 p. xii]. After his visit to Texas, and alarmed at what he had seen, Terán became one of the advocates for a revised immigration policy and stronger military presence, later writing an influential report about his visit that was issued in early 1830. After playing a pivotal role in repelling a Spanish expeditionary force at Tampico in Aug-1829, Terán was promoted to “General of Division” with the post of Commander General of the Eastern Internal Provinces (which included Texas), eventually establishing his headquarters at Matamoros in

Mar-1830. In this role, Terán initially had plans to gather a large military force at Matamoros to be used in Texas as necessary [Morton 1944 pp. 194-196]. Stephen F. Austin, hearing of these plans, published a notice and editorial in the [Texas Gazette](#) in an attempt to assure his colonists this was in their best interests [Austin 13-Mar-1830]. But, these plans were altered somewhat by a new law soon enacted by the Mexican federal legislature.

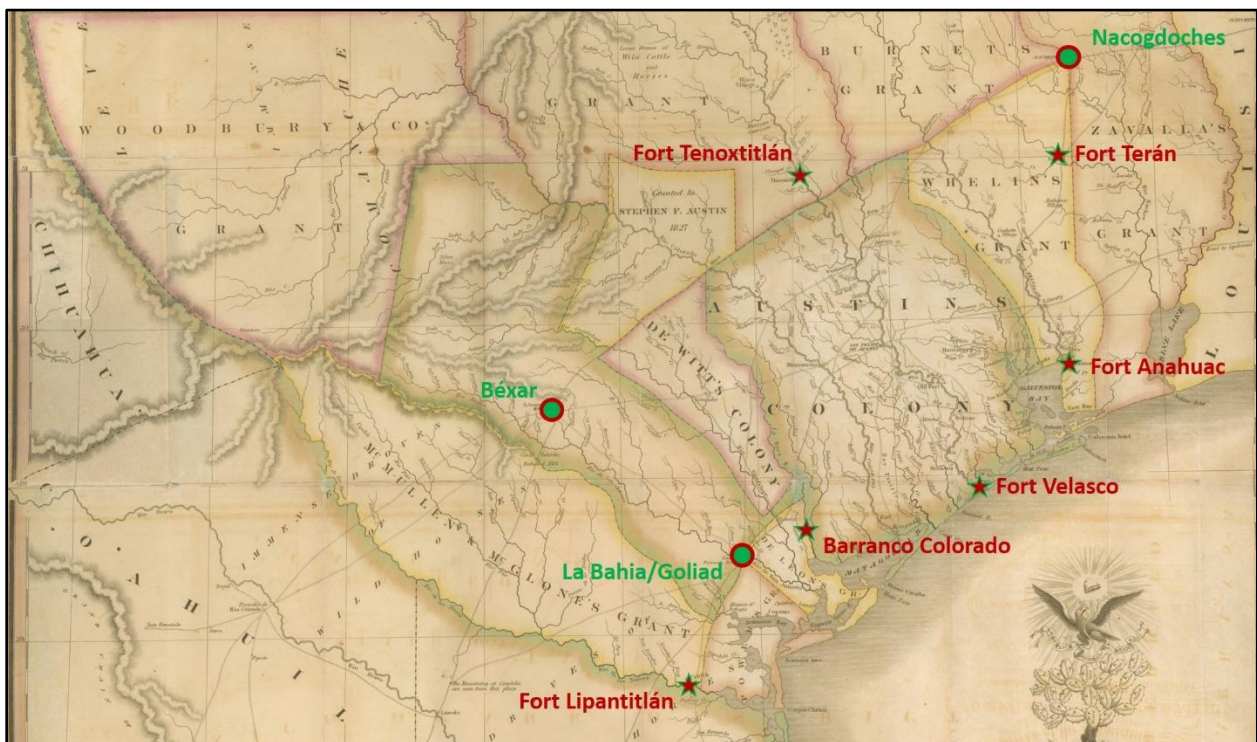


**Figure 2: Manuel de Mier y Terán, circa 1832**

Based on Terán's report, [Lucas Alamán](#) (Mexican minister of foreign relations) and other Mexican politicians created the infamous [Law of 6-Apr-1830](#), in some cases exceeding Terán's advice. One provision called for the military occupation of Texas using, in part, convicts as laborers. Another important aspect of the law was that authority for colonization in frontier states was vested in federal commissioners, removing such authority from the individual states. This last provision was in direct opposition to Stephen F. Austin's stated opinions [Austin 29-Mar-1830]. For Texas, the post of colonization commissioner was added to Terán's duties in late Apr-1830 [Morton 1944 p. 199]. The new law also forbade further immigration from the United States, while sanctioning further immigration from Mexico and Europe. Another provision of the law was Article 12, which stated "*Coastwise trade shall be free to all foreigners for the term of four years, with the object of turning colonial trade to the ports of Matamoros, Tampico and Veracruz.*" [Howren 1913 p. 416]. This law, justified from the Mexican government's perspective, had a [negative and galvanizing effect](#) on the loyalty of the Anglo-American

colonists in Texas (Texians), and its effect is often equated with the “[Stamp Act](#)” in catalyzing the American Revolution. But, this law’s immediate effect was to give birth to efforts for new military sites in Texas, to enforce its customs and immigration provisions.

In his new position, Terán planned to construct a series of new forts in Texas, with one being near the mouth of the Lavaca River, apparently with the intention to control customs and immigration into the “Bahia de San Bernardo”, later known as Matagorda, Lavaca, and perhaps Espiritu Santo Bays. This fort, and two others, were among the first actions of Terán in compliance with the new law, as indicated in a letter he later wrote to [José María Viesca](#), then governor of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas “... I have selected some points which have appeared to me the most appropriate for locating detachments of troops: at the mouth of the Lavaca River, at the crossing of the Brazos River on the Upper Road from Béxar to Nacogdoches (a place which has been given the name of Tenoxtitlan), and at the point at the head of Galveston Bay, on the left bank at the mouth of the Trinity River.” Viesca responded with full approval, authorizing [Ramón Músquiz](#) as commissioner to build the establishments [Terán 30-Dec-1830]. In total, six new forts were to be constructed to enforce the new law, including these three (Barranco Colorado, [Fort Tenoxtitlán](#), [Fort Anahuac](#)), and also [Fort Terán](#), [Fort Lipantitlán](#), and [Fort Velasco](#), adding to existing garrisons at [San Antonio de Béxar](#), [Presidio La Bahía](#), and [Nacogdoches](#) (as illustrated in Figure 3), along with a war frigate to serve the coastal forts [Filisola 1848 pp. 65-66]. Although Terán requested such a vessel, also to act as a coast guard, it was never obtained due to lack of funds [Morton 1944 pp. 499-500]. Some of these forts also included smaller satellite posts, often as a temporary camp but also something more substantial (for example, customs houses on Galveston Island and the mouth of the Brazos as adjuncts to Fort Anahuac). Unlike the other new forts, the one on the Lavaca River is poorly known in modern references, with only a few obscure accounts mentioning it.



**Figure 3: Mexican Forts of 1830-1832 (based on the 1836 version of the Austin and Terán map)**

In his memoirs written some years later, [Vicente Filisola](#) wrote “*The town of San Felipe de Austin is the capital and focal point for the colonists of Texas. General Terán has ordered the occupation of this and El Paso del Caballo, Lavaca or Barranco Colorado, Fort Velasco, Galveston, Anáhuac, Fort Terán, Harrisburg, Nacogdoches and Tenoxtitlán and some others*” [Filisola 1848 p. 139]. This account seems to indicate that the name of the place on the Lavaca was “Barranco Colorado”. The term “Fort Lavaca” does not seem to have been used at the time, although this term was repeatedly used for Barranco Colorado in a recent historical/archaeological report for Fort Lipantitlán [Jackson et al 2006] and a book about the old road paths in the area of Victoria county [Shook 2007]. The term “Fort Lavaca” is otherwise found as a name for a [Civil War era battery](#) at the current location of the town of [Port Lavaca](#).

## BACKGROUND

Lest one think that Barranco Colorado was the first attempt to establish a detachment, fort or port on the middle Texas coast, our story needs to start a little earlier, so as to get some understanding of prior efforts at and near Matagorda and Lavaca Bays.

Spanish explorers had intermittently visited the middle Texas coast a number times by sea and land, most notably during the period of the late 1680’s when LaSalle had established Fort St. Louis about 5 miles up Garcitas Creek from its mouth on [Lavaca Bay](#). The presence of this colony caused great focus and attention to fall upon [Matagorda Bay](#), resulting in no less than eleven Spanish expeditions by land or sea to find and destroy it [Weddle 1999]. These expeditions caused the drawing of several early maps of the area, where Matagorda Bay loomed large, perhaps overly so, in both Spanish and French efforts to understand the geography of the huge wilderness, now threatened by French incursion, that Spain had claimed but largely ignored for 150 years. Indeed, the second (or [Rivas-Iriate](#)) maritime search from Veracruz arrived at the bay on 2-Apr-1687, sometimes called Bahía del Espíritu Santo since Cabeza de Vaca’s previous naming of it. Their chief pilot, [Juan Enríquez Barroto](#), re-named the bay as Bahía de San Bernardo for the first time [Weddle 1999 p. 99, Shook 2007 p. 86]. Both names would be variously used for many years afterward. At the entrance of the bay, he also named the leeward (west) point as San Francisco and the windward (east) point as Culebras [Shook 2007 p. 86]. Two days later, they came across the wreck of the *Belle*, inside the bay three leagues east-northeast of the entrance against the windward shore [Weddle 1999 p. 99, Shook 2007 p. 87].

Some notable maps from the period (although not illustrated here) can be observed via the link or at the listed references:

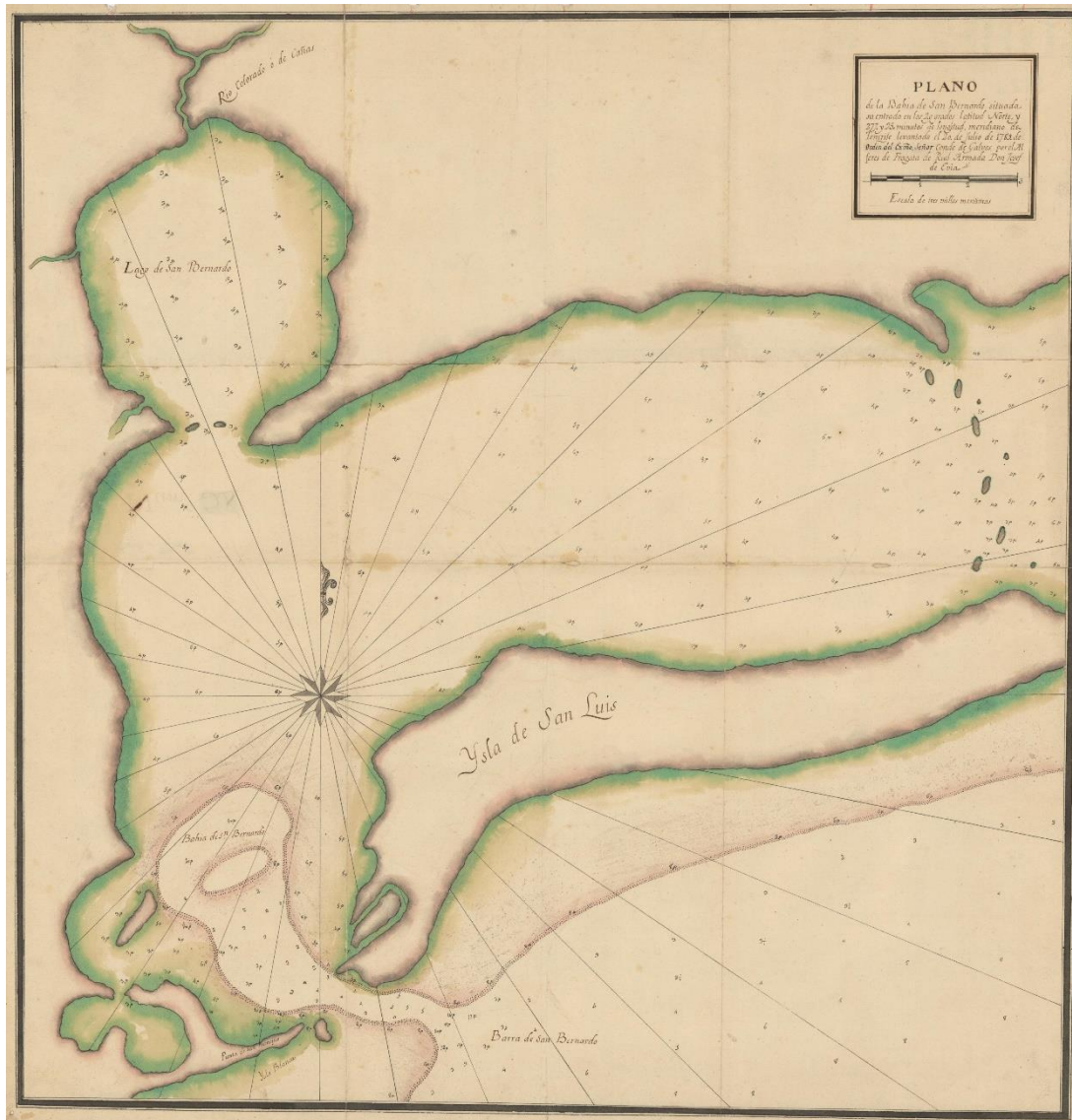
1. [Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora](#) map of 1689 - [Mapa del camino que el año de 1689 hizo el Gobernador Alonso de León](#) [Martin 1982b p. 16, Jackson et al 1990 p. 49, Weddle 1999 Plate 8]
2. Llanos-Cárdenas map of 1690 - [Planta cosmográfica del Lago de San Bernardo](#), 1690 [Weddle 1999 Plate 11]
3. Alonso de León map of 1690 - [Mapa del Viaxe que el año 1690 hizo el Gobernador Alonso de León desde Cuahuila hasta la Carolina](#) [Bryan & Hanak 1961, Plate 7, especially inset of Matagorda Bay]
4. Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo map of 1722 - Carta de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo de la

Provincia de las Nuevas Philipinas, que dejó observada – [version 1](#) – [version 2](#) – [version 3](#) [Weddle 1999 Plate 12, Shook 2007 p. 187] – famous as the first known instance for use of the term “Matagorda” in regards to Matagorda Bay of Texas. It shows a drawing of a tree or bush on the shoreline (perhaps near modern Port Lavaca), so perhaps it was an attempt to draw a single stout-trunked and/or wide-canopied specimen (or motte) of Live Oak trees on the bank, labeling it as “Fat Bush”.

5. Le Maire map of 1716 – Carte nouvelle de la Louisiane et país circonvoisins dressée sur les lieux pour etre présentée a S. M<sup>te</sup>. T.C. par F. Le maire pretre parisien et mission<sup>e</sup>. Apostolique MDCCXVI - [copy](#) [Jackson et al 1990 Figure 8 pp. 52-53, Figure 9 pp. 54-55]
6. DeLisle-Lemaire map of 1718 – [Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi dressée sur un grand nombre mémoires entrau.<sup>tres</sup> fur aux de Mr. le Maire Par Guill.<sup>aume</sup> Delisle del academie R.<sup>lo</sup> des Seten](#) – [version 2](#) – [version 3](#) - [Martin 1982b p. 40, Jackson et al 1990 Figure 14 pp. 62-63]

Barroto’s place names such as Lago de San Bernardo, Punta de San Francisco, Punta de Culebras, Rio de San Marcos and Isla Blanca are retained in the first of these maps, as well as an indication for the wreck of the *Belle*. An early name for the Lavaca River was Rio de San Marcos, given by [Alonso de León](#) [Weddle 1999 p. 194]. The fourth-listed map (1722) uses the term “Matagorda” for the first time, for a place on the shore of Lavaca Bay near what would become the port of Linnville over 100 years later, and also shows a deep-water channel along the southwest bank [Shook 2007 p. 187]. The fifth and sixth maps are French, copying information about Bahia de San Bernardo gleaned from Spanish maps of the LaSalle era, and the work of [Saint-Denis](#) and Le Maire [Jackson et al 1990].

The first successful and comprehensive attempt to map the coastal geography of the Texas coast, though, had to wait for many years. It came with the survey efforts of [José de Evia](#) in the 1780’s for much of the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico. Detailed maps were produced of any significant bay and harbor discovered, and this included “Bahia de San Bernardo” [De Evia 1785], as shown in Figure 4 below, and “Bahia de Galveston” during separate voyages in 1785 and 1786 [Weddle 1992 pp. 113-115]. Please note the survey included soundings for water depth, and that a deep-water channel was found extending into the bay, perhaps to the point known today as Port O’Connor and Indianola. The tip of the barrier island just west of the mouth of the bay was labeled as “Punta de San Francisco”, and the island eastward was “Ysla de San Luis”. Modern Lavaca Bay is labeled “Lago de San Bernardo”, while modern Matagorda Bay is “Bahia de San Bernardo”. A river is shown emptying into the north shore of Lavaca Bay labeled as “Rio Colorado ó de Cañas”, which may be the river known now as the Lavaca River. Unfortunately, these surveys of individual bays were not assembled into a larger and/or public map of the Texas coastline at the time, and the Spanish authorities kept them secret. A “Portulano de la America Setentrional” (a collection) of the individual 121 harbor maps was assembled [Taliaferro 1988], presumably for private use by Spanish mariners. Interestingly, as José de Evia had apparently divided his work into several annual seasons, they “missed” the area between Galveston and Matagorda Bays when stopping and then resuming work. Another publication of the “Portulano” in 1818 showed a similar map for [“Bahia de San Bernardo”](#).



**Figure 4: José de Evia's survey map of Bahía (and Laguna) de San Bernardo**

Later, in 1799 and again in 1807, Spanish cartographers made maps of the Gulf Coast using the de Evia surveys, which retained this missing area, drawing it as if "Isla de San Luis" extended all the way from the mouth of Matagorda Bay to the entrance of Galveston Bay. Apparently, the Colorado and Brazos Rivers were missed entirely by de Evia, and an error (the drawing of Matagorda Bay connected to West Galveston Bay inside of a single barrier island) was made, which propagated into maps for decades afterwards. Curiously, this island (probably named for Fort St. Louis) transferred its name to what later became known as Galveston Island and (on its western end) San Luis Pass. The map of 1799 was prepared by Juan de Langara of the Spanish Hydrographic Service, and had the ponderous title of "Carta Esferica que comprehende las costas del Seno Mexicano Construida De Orden Del Rey En El Deposito Hydrografico De Marina", which is shown below in Figure 5a in its entirety for an 1805 version [De Langara 1799]. A magnified portion of it for the upper Texas coast is shown in Figure 5b. Compared with de Evia's chart, the Lavaca River is labeled solely as "Rio Colorado" and the name of "Rio Flores" has been added to what might be modern Garcitas Creek.

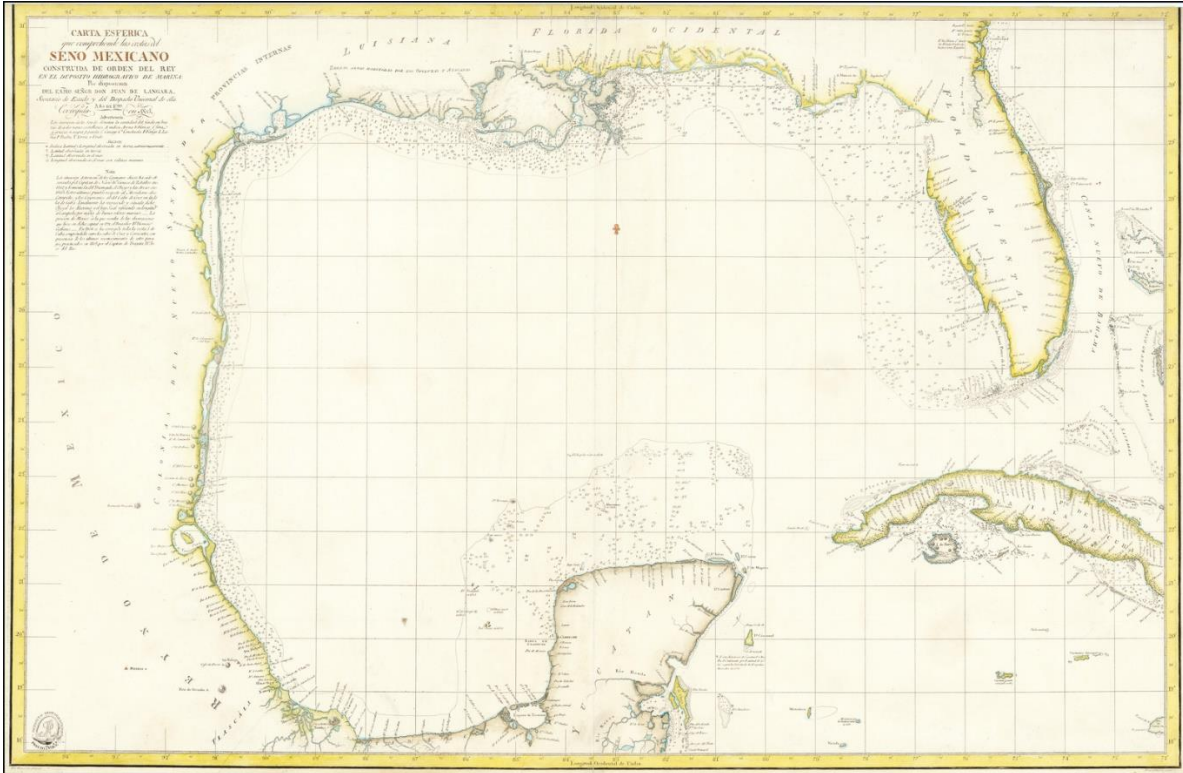


Figure 5a: 1799 map of Gulf of Mexico by Juan de Langara

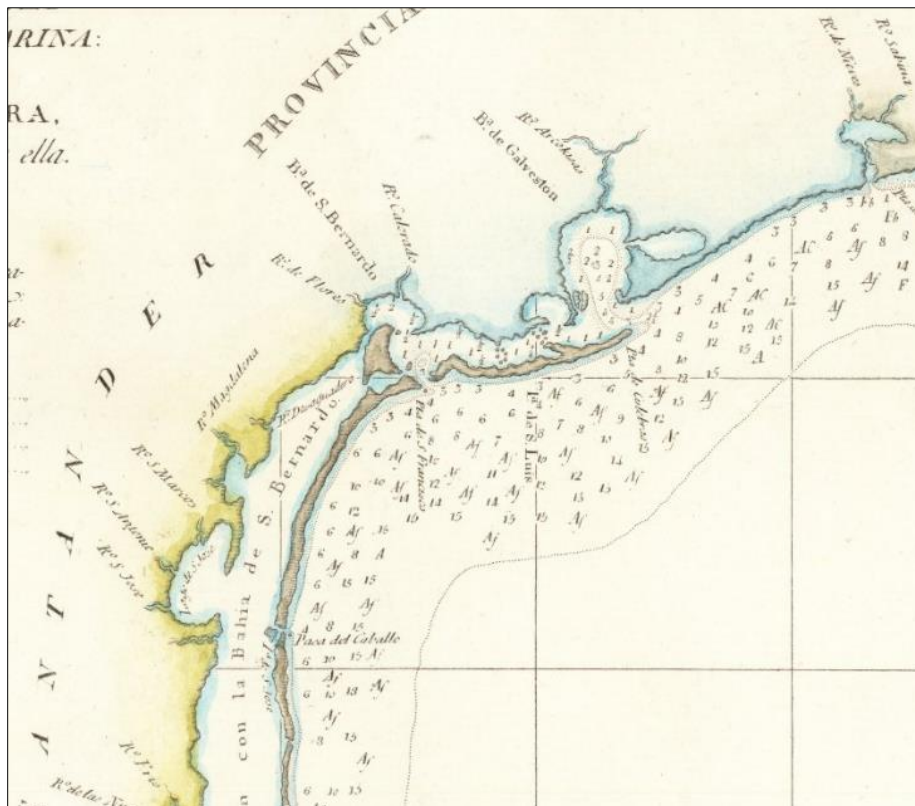
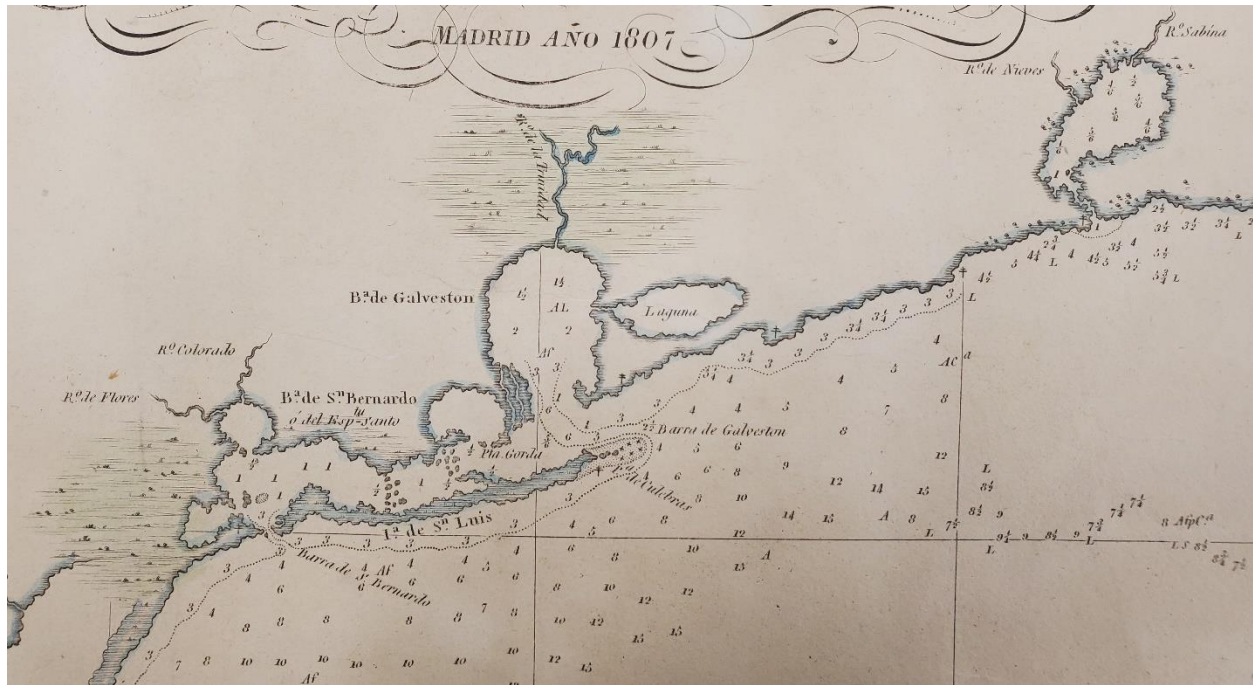


Figure 5b: Detail from 1799 Langara map for the upper Texas coastline



A similar map was prepared in 1807 by the Spanish Admiralty, which omitted the area of Florida, known as “Carta particular de las Cóstas Setentrionales del Seno Mexicano que comprehende las de la Florida Occidental las Margenes de la Luisiana y toda la rivera que sigue por la Bahía de S. Bernardo y el Rio Bravo del Norte hasta la Laguna Madre” [Spanish Admiralty 1807]. A detail of the upper Texas coast from it is shown in Figure 6 below.



**Figure 6: Detail from 1807 Spanish Admiralty map for the upper Texas coastline**

Please note that this map also omits the area about the mouths of the Colorado and Brazos Rivers, and the single barrier island is again labeled as “Isla de San Luis”. An area southwest of Matagorda Bay also seems to be intentionally left unclear.

Before Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, the King of Spain authorized Bahía de San Bernardo for free trade [Soler 1805], and this was recognized again by the Eastern Interior Provinces of Mexico in 1821 [Barker 1926 p. 178-179]. This was probably due to the fact that these bays provided the closest deep-water harbor to the settlements, ranchos and missions along the lower San Antonio River near La Bahía (modern Goliad), and their incomplete knowledge of other harbor options along the middle and upper Texas coast. So, again, one can see that this area had been explored and known for some time. Nonetheless, “No port worthy of the name was ever developed on the Texas coast during Spain’s tenure.” [Weddle 1992 p. 118].

Some indication of the state of geographical knowledge of inland areas of the time can be seen in another 1807 map, drawn by a Franciscan friar at Nacogdoches, Fray José Maria Puelles. Figure 7 is a digital copy of the Puelles map found among Stephen F. Austin’s papers (the [original](#) is now at the Texas Map Collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History). This map was probably the best map of Texas for its time, although it, like many others, was never publicly released by Spanish authorities. Published maps, such as the Humboldt map of New Spain (drawn [1804](#), published [1810](#)) and the

Zebulon Pike map of the Internal Provinces of New Spain (visited 1807, published [1810](#)) were less accurate for the Texas interior and its rivers, although they were similar for coastal geography.



**Figure 7: Stephen F. Austin's copy of the Puelles 1807 map (from [The Portal to Texas History](#)); other versions are labeled "Mapa Geografica de las Provinciales Septentrionales de Esta Nueva Espana"**

On these maps, the series of bays known today as Matagorda and Lavaca Bays is again labeled as "*Bahía (or Lago) de San Bernardo*", San Antonio/Aransas/Copano Bays as "*Bahia de San Jose*" and Galveston/Trinity Bays as "*Bahía de Galveston*". Galveston Island was labeled as "*Isla de San Luis*" and its northeast end was "*Punta de Culebras*", and the island was shown reaching all the way southwest to the entrance of Bahía de San Bernardo. With the exception of the Puelles map, the Brazos River is poorly represented as a minor river emptying into an intervening bay. With this state of knowledge, it is little wonder that Bahía de San Bernardo was considered the best choice for a Texas port. Like previous maps, a river labeled as the Colorado River is shown to empty into Lavaca Bay, although it in fact emptied into the northeast end of Matagorda Bay. This bay and East Matagorda Bay were once a single bay until about 1929 when the Colorado "raft" was finally dislodged and a new delta formed into the bay. In 1934, a 200' wide x 9' channel was cut through this delta and across Matagorda Peninsula to empty directly into the Gulf. Thus, to reach the mouth of the Colorado in the early years, sailors had to enter Bahía de San Bernardo at Paso Cavallo, and then turn northeast to travel some distance up the bay to the mouth. However, at the time, the "raft" and the shallow bay prevented further navigation up the Colorado River itself much past Matagorda [Clay 1949], so this river never developed the early commerce that the Brazos River did during the Austin Colony period.

Perhaps, we can also infer why [Moses Austin](#) and his son [Stephen F. Austin](#) sought a grant of land to the

east of the Spanish settlements and authorized bay, and southwest from Nacogdoches and the Spanish missions of east Texas, in what was a larger-than-mapped poorly-known and undeveloped “wilderness”. In 1822, [Stephen F. Austin](#) prepared the first of a series of maps for the Austin Colony (a version found in the Library of Congress is shown in Figure 8), which continued to display poor knowledge of coastal geography, although it is rich with inland information about roads, Indian villages and names, and the extent of forested lands (in green). Many rivers are represented, flowing correctly to the southeast, but he seems to have left out naming the Brazos River [Martin 1982a, Reinhartz 2015]. The coastal areas are not much improved from the Puelles, Humboldt or Pike maps.



**Figure 8: Hand-drawn map by Stephen F. Austin, circa 1822 (Library of Congress version)**

An [apparent copy of this map](#) by or for a Mexican army officer, José Dominguez Manso, is found in the U. S. National Archives (illustrated in [Reinhartz 2015] Figure 9) that was captured in the Mexican-American War, and another [hand-drawn version](#) by Austin can be found at the Briscoe Center for American History (CAH), both of which clearly label the Brazos River. Notably, these maps display the early unimproved roads of the time, and a detailed discussion of these roads can be found in a book by Robert W. Shook, a retired history professor at the University of Houston-Victoria [Shook 2007].

Still-another map was also prepared in 1822 by [Nicholas Rightor](#) for the area between the Brazos and Lavaca Rivers, held at the CAH (Figure 9 below). Again, no improvement of coastal geography is

apparent, but there is accurate information about rivers and roads, as well as extensive “prairie” areas.



**Figure 9: “A Map of the Country between the Brassos & La Baca Rivers”, N. Rightor, 1822**

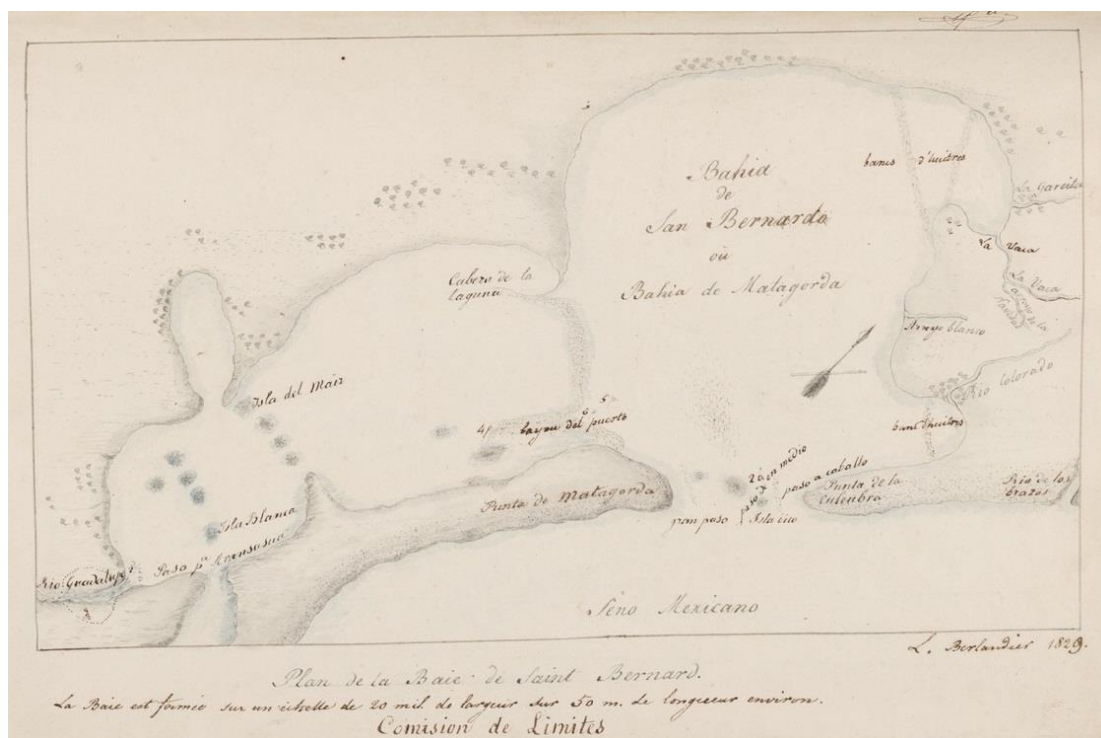
The first (of four) land contracts to Stephen F. Austin extended from the Lavaca River on the southwest

to the San Jacinto River on the northeast, bounded by the coast and the “El Camino Real” or “San Antonio Road” (between San Antonio de Béxar and Nacogdoches), the boundaries of which can be seen in Figure 1. The very first effort to actually bring colonists there involved the voyage of the schooner [Lively](#), intended for “Bahia de San Bernardo” - at the time, the only authorized port in Texas. It sailed from New Orleans on or about 23-Nov-1821 with about twenty colonists and important supplies steering for the mouth of the Colorado River to meet [Stephen F. Austin](#), but instead dropped them at the mouth of the Brazos River after a difficult month-long trip [Lewis 1899]. Upon returning to Texas on a second voyage with more colonists and supplies in 1822, the [Lively](#) was lost on Galveston Island, although the passengers were rescued and continued on to the mouth of the Colorado [Bugbee 1899]. Ships and colonists continued to arrive, and by the summer of 1824, most of the [Old Three Hundred](#) had arrived, and taken title to much of the prime property along the lower Brazos and Colorado Rivers. Stephen F. Austin foresaw the need for an authorized port, and wrote to the military commander of the Eastern Interior Provinces (which included Texas) on 27-May-1823, asking for authorization on several points, including a port of entry and authority to issue clearances for vessels [Austin 1823], apparently without success.

After the Mexican federal legislature passed a national colonization law on 18-Aug-1824 that forbade settlement in a 10-league band along the coast, [Stephen F. Austin](#) must have felt some urgency to legalize a port, as this “littoral reserve” of the new law reneged on that portion of his grant, and threatened his primary commercial and immigration connections by sea. He formally requested permission to establish “*el puerto de Galvezton*” in a petition also asking to extend his empresario contract to an additional 300 (then 500) families [Austin 1824, White 1839 p. 582]. Although the land contract was successfully authorized by the new state of “Coahuila y Tejas” on 27-April and 20-May-1825 [White 1839 pp. 610-613], the port was separately authorized in a modest decree by the federal legislature on 17-Oct-1825 [Arévalo 1829 p. 6]. This decree anticipated creation of a customs house (*aduana marítima*), but did not specify the location of the port. Thus, “*el puerto de Galvezton*” became the second authorized port on the Texas coast. At the time, this term seems to have applied to a broad area of the coast; in 1830, its new administrator, George Fisher, defined it to include “... *an extensive coast, from the Sabine River to Matagorda Bay ...*” [Fisher 5-Jun-1830].

After inspection and survey of Galveston Bay and Island, probably over 16 days in Feb-1826 using the rented sloop *Mexicana* and a rowboat, Austin realized the island was without timber or freshwater, subject to inundation, and isolated from the mainland [Austin 1826a, Martin 1982a p. 384] - so he favored the existing port at the mouth of the Brazos River [Austin 1826a, Austin Dec-1829, Barker 1926 p. 180]. Austin’s survey resulted in an improved chart of Galveston Bay and Island [Austin 1826a], although the chart was forwarded on to the governor of Coahuila y Tejas in Saltillo, and from there to Mexico City - no surviving copy is known to exist. Since Austin had been asked earlier by Mexican authorities to seek boats for use by their detachments on the middle Texas coast, he then chose to purchase the two boats he had used in Galveston Bay, initially suggesting they be delivered to Balandra Point (along current San Antonio Bay) complete with sails and tools [Austin 1826b, Ahumada 1-Feb-1826]. Later dispatches reveal they were delivered to Sabino/Balandra Point in late July, and were to be used from a newly-staffed satellite post of La Bahia called “Matagorda” [Manchola 29-Jul-1826, frames 480-481] – probably on the western shore of Matagorda Bay near the location later known as Indianola or Port O’Connor. Please see Appendix A for further details about this Mexican “port of Matagorda”.

Accompanying Terán's expedition of 1828 had been the naturalist [Jean Louis Berlandier](#), who detoured from San Antonio de Béxar, starting to La Bahía on 25-Feb-1829. There he met the captain of the *Paumone* (probably *Pomona*); they traveled overland to [Cópano](#) (northwest end of Copano Bay) from which they departed on 11-Mar-1829 through Aransas Pass by sea for New Orleans, returning the same way on 13-May-1829 (Berlandier 1980 pp. 390-408). Apparently, during this trip, Berlandier acquired knowledge of the coastal geography and drew at least two maps, one of which is shown below in Figure 10, still indicating very poor conception of the local bays [Berlandier 1829]. Although some great detail about the entrance to Bahía de San Bernardo appears correct, the adjacent bays and rivers are badly inaccurate, especially the Brazos shown in the lower right corner. Lavaca Bay and the Colorado River are poorly represented in the upper right corner, as a small eastern extension of Bahía de San Bernardo, when it really attached to the northwest corner. Notably, the "Punta de San Francisco" of earlier maps is now labeled as "Punta de Matagorda", and the opposite point is labeled as "Punta de la Culebra". Obviously, however, local sailors knew well how to use these adjacent bays, and they must have been considered part of Bahía de San Bernardo.

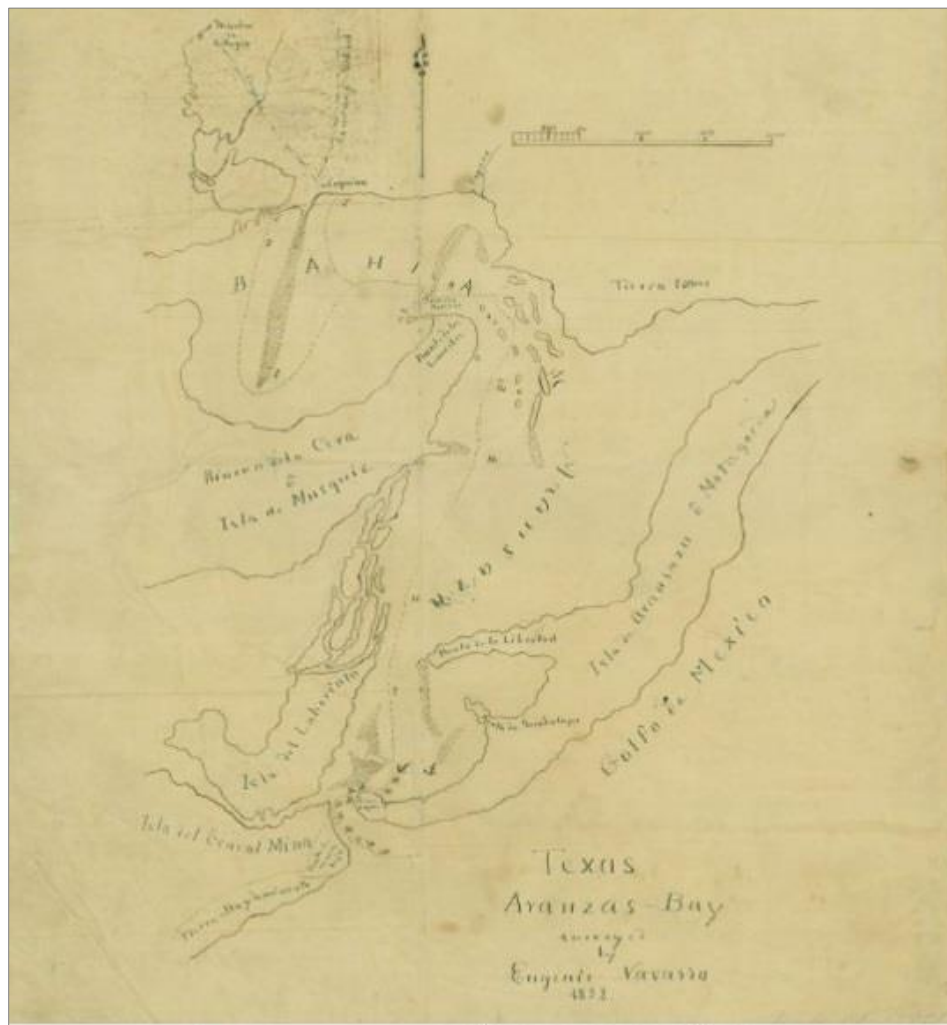


**Figure 10: 1829 Berlandier map of "Bahía de San Bernardo ou Bahía de Matagorda" (Beinecke Library)**

On 13-May-1829, the Congress of Coahuila y Tejas had issued Decree No. 94, setting conditions for customs officers to be placed at the ports of Galveston and Bahía de San Bernardo, including mention that the salary was \$500 annually, and duties due to the state were to be two reales per ton [White 1839 p. 548]. [José Antonio Navarro](#) received an appointment from the government to become Administrator for the port of Galveston, but Stephen F. Austin advised him "... that for some time it will not produce sufficient to live upon." [Austin Dec-1829], and he apparently never took such a position.

So, as the 1830's began, it can be seen that geographic knowledge of the upper Texas coast was still very limited, but improving, and only with Stephen F. Austin's 1830 map (Figure 1) did an accurate widely-available representation occur. Apparently, Austin drew on information collected by the Comisión de Límites provided to him by Terán (such as Figure 10), to improve on his 1822 maps. For example, another [Berlandier sketch of Matagorda, Lavaca, Espiritu Santo and Aransas Bays](#) bears great resemblance to those same bays drawn on the 1830 Austin/Terán/Tanner map (although still not completely accurate). Only with the [1839 Hunt-Randel map](#) did a reasonably accurate representation of these lower bays occur. Tanner published several updates of the 1830 map through 1837, usually adding new towns and landmarks to the base map.

José Antonio Navarro's brother, [José Eugenio Navarro](#), while an Alférez (2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant) in the Second Flying Company of San Carlos de Alamo de Parras, produced a sketch in 1832 of "Aransas Bay" (today's Aransas and Copano Bays) and the navigable path to the early port of Cópano, today found in the records of the Texas General Land Office as Map #145 (see Figure 11 below). This may illustrate the path of the *Pomona* in taking Jean Louis Berlandier to and from New Orleans a few years earlier, and was one part of the improving knowledge of coastal geography.



**Figure 11 – Sketch of Aransas Bay surveyed by Eugenio Navarro, 1832 ([TGLO Map# 145](#))**

Another version of this map (perhaps a later copy) can be found at Yale University's Beinecke Library, and is illustrated on page 239 of *Almonte's Texas*, a book published by Jack Jackson and John Wheat in 2003.

An early settler of Jackson County, [John S. Menefee](#) (1813-1884), authored a series of articles in the *Jackson County Clarion* newspaper in the period of 20-May to 15-Jul-1880, a collection of which were transcribed many years later into a single typescript document entitled "Early Jackson County History". In this document is found a story alluding to a military post on the Lavaca (the context indicating it was the summer of 1831), stating "... *Capt. Mat (Nathaniel) Lewis and Capt. S. (Sylvanus) Hatch owned a vessel called the **Hetta**, by which father sent to New Orleans for some supplies, and he and I went down to get them on her return. Some Mexican soldiers from the Garrison on the west side of Lavaca went down also, and we camped at Cox's Point; next morning we and the officers went aboard of the vessel, leaving the soldiers ashore; the officers wanted the captain to send some water ashore for the soldiers, and after repeating their wishes two or three times the captain told the interpreter (Stoddard) to tell them to go to H\_\_ell, which made the officers furious, they drew their swords and \_\_\_ the water went ashore and nobody was hurt, though somewhat scared. ... The vessel was seized by the soldiers as having contraband on board, and lay in the bay until she became a wreck.*" [Menefee 1880]. The Béxar Archives has letters indicating this event occurred in the summer of 1831, although another interaction with the same vessel also occurred in 1830. The Spanish documents usually refer to this vessel as the **Hesta** (more information can be found later in this report).

The location of Cox's Point was a blunt peninsula near the northeastern corner of Lavaca Bay, just off the mouth of the Lavaca River, and can be seen on an 1840 map of Jackson County, in Figure 12 below (red arrow), showing a portion of this map surrounding Lavaca Bay. The map also shows the (unlabeled) mouth of Garcitas Creek at the northwestern corner of Lavaca Bay, the location of Linnville on the western shore (just north of modern Port Lavaca), the juncture of the Lavaca and Navidad Rivers and the site of the town of Texana (on the west bank of the Navidad River). Barranco Colorado would have been just west of Texana, on the west bank of the Lavaca River (red star). Modern Hwy-35 involves a causeway bridge across Lavaca Bay, and its eastern end is just north of where Cox's Point was located, now occupied by an industrial complex and harbor.



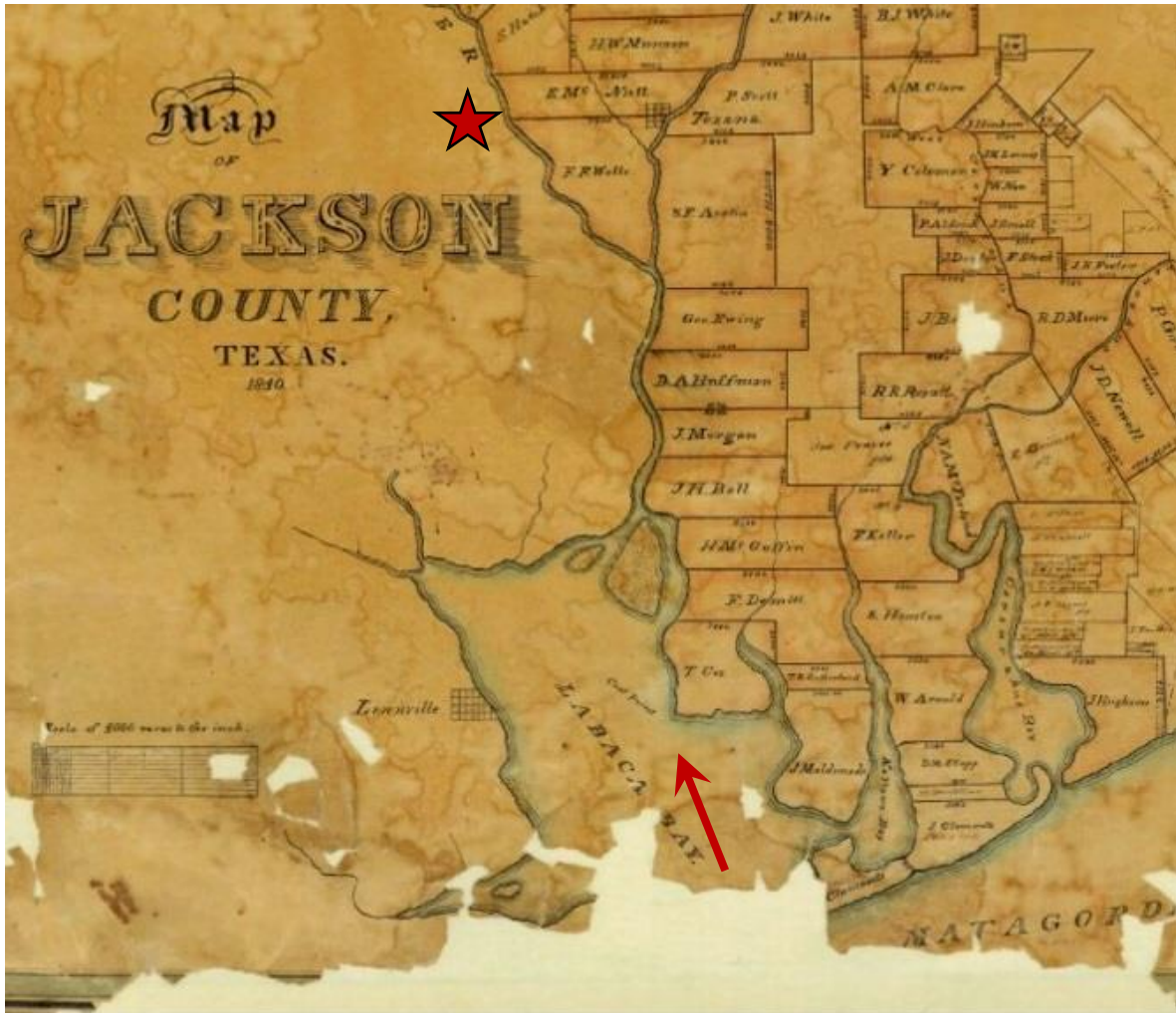


Figure 12: Portion of 1840 Map of Jackson County, showing Cox's Point ([TGLO Map# 3708](#))

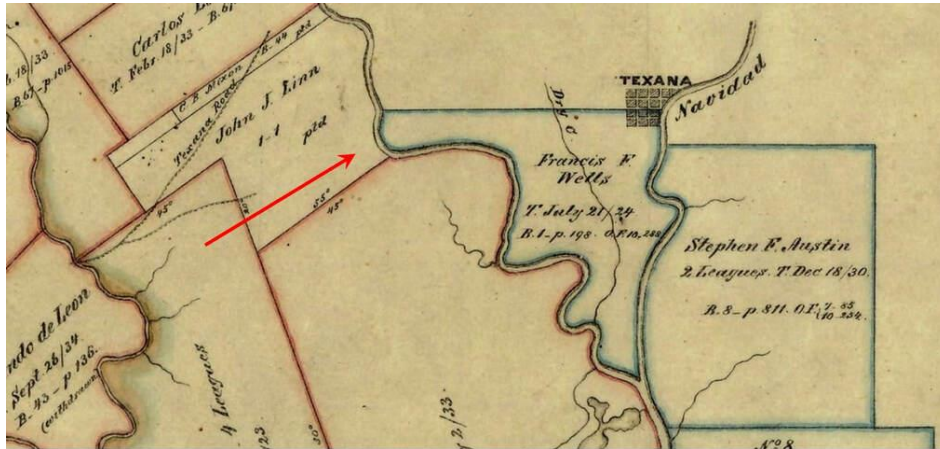
In his book "Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas", [John J. Linn](#) wrote "... During this year (1830) General Teran sent two hundred soldiers to establish a military post on the Lavaca River. This addition to our scant population gave a decided impetus to trade. I engaged to supply the troops with all articles suitable to their wants." [Linn 1986 p. 13]. At a later point in the book, he also wrote "... There were in Victoria and on the Lavaca River above two hundred soldiers, who had been sent by the orders of General Teran in 1831. He had intended building a fort on the Lavaca; the definite position had not been decided upon, but the manufacture of brick had been commenced at a place called 'El Banco Colorado,' or 'The Red Bank', on the west bank of the Lavaca and about three miles west of Texana. The works were under the control of Don Manuel Choval (*Rafael Chowell?*), a gentlemen of birth and education, commissioned by General Teran. ... The immediate commander of the troops was Captain Artiaga, also a perfect gentleman and an old officer, who had served throughout the Mexican Revolution. ... After the surrender of Velasco (late Jun-1832) and the intrigues of Santa Anna had been developed, and after the death of General Teran (3-Jul-1832), who committed suicide by falling upon his sword, Commissioner Choval resigned, and Captain Artiaga informed General Mexia that he wished to be relieved of the responsibilities of his position, as he did not favor the movements of Santa Anna. An order arrived directing the removal of the whole army, together with the workmen at the brick-kiln, some thirty or

*forty in number. These latter were from various parts of Mexico, who had been convicted of offenses against the laws and were known here as 'the chain-gang'. .... Lieutenant-Colonel Villasana arrived in a schooner in the bay to transport the troops to Matamoros, but had no funds with which to pay for provisions and other expenses. He had, however, authority to draw on the custom-house at Matamoros. ... As the 'Lavaca command' was indebted to me for supplies, Captain Artiaga called on me and stated that he was ordered to abandon the proposed fort; that he needed supplies, and that Villasana would draw on the Matamoros custom-house for the same. I knew their impecunious condition and the venture of accepting Villasana's check in payment, but so anxious were we all to get rid of the military that I determined to supply their necessities and run the risk of ever receiving pay, in order to contribute to the peace and prosperity of our country. All this was consummated. I supplied all their wants, and received of Villasana an order on the custom-house at Matamoros for some EIGHT HUNDRED and odd dollars. I sent the draft to a friend in Matamoros for collection. He was offered payment upon the basis of a ruinous discount which he did not deem at all equitable or just, and the proposed liquidation was rejected. .... But I have failed to receive one cent of that sum up to the present day. After the departure of the above-mentioned troops Texas enjoyed a period of peaceful quiet, absolutely free from the presence of Mexican soldiery, until the year 1835." [Linn 1883 pp.18-21].*

Mindora Bagby McCallick (1906-1973), then a high school student, wrote an essay entitled "The Local History of Jackson County" to compete for the Caldwell Prize in Local History, which was judged by The University of Texas History Dept. Her essay, among others, was awarded a "Special Mention" and published in the University of Texas Bulletin of 22-Oct-1924, which said in part "As late as 1832 the Mexican Government kept soldiers in a fort that stood on a high bluff on the west side of the Lavaca River. The traces of the fort and the old mission have almost disappeared and there are very few people living in the county at present who can locate the sites where they stood. At Dimmett's Landing on the Lavaca ([Dimitt's Landing was on the west bank near the mouth of the Lavaca River](#)), the Texans, in the revolution with Mexico, received many of their supplies and ammunition. About thirty-five years ago some of this land was put in cultivation and old cannon balls, bayonets, sabers, and muskets were plowed up." [Bagby 1924].

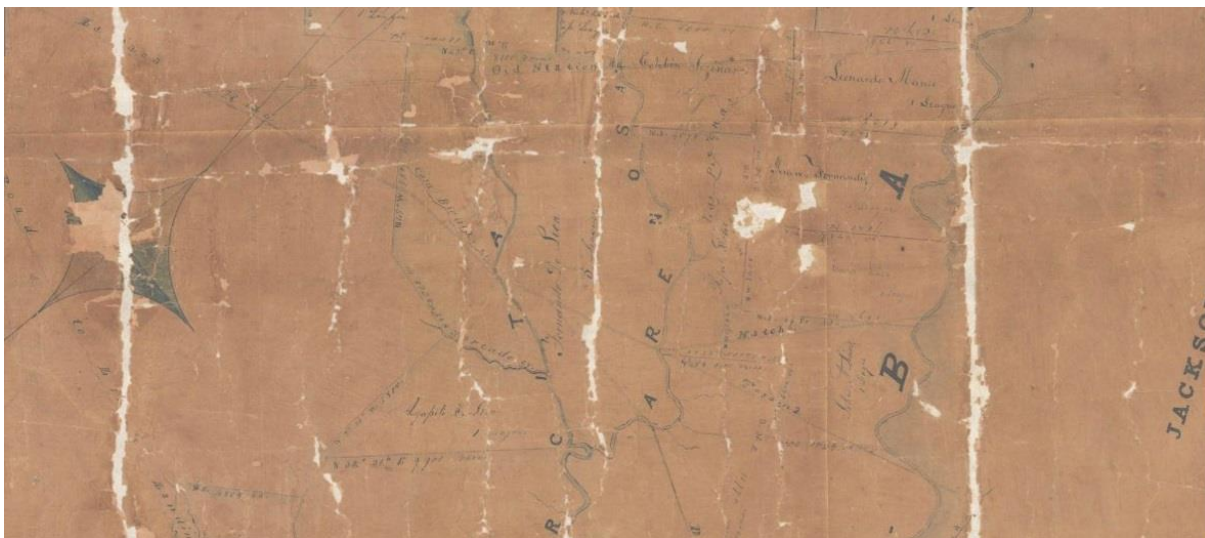
Ira Thomas Taylor published the book "The Cavalcade of Jackson County" in 1938, with a small chapter entitled "Last Camp Site of Mexican Army in Jackson County". It says "As late as 1831 and 1832 a Mexican army of some two hundred men with some thirty or forty convicts was stationed within the present boundaries of Jackson County, in the southeast corner of the John Linn Survey and on the west side of the Lavaca River near the present home of Charley Jones. It had been proposed by the Mexican Government to build a fort undoubtedly intended to overawe and if necessary to exterminate the citizens who had come from the United States in good faith to make their homes in Jackson County. ... This military camp under the command of Captain Artiaga at a point called "El Banco Colorado" or the "Red Bank," was an army camp as well as a penal colony for convicts from old Mexico. The convicts were engaged in making brick and shipping them by boat to ports in old Mexico. Brick were actually manufactured there at that early date, and a number of such brick have been dug up from that brickyard and are now souvenirs of many of our citizens. ... This army was removed and the camp abandoned by order of the Mexican Government in July, 1832. ... All that remains of this old camp site on the high river bank is part of the remains of the old brick kiln." [Taylor 1938 pp. 58-59]. The John J. Linn survey is shown in Figure 13 below, with a red arrow indicating the approximate location of Barranco Colorado,

also showing an old road segment which appears headed toward it. The (northern fork) road segment labeled as “Texana Road” appears to be a portion of the trail from Guadalupe Victoria to [San Felipe de Austin](#), although it is the southern fork that actually seems pointed towards [Texana](#).



**Figure 13: Detail from “Victoria County” map, 21-Nov-1858 by Charles W. Pressler ([TGLO Map# 4115](#))**

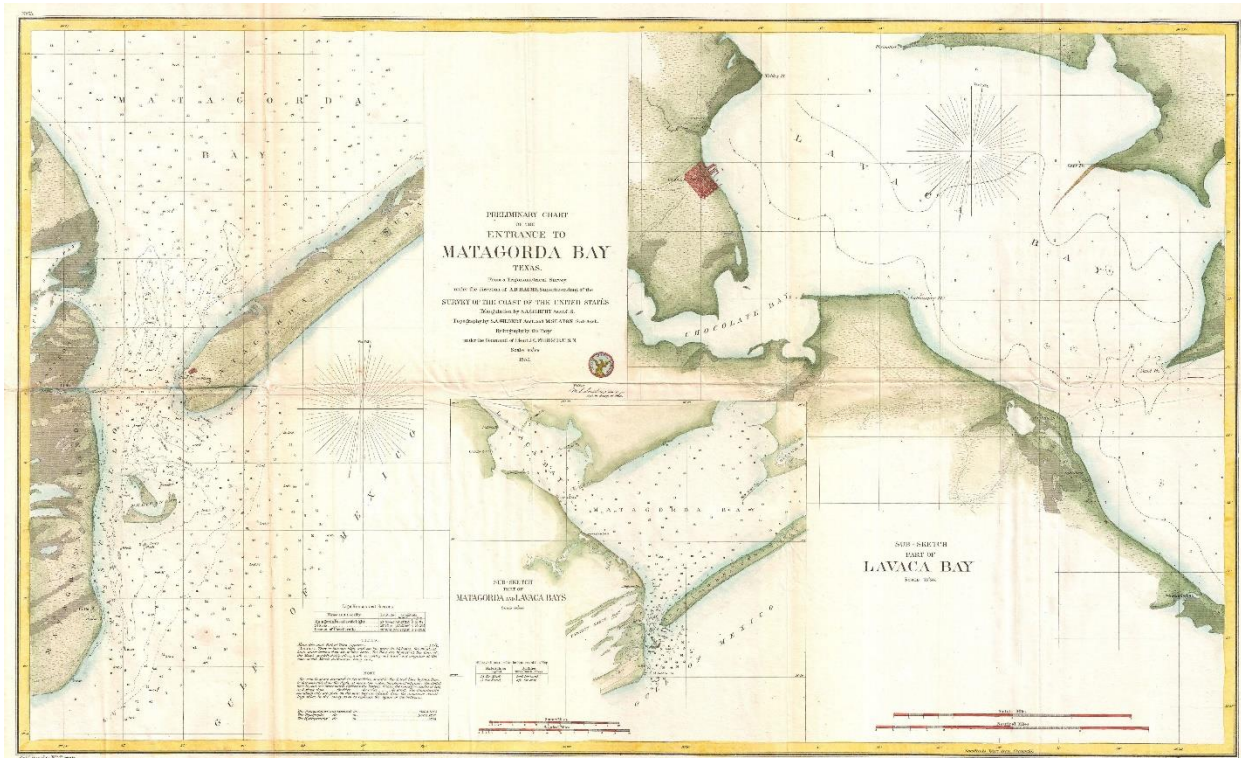
An earlier map created by Edward Linn in 1838 also shows these road segments, although it is in a degraded condition and is hard to read. In this map (a portion illustrated in Figure 14), the southern fork is labeled as “Texana” and the northern fork as “Hatch”. The Texana road crossing of the Lavaca River is shown to be just about the same location as the modern Jackson County Road 311 crossing, passing just south of the likely location of Barranco Colorado, although this map does not appear to show any indication of the post. In this period, the boundary between Jackson and Victoria counties was the Lavaca River, although it later became Arenosa Creek, placing Barranco Colorado in modern Jackson County.



**Figure 14: portion of Linn 1838 Connected Map of Victoria County ([TGLO Map# 1946](#))**

If one examines Figures 4 and 10, it can be seen that a deep-water but narrow channel existed through Paso Cavallo into Matagorda Bay. Later, an 1857 chart by the U.S. Coastal Survey shows a more

accurate rendering, Figure 15. The point of land still attached to the mainland that is closest to Paso Cavallo is labeled as Alligator Head (later to become Port O'Connor), and the island just off that point is labeled as Bayucos Island.



**Figure 15: 1857 USCS chart of Entrance to Matagorda Bay [Bache 1857]**

It seems odd that Barranco Colorado was lost to history since it was occupied for perhaps two years where bricks were made, yet no substantial structural remains of a fort were left (as at [Anahuac](#)), especially when compared with the 1832 [Fort Velasco](#) which was occupied for only about two months.

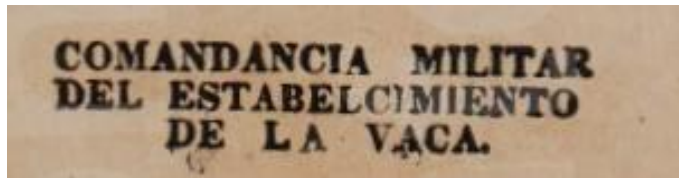
## DETAILS FROM PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Now that some of the early mapping efforts have been presented, and a number of “secondary documents” reported that some kind of fort or military detachment existed on the lower Lavaca, can some “primary documents” verify the story, or provide more details of its construction, size or history?

A review of the [Béxar Archives](#) reveals over 100 letters to/from/about Aniceto Arteaga and the Lavaca post from 25-May-1830 to 16-Aug-1832 at locations shown as “Guadalupe” or “Barranco Colorado”, perhaps indicating that (like Linn mentioned) some soldiers stayed in Guadalupe Victoria (modern Victoria TX) and some (perhaps convict laborers and their guards) on the Lavaca River making bricks for a fort, until early in 1831 when all moved to the fort. Many additional dispatches are found for coastal detachments and ship arrivals in the area just before and during the creation of Barranco Colorado. Review of the documents logged in the Béxar Archives Calendar for the latter half of 1832, though,

indicate a likely error in recording the year of Arteaga's letters; almost all seem to properly be for 1831, since Arteaga wrote the numeral 1 much like a check mark, which has been confused with the numeral 2. Examination of his other letters indicates he wrote the numeral 2 in a different fashion, and this author believes no Arteaga letters exist beyond Aug-1832 about this location.

During this period, Arteaga's correspondence is labeled with a handwritten header and (later) a stamped letterhead as "*Comandancia Militar Del Establecimiento De La Vaca*", apparently a name applied to the command involving both Guadalupe Victoria and Barranco Colorado.



In early 1830, a number of dispatches reveal that a schooner named **Zorra** was being used by the port of Matagorda - apparently the **Mexicana** had been replaced in the period since 1826. A letter in February of that year reported that the **Zorra** had fallen into a state of disrepair and was "useless" [Cosío 26-Feb-1830, frame 710]. The boat was reported by its captain, George Midkiff, to have deteriorated after two years of use, but was being salvaged for parts [Elosúa 2-Mar-1830]. So, it appears that the port of Matagorda operated in some form or fashion up to about the time that Barranco Colorado was established. Please see Appendix A for further details about this Mexican "port of Matagorda".

Even before he had established his headquarters at Matamoros, Terán wrote from San Fernando to Elosúa authorizing the port of Matagorda to receive supplies for Texas troops, consigned to one Salvador Flores [Terán 25-Feb-1830]. Flores seems to have been acting as a civilian agent to receive supplies for the Mexican military posts. It is unclear why a civilian agent was needed, although Terán cited the Decree of 29-Sep-1823 which had authorized duty-free importation of any goods to Texas for a period of seven years. A sailboat or schooner called the **Oscar**, one such ship bringing supplies from New Orleans for troops in Texas in Feb-1830, went off course and was overdue, and then was apparently found and escorted by the schooner **Constante** into the Mexican port of Matamoros (Brazos Santiago), before being re-directed back to Matagorda in Apr-1830. However, it instead traveled all the way back to New Orleans, and the supplies for Texas had to be sent on another ship [Terán 24-Apr-1830].

During the Spring of 1830, a number of ships called at the ports of the middle Texas coast, perhaps demonstrating by their example the need for an increased presence of Mexican authorities, such as that intended with Barranco Colorado. One of these was the merchant schooner **Sol**, Captain Pierre Boujean, who arrived from New Orleans at Copano on 18-Apr-1830 with goods, provisions and passengers [Cosío 23-Apr-1830, frames 929-930]. It returned in a similar fashion again from New Orleans, arriving back at Copano on 9-Jun-1830 [Cosío 2-Jul-1830, frames 149-150 & Elosúa 5-Jul-1830, frames 303 & 306]. Both trips presumably traveled via Aransas Pass as shown in Navarro's chart of Figure 11.

A schooner owned by Victoria merchant John J. Linn named the **Oposición** arrived from New Orleans at the anchorage at the mouth of the Lavaca River on 27-Apr-1830, with trade goods and John's two brothers, Edward and Charles Linn. The vessel was first reported by Sgt. José María de la Garza of the

detachment at that point, observing the brothers did not have the proper passports, and also suspected smuggling of tobacco. Some drama ensued, when the Comisario of Goliad, José Bonifacio Galan, initially declined to travel to Lavaca to inspect the ship, since he insisted on a personal military escort. Eventually, Eugenio Navarro and José Valentin Garcia were then ordered to investigate, but found no evidence of smuggling [DeLaGarza 1830].

The *Oposición* returned to New Orleans and then Lavaca again on 27-Jul-1830, bringing three more passengers and 14 tons of cargo [Arteaga 25-Aug-1830]. The Linn brothers, unable to obtain valid passports, had to return aboard when this ship left Texas for New Orleans [Cosío 13-Aug-1830, frames 483-484].

A curious incident also occurred in this period involving the arrival of a “launch” from Matamoros. First reported when found abandoned on the Gulf beach south of Punta de Matagorda on 25-May-1830 by Corporal Francisco de la Garza, it was 19’ long x 7’ wide x 5’ deep, had 5 oars per side, but needed caulking repair. Although events are not perfectly clear from the snippets of information in the many dispatches, it appears that a group of 10 armed Mexicans, 2 sailors and an American captain had come from Matamoros to the mouth of Matagorda Bay, claiming to be under orders of Terán and the captain of the port of Matamoros (Luis Asqueta), to commandeer all available merchant ships from Matagorda to Corpus Christi for use back at Matamoros. Their “launch” was abandoned at Matagorda Bay, perhaps since it needed repair, and somehow they acquired a small sailing vessel, taking the masts and sails from the damaged *Zorra*, and also Corporal José María Becerra (commander at the port of Matagorda), to travel on to Los Mosquitos (above modern San Antonio Bay). There, they encountered Mexican officers such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Eugenio Navarro who had been sent to investigate their claims, since they were suspected of really being corsairs or pirates. It is tempting to conclude that Terán and his subordinates did indeed send them, to gather vessels to support his efforts at colonization and fort-building since the government failed to fund the ships needed, although such direct evidence has yet to be found. The group then returned to Matamoros [Cosío 12-Jun-1830].

The abandoned launch was eagerly claimed by the port of Matagorda as a replacement for the *Zorra*. [Elosúa 21-Jun-1830, frames 823-824]. However, the captain of that port, George Midkiff, found that it would take substantial repair and cost, and Terán wanted the vessel for the harbor of Matamoros (Brazo de Santiago) and his wish apparently prevailed [Midkiff 1-Jul-1830].

The schooner *Hetta*, under Captain Nathaniel Lewis, arrived on 8-Jun-1830 from New Orleans with 57 settlers for Austin’s Colony, first being spotted from the port of Matagorda by Francisco de la Garza. The vessel anchored in Lavaca Bay near the Garcitas anchorage, and was inspected by a small group including [Fernando de Leon](#). After dropping the Austin colonists, the vessel apparently continued on to the Los Mosquitos landing, dropping a few other passengers and goods intended for Béxar. The vessel also seemed to have been targeted for seizure by Thomas M. Thompson, captain of a coast guard vessel based at Brazos Santiago, since it was suspected of smuggling tobacco. But, after Thompson’s presence and actions ruffled the feathers of local authorities, Terán admonished this captain, ordering him to leave enforcement to the local authorities and to return to Matamoros [Cosío 17-Jun-1830]. A letter from Ramón Músquiz to Governor Viesca seems to provide the missing clue that it was Thompson, perhaps willfully misinterpreting his instructions to pursue tobacco smuggling, who arrived at

Matagorda in the “launch”, and then traveled on to Sabinito before being ordered back to Matamoros [Músquiz 19-Jul-1830]. So, after abandoning the “launch”, he and his crew may have boarded the *Hetta* on its passage back through the port of Matagorda on its way to Los Mosquitos/Sabinito.

The surviving records specific to Barranco Colorado and the new Lavaca post seem to start on 25-May-1830, when Terán sends a letter to [Antonio Elosúa](#) (also spelled Elosúa), now the military commander for [Coahuila and Texas](#) based in San Antonio de Béxar, ordering him to assist creation of this post, and copying him on the instructions that Terán had given to the commander at Goliad (Mariano Cosío) and also to the unnamed commander of the war schooner *Constante* that same day [Terán 25-May-1830]. This was just one month after Terán had ordered the creation of Fort Tenoxitlán, so the Lavaca post was the second of the six new forts to be created. It seems the *Constante* was tasked with bringing munitions and money (20,000 pesos) from the commissary at Tampico, and the commander at Goliad had posted lookouts at Matagorda and Sabinito (a place name for the confluence of the Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers at the head of current San Antonio Bay, near what was known as Rancho de Los Mosquitos, Los Mosquitos or [Mesquite Landing](#)), to assist in its arrival, and also to observe for the expected arrival of the *Oscar*. On 31-May-1830, apparently in an attempt to fulfill the provision for Mexican colonization of Texas, Terán also wrote to Andres Sobrevilla (commander at Laredo) and [Martin de Leon](#) (empresario of the [Guadalupe colony](#) – the boundaries of which can be seen in Figure 3), ordering them to assist a group of families traveling from Zacatecas to the Guadalupe Colony. He also wrote to [Lucas Alamán](#) about it, indicating this was in coordination with the Lavaca establishment [Terán 31-May-1830]. This was part of a larger plan by Terán to create settlements of 500 families each at Galveston (Bay area, probably Anahuac), Lavaca and Tenoxitlán, which did not materialize [Morton 1945 p. 500]. Late in July, Terán wrote multiple letters when this group apparently was underway through Lampazos on its way to Laredo, indicating it consisted of 16 families and 31 “*presidarios*” (prisoners/convicts/inmates), while ordering local authorities to assist in any way [Cosío 30-Jul-1830, 1<sup>st</sup> document]. Later, Terán wrote to [Ramón Músquiz](#), advising him that he’d ordered the commandants at these three forts to report when the goal of 40 families was reached, apparently since this goal had not been reached by that point [Terán 15-May-1831].

On 1-Jun-1830, Terán wrote a series of letters to Antonio Elosúa, [Erasmo Seguin](#) and Stephen F. Austin, informing them that troops from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalions under the command of Captain Aniceto Arteaga were to embark from Matamoros on the sloop *General Bustamante* within two days to the mouth of the Lavaca, that a cavalry unit under Captain José Manuel Barberena (3<sup>rd</sup> Active Company of Tamaulipas) will march overland through Mier to La Bahia along with the Zacatecas families, and that Rafael Chowell was to be commissioner in building the Lavaca establishment. Chowell was trained as a mineralogist, and had accompanied Terán as a scientist in the 1828 boundary expedition. Attachments in the letters to Seguin include a copy of the specific instructions given to Chowell and Arteaga [Terán 1-Jun-1830, 5-Jun-1830].

The directives to Chowell include measurement of the latitude for the Lavaca anchorage (to help plot it on future navigation charts), to build a defensible structure for 100 soldiers at a flood-free site with fresh healthful water, questions about finding lime/clay/oyster shell and whether to build with brick or wood with the assistance of skilled laborers from Guadalupe or Austin’s Colony, seek assistance from [Martin de Leon](#) about pastures and farming, to contact the Commissioner at Béxar ([Erasmo Seguin](#)) for

funds if needed, and with knowledge that the state commander (Elosúa) was to be informed of all these plans.

The directives to Arteaga include taking 40 men from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalions at Matamoros aboard the sloop **General Bustamante** to the anchorage at the Lavaca River in “*la Bahía de San Bernardo*”, to create a military establishment on the right bank on the property of “*Colonia de Guadalupe*”, with the purpose of keeping an eye on “*la Norte Americanos de Austin*” across the Lavaca, while protecting both colonies from the “*aggressions of the savages*”, to be independent of the commander at La Bahia, but report his arrival to the regional commander (Antonio Elosúa at Béxar), and to otherwise communicate directly to Terán, to treat the North Americans with respect and contact Stephen F. Austin with honesty and enlightenment, to settle into the fort as soon as possible but stay at Guadalupe in the meantime, locate a cavalry company at La Bahia or Guadalupe, to construct using lime as directed by Rafael Chowell, and even advice about how to grow and process grain and also the importance of daily rifle maintenance, among other advice.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, Terán wrote again to Elosúa, quoting messages he sent to Arteaga and Barberena, that Barberena was to locate his cavalry troop at La Bahia under Arteaga’s overall command. Terán also wrote to [Erasmio Seguin](#) on the same day, requesting support for Barberena’s trip [Terán 5-Jun-1830]. From all of these messages, we can see that Terán was choreographing a large coordinated effort to both colonize and establish military posts in this part of Texas, according to provisions of the new Law of 6-Apr-1830.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, Cosío copied Elosúa with Terán’s message of May 25<sup>th</sup>, and that he was additionally posting a lookout for the **Constante** at the Lavaca anchorage [Cosío 6-Jun-1830, frames 375-376b]. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Elosúa wrote to [Martin de Leon](#), requesting aid for unloading the **Constante** upon its arrival [9-Jun-1830], to which De Leon agreed [De Leon 18-Jun-1830].

The first word from Texas on the **General Bustamante** comes, strangely, from a dispatch written by Elosúa on 21-Jun-1830 from Béxar to Cosío at Goliad, acknowledging prior letters from Cosío (on the 17<sup>th</sup>) and Rafael Chowell (on the 15<sup>th</sup>) stating the vessel had been “*thrown to the beach*” on 11-Jun-1830, and orders all possible aid [Elosúa 21-Jun-1830, frames 831-832]. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Elosúa writes to Terán, reporting the loss of the vessel, and including the Cosío letter of the 17<sup>th</sup>, indicating that the Chowell letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> was an enclosure [Elosúa 28-Jun-1830, frame 137]. Thus, the original copies of these initial reports (not found in the Béxar Archives) seem to have been sent off to Matamoros. No location is mentioned for the shipwreck.

One of the first things that Aniceto Arteaga did after arrival in Texas was to write to Elosúa, that he’d arrived at Guadalupe (Guadalupe Victoria, current Victoria TX) on 29-Jun-1830, and made an initial report of his forces [Arteaga 1-Jul-1830]. This report indicates that Arteaga had brought 1 officer and 35 infantrymen (total of 37 men), and their armament consisted of 33 muskets, 33 belts, 33 cartridge boxes and 66 gun flints – presumably the personnel and cargo brought and then rescued from the **General Bustamante**. This was confirmed in a dispatch the next day from Cosío to Elosúa, based on a report from his men posted at the Lavaca anchorage that Arteaga and troops had disembarked at the bar of the Lavaca River on 26-Jun-1830 [Cosío 2-Jul-1830, frames 147-148]. So, perhaps the wreck lies



somewhere near that Lavaca anchorage, and serves to illustrate the dangers of grounding in this shallow part of the bay.

The first muster reports or lists were made by a junior officer, José María Castillo, on 3-Jul-1830 from Guadalupe, which were certified by Rafael Chowell and Aniceto Arteaga, indicating 24 members of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 12 members of the 11<sup>th</sup> were present [Castillo 3-Jun-1830]. Including Arteaga himself, this totaled 37 men, in agreement with the prior report.

In short order, Arteaga also wrote to [Stephen F. Austin](#) informing him of his new post, and that Terán suggested contact to request help locating laborers [Arteaga 6-Jul-1830]. Rafael Chowell also wrote to Stephen F. Austin from Guadalupe, establishing contact, indicating they had left Brazos Santiago (the harbor and anchorage near to Matamoros) on 7-Jun-1830 but "*you already will have known how badly fortune has treated us*" (the shipwreck?), and also requesting two subscriptions to the newspaper of San Felipe [Chowell 10-Jul-1830]. Austin promptly replied to Arteaga on 13-Jul-1830, with a diplomatic response but not committing to laborers; however, he offered to request such in the newspaper [Austin 13-Jul-1830]. Indeed, in the [Texas Gazette](#) issue of 22-Jul-1830, the following notice did appear. From this notice, one might infer that initial plans included construction of some wooden structures.

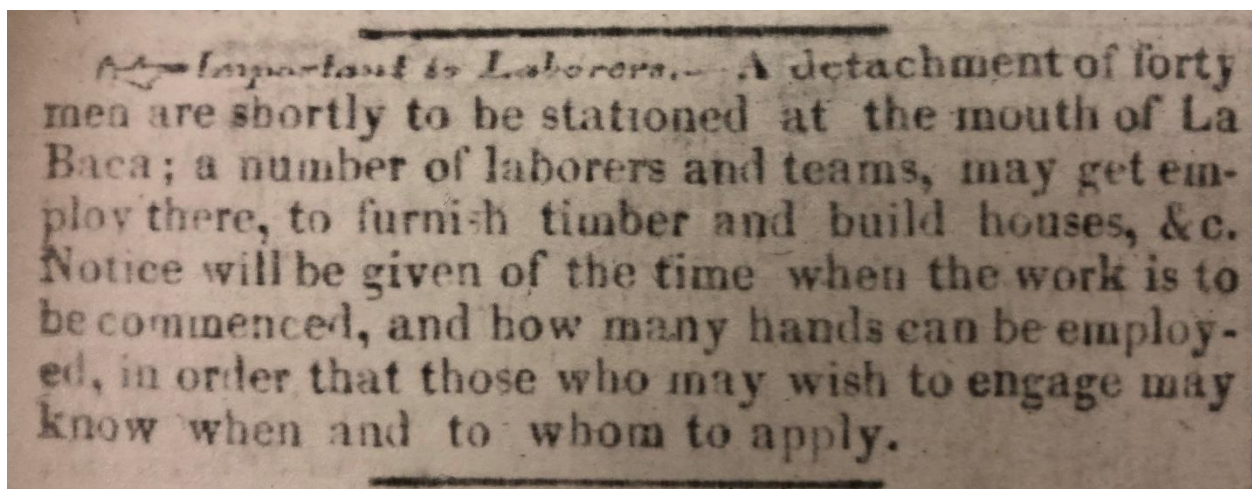


Figure 16: Notice in [Texas Gazette](#), 22-Jul-1830, Page 2, Column 1

Later in July, Arteaga received a letter from Elosúa, passing on a message from [George Fisher](#) on the Brazos, suggesting to aid Fisher or use the schooner *Cañon* [Elosúa 21-Jul-1830], which had been seized for importing contraband tobacco, so as to recoup the large imposed fine.

Terán wrote to Elosúa again informing him that supplies were coming to the port of Matagorda from New Orleans for troops in Texas, and these should be unloaded through the new Lavaca post, with money to be directed to Nacogdoches via Tenoxtitlán [Terán 17-Jul-1830]. Indeed, two schooners (*Pomona* and *Rover*) arrived on 21-Jul-1830 at Aranzazu from New Orleans, laden with supplies for troops in the Department of Texas, consigned again to Salvador Flores [Cosío 30-Jul-1830, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> documents], now including provisions for the new Terán forts. Perhaps these were the long-overdue supplies which the *Oscar* tried to bring earlier that year.

Beginning about July 1<sup>st</sup>, a practice began of making formal military reports to Antonio Elosúa, on or about the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month that reported the status of the detachment as of that point in time. To some degree, Elosúa clarified the information he wished to receive, including also reports on ship arrivals in the area [Elosúa 19-Aug-1830]. These reports took various forms, but continued on a regular basis until the Lavaca post was abandoned in the summer of 1832. One type was usually issued by the Captain of the detachment, and is often referred to as a “monthly military report” in the Béxar Archives Calendar, but was typically a high-level one-page tabular summary of the headcount and available armaments, and usually was forwarded to Elosúa with a cover letter dated a few days later into the month. This type of report is illustrated in Figure 17a below for the month of Aug-1830 [Arteaga 1-Aug-1830]. In this example, the 11<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalion is represented with no officers, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 10 soldiers, the 12<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalion by 1 Lieutenant, 1 Sergeant, 2 buglers and 21 soldiers. In addition, there was the overall commander (Arteaga), making the total headcount of 38 present in Guadalupe at this early stage, obviously reflecting the troops that arrived on the **General Bustamante**.

12<sup>ma</sup> Batall<sup>on</sup> Perm<sup>ente</sup> Partida de la Vaca

Estado de manipular la f<sup>uerza</sup>, armamento, y municiones correspondientes a los Regimientos del n.º 11. y n.º 12.

Fuera efectiva	Comando					Armamento	Suma	
	Comandante	Alférez	Sergente	Corporal	Soldado		Fuente	Suma
Hizo de f <sup>uerza</sup> el n.º 11. en esta f <sup>uerza</sup> .....	0.	3.	1.	5.	10.	Hizo el n.º 11.....	12.	12.
Hizo de f <sup>uerza</sup> el n.º 12. en esta f <sup>uerza</sup> .....	Hizo 3. 2. 0. 23. 24.					Hizo el n.º 12.....	24.	24.
<u>Total de toda la f<sup>uerza</sup>.....</u>	<u>H. 2. 2. 1. 33. 36.</u>					<u>Suma total.....</u>	<u>36.</u>	<u>36.</u>

✓ Villa de Guadalupe Agosto 1.º de 1830.

José R. Castillo

**Figure 17a: Monthly “summary” report by Arteaga and Castillo from Guadalupe dated 1-Aug-1830**

As Arteaga’s command grew, this type of report grew in complexity. Just two months later, the report for Oct-1830 included additional information, sometimes including side notes, as shown in Figure 17b [Arteaga 1-Oct-1830]. In this example, Arteaga lists himself as a Captain from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Permanent Battalion, 2 Lieutenants, 2 Sub-lieutenants (also sometimes called “Alférez”), 6 Sergeants, 2 Buglers, 6 Corporals and 103 soldiers. Armaments include 117 muskets (with bayonets), 98 belts, 19 horses and 1080 cartridge boxes. A note at the bottom indicates that Reverend Friar Miguel Muro was appointed by Terán to serve as chaplain in concert with the garrison at La Bahía.

Establecimiento Militar de la Vaca

Estado q<sup>e</sup> manifiesta el numero de fuerza Armamento y municiones con q<sup>e</sup> se halla la guarnicion del yprerado en esta fecha.

Cuerpos.	Capitan.	Fuertes	Subtenientes	Aspirantes	Cornetas	Cabos.	Soldados	Fusiles y Ballones	Caraques	Caballos y Monturas	Cartuchos
2 <sup>do</sup> Batallon Permanente	1	"	"	"	"	"	1	1	1	"	10
11 <sup>mo</sup> B. <sup>to</sup> Permanente	"	"	1	1	"	1	26	28	28	"	280
1 <sup>o</sup> Co. de H.	"	2	1	4	2	1	53	60	60	"	600
3 <sup>ra</sup> Comp. de Art. del Tamauliz.	"	"	"	1	"	1	14	19	"	19	180
<b>Total</b>	1	2	2	6	2	6	103	117	98	19	1080

Guadalupe Octubre 1.<sup>o</sup> de 1830.

*Aniceto Arteaga*

Nota  
Se da de alta en este estado al Reverendo P. Miguel Muro capellan nombrado por el Es. Comandante Gral. p.<sup>o</sup> este establecimiento con agregacion ala compania de la Bahia del Espiritu Santo.

058/-1-0/

Figure 17b: Monthly "summary" report by Aniceto Arteaga from Guadalupe Victoria, 1-Oct-1830

Another type of report, usually described in the B xar Archives Calendar as a "commissary review report" or sometimes "roster report", is what might also be called a "muster report" and was often written by a junior officer but certified by Arteaga and Chowell, shown below in Figure 18 [Castillo 3-Aug-1830a]. These reports often included explanatory side notes, such as mention of deaths or desertions. In this example, we see the roster of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Guadalupe, including the names for their Sergeant (Marselo Leon), Corporal (Jos  Maria Ramos) and 10 soldiers. A similar report is found for the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, listing a total of 41 enlisted personnel and 1 officer, but with 17 absent [Castillo 3-Aug-1830b]. Compared with the July report, we see the arrival of 12 members of the 11<sup>th</sup> and some new members of the 12<sup>th</sup> – perhaps these were those brought on the *Constante* (since it first detoured to Tampico), which had arrived at some point during July. There is also no indication yet of convicts.

11. mo Batall. fusil.

Piquete de Carabos.

Justificante de Revisas de Comisario Carada en el mes de la fha.

<u>Presvros.</u>	<u>Clase.</u>	<u>Nombres.</u>	<u>Destinos.</u>
Con Presvros. 20.	Seg <sup>ta</sup> 2 <sup>o</sup>	C. Marcelo Leon.....	1
	Cabo.	C. Jose Maria Ramos.....	1
	Trova.	C. Jose Diaz.....	1
		C. Gregorio Rodriguez.....	1
Con Presvros. 3.		C. Filomeno Baquer.....	1
		C. Antonio Pean.....	1
		C. Santos Flores.....	1
		C. Octaviano Novas.....	1
		C. Jose Maria Toboa.....	1
		C. Perfecta Alis.....	1
		C. Florentino Garcia.....	1
		C. Juan Flores.....	1
		<u>Total.....</u>	<u>12.</u>

Villa de Guadalupe Agosto 3 de 1830.

*Jose de Castillo*

Al Sr. Rafael Carral, Sub-comisario del Establecimiento Militar sobre la  
suma de \$ 1. el Com. de Intendencia D. Juan de Dios y Juan.

Certifico q<sup>ue</sup> hoy dia de la fha. se me han presentado en Revisa de  
Comisario la Individa q<sup>ue</sup> contina el antecedente por de Luis, he  
visto interceder al Com. de Intendencia de Guadalupe. Villa  
de Guadalupe Agosto 3 de 1830.

*Jose de Castillo*  
*Rafael Carral*

3-1830

Figure 18: Monthly "muster" report by Castillo from Guadalupe dated 3-Aug-1830

One might notice that, near the bottom side of Figure 18, there is some handwritten text in which Rafael Chowell certifies that Aniceto Arteaga was present for the commissary review. However, for the first few months, separate documents or pages were also used to certify the presence of certain individuals, especially Aniceto Arteaga. An example of such for this same review (3-Aug-1830) is illustrated in Figure 19 below [Chowell 3-Aug-1830]. Please note that the actual signature of Rafael Chowell in Figures 18 and 19 seem to use the spelling "Chowell" for his surname, so that is the spelling adopted here, although other spellings (Chovell, Chovel, Choval) are sometimes observed.

Comisaria de la Plaza      Sumatana de la Decolección

El Cid. no. Gregorio Mochel. Sub Comisario del C. de la Plaza de la Plaza

Certifico q. el día de hoy he visto en el C. de la Plaza de la Plaza al Cid. no. Cap. Aniceto Arteaga, del Bat. no. 1.º de Inf. de la Plaza de la Plaza, en la Villa de Guayaquil, a las tres de la tarde de este día de hoy de mil ochocientos treinta y tres años.

Raf. Chowell

Figure 19: Certificate of attendance for Aniceto Arteaga at commissary review, by Rafael Chowell



Comisario del Real Militar de la Nueva

Lista con el sueldo de los individuos en esta plaza los siguientes individuos.

Nombre	Dominos
Antonio Aguado	100
Antonio Alvarado	100
Gil Zalazar	100
Domingo Mendonza	100
Jose Maria Juan	100
Bernardino Nolasco	100
Natael Mora	100
Juan Romera Ramon	100
Antonio Rodriguez	100
Jose M. Beltran	100
Antonio Carrillo	100
Felipe Parada	100
Jose Mora	100
Estadete Morales	100
Ferdinand Martinez	100
Jose M. Guel	100
Jose Prieto	100
Prisiano Hernandez	100
Petro Peral	100
Jose Ortega	100
Manuel Galles	100
Jose Guerrero	100
Jose M. Rodriguez	100
Santiago Romera	100
Jose Maria Garcia	100
Jose M. Solis	100

Juan Mendon	100
Jose Galavis	100
Domingo Santalla	100
Julian Antina	100
Feliciano Reinos	100
Petro Delgado	100
Pentura Galat	100
Fernando Campos	100
Total	3000

Atal y Papeles no han ocurrido.  
Guadalupe Septe 3. 1830.

M. Trujillo

El Comisario Rafael Chowell, Comisario del Real Militar de la Nueva.

Certifico que los 90 individuos que se me presentaron en esta plaza son los individuos contenidos en el antecedente por el Sr. Comisario. En testimonio de lo cual se expide este por el Sr. Comisario. En Guadalupe a los 3 de Septiembre de 1830.

Rafael Chowell

Figure 21: Commissary Review Report for Convicts by Trujillo at Guadalupe, 3-Sep-1830

Interestingly, the monthly salary of the various positions are revealed in another type of report, usually referred to as a "budget report" authored by the commissioner or unit paymaster. Most especially in those for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Active Company, it can be seen that they itemized each role, an example from Feb-1831 is shown in Figure 22 below – Captain (125 pesos), Lieutenant (66 pesos, 5 reales, 4 granos), First Alferez (50 pesos), Second Alferez (41 pesos, 5 reales, 4 granos), Sergeant (30 pesos), Drummer (12 pesos), Corporal (25 pesos) and Soldier (20 pesos). Convicts were to receive a stipend of 8 pesos per month to a common account, be dressed in coarse brown or green cloth to distinguish them from the soldiers, provided with sufficient rations for their families, yet allowed a ration of brandy or whiskey [Terán 19-Sep-1830, Chowell 12-Oct-1830].

3.<sup>a</sup> Comp.<sup>a</sup> de Ultramar Activa de San Mateo

Presupuesto y forma el habilitado de la expedición del barco que viene de  
Comp.<sup>a</sup> con arreglo a su fuerza del mes de la fecha.

<u>Items</u>	<u>Clases</u>	<u>Significancia</u>	<u>Pesos. Rs. C.</u>
1. Capitan	al mes		125
2. Teniente	a d.		66.5
3. Alférez 1. <sup>o</sup>	a d.		50
4. Alférez 2. <sup>o</sup>	a d.		44.5
5. Aspirante	a 30 p. cada uno al mes		90
6. Familia	al mes		12
7. Cabos	a 25 p. cada uno al mes		150
8. Soldados	a 20 p. cada uno al mes		140
9. La Satisfacción de familias	al mes		44.5
<u>Suma</u>			<u>1712</u>

Deducción

Se deduce a esta cantidad la de cincuenta pesos  
quatro reales que impide el documento de Yndios a  
8 m. por peso

Líquido habido ..... 1666.4

Yto y no  
Maribrena

Guadalupe 1.<sup>o</sup> de Feb de 1831  
José Adeodato Vivero

Figure 22: Budget Report for 3<sup>rd</sup> Active Company by José Adeodato Vivero dated 1-Feb-1831

Another voyage of the *Constante* arrived at "Garcitas" (presumably the anchorage at the head of Lavaca Bay near the mouth of Garcitas Creek) on 22-Sep-1830, bringing 75 recruits (32 from 11<sup>th</sup>, 43 from 12<sup>th</sup>) and 6000 pesos [Arteaga 12-Oct-1830]. These personnel numbers do not show up in the subsequent



reports for the Lavaca detachment, so many of these soldiers ended up as reinforcements for other posts. A letter from Terán indicates these troops were new recruits from Nuevo Leon, gathered at Matamoros, and then sent on to Lavaca. They were intended for the Nacogdoches post commanded [José de las Piedras](#), and he sent Lt. Juan Perez de Arze from Nacogdoches to retrieve them; in the meantime they were housed at Lavaca and supplied by Chowell [De Las Piedras 2-Aug-1830]. The money, though, was intended for Rafael Chowell and the Lavaca post [Terán 15-Sep-1830]. This reference also indicates that Terán was already encountering some delays in obtaining the full budgeted funding from the Mexican Treasury for his forts in Texas, estimated at 8000 pesos annually per post.

The monthly reports for Jan-1831 showed that 34 convicts were present (now at Barranco Colorado), along with 24 soldiers of the 12<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalion. Each group had also suffered one death in the prior month. An additional 35 soldiers were posted at Guadalupe or other places, some perhaps on leave [Trujillo 3-Jan-1831, Castillo 3-Jan-1831].

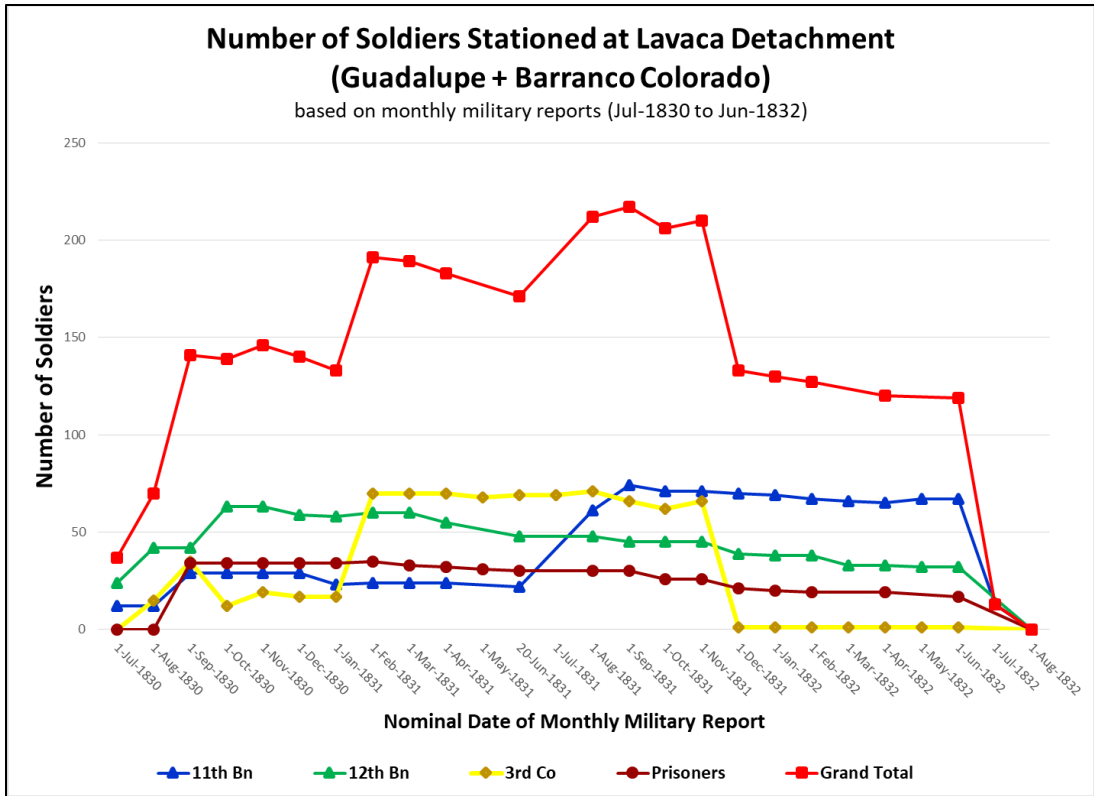
Since the various military reports are scattered throughout the Béxar Archives over about 2 years, and often separated from each other and their cover letters, it would not be especially productive to separately discuss each and every one. The examples mentioned above in Figures 17 to 22, and all others located to date, are indexed in the following table.

Date	Cover Letter	11th Battalion	12th Battalion	3rd Co. (Cavalry)	Summary	Attendance Certified	Presidarios
1-Jul-1830	132:115-116a	132:232-234	132:229-231		132:116b		
1-Aug-1830	133:24, 458-459, 796	133:141-142	133:143-145	133:10-13	133:24	133:146-147	
1-Sep-1830	134:279, 297-298	134:96-98	134:81-88	134:5, 261-262	134:33	134:70, 80	134:91-95, 89-90
1-Oct-1830	135:351	134:990-992	134:984-987	134:887-890, 896	134:934	134:980-983	134: 988-989
1-Nov-1830	135:959, 965	135:966-968a	135:968b-971	135:904-907, 942-943; 136:37-39	136:61-62	135:960-962	135:972-974, 940-941
1-Dec-1830		136:781-783	136:774-777b	136:657-660, 664-666	136:702-704	136:784-787	136:778-780
1-Jan-1831	137:786, 795	137:574-576	137:591-594	137:482-489	137:494-495	137:577-580	137:588-590
1-Feb-1831	138:591	138:592-594a	138:594b-597b	138:435-442	138:492-493	138:443, 600b-602	138:598-600a
1-Mar-1831	139:280			139:64-72	139:63		
1-Apr-1831	139:835			139:827-833	139: 836		
1-May-1831	140:177			140:241, 518-523			
1-Jun-1831	141:495-7, 683 142:159-61			141:448, 508-510, 663-664	142:112		141:498-499
1-Jul-1831	143:182			143-603			
1-Aug-1831	152:205-206, 143:261			143:379, 380-383, 514-515	143:385		
1-Sep-1831	144:255, 301, 303			144:185-188	144:178		144:179-180
1-Oct-1831	153:773			145:28-29, 98-100	145:27		153:765-767
1-Nov-1831	153:794			145:702-706, 850	145:694-695		153:791-793
1-Dec-1831	154:253				146:365-366		146:363-364
1-Jan-1832	147:219				147:17-18		147:15-16, 217
1-Feb-1832					147:800-801		147:802-803
1-Mar-1832	148:763				148:337-338		
1-Apr-1832	149:282-284, 335				149:76		149:77-78
1-May-1832	150:356				149:719-720		
1-Jun-1832	150:736, 740				150:458		150:433-434
1-Jul-1832	151:548, 637-638						

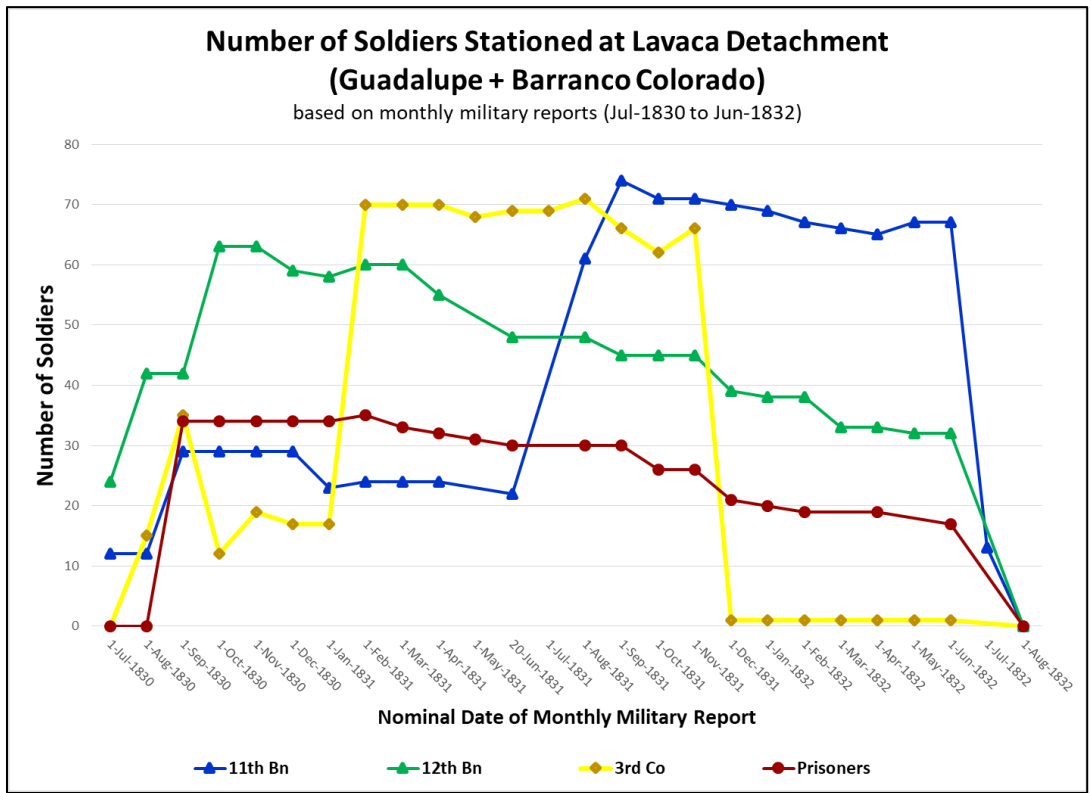
**Table 1: Index to all known Lavaca monthly military reports found in the Béxar Archives (Roll:Frames)**

Table 1 indicates that the unit “muster” reports (and their certification letters) were used only through Feb-1831; however, the “summary” and “prisoner” reports were used for the entire period. Empty cells indicate that some reports are not found, although the majority are available in the Béxar Archives. The pink-tinted cells were addressed from Barranco Colorado, and the uncolored cells from Guadalupe. Several of the first reports of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Co. were from Goliad, in the green-tinted cells.

A census of sorts was made based on these reports, and a graph made of the military population over time (see Figures 23 and 24 below). These graphs reveal major shifts, which are discussed after the graphs, along with other major developments.



**Figure 23: Military Population of Lavaca Detachment (with Grand Total)**



**Figure 24: Military Population of Lavaca Detachment (separated by unit identity)**

From the discussion above, and the graphs in Figures 23 and 24, it can be seen that there was an initial growth period where several deliveries of soldiers and convict laborers brought the Lavaca detachment's size up to about 140-150 personnel for a period of Sep-1830 to Jan-1831. Initially, all of the reports were from Guadalupe, indicating that Arteaga used the existing town of Guadalupe Victoria as a base, perhaps while investigating the area and selecting a specific site for Barranco Colorado. However, beginning with the reports of 1-Oct-1830, the location of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the convict group switches to Barranco Colorado, perhaps indicating the convicts were put to work building a brick kiln and initial structures, and the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion were their guards. One document suggests this was to include "... *manufacture of barracks*" [Chowell 19-Aug-1830]. This arrangement continued through early January of 1831.

In Aug-1830, it can also be seen that Terán was also planning for the religious welfare of the soldiers, prisoners and settlers, since he wrote to one Father Miguel Muro, soliciting him to become the chaplain at Lavaca with an annual salary of 500 pesos and an inducement to pacify the local Karankawa and Jaraname tribes through settlement and work at the new establishment [Terán 21-Aug-1830]. Muro's assignment apparently came to pass as indicated in Figure 17b. So, again, we see more evidence of Terán's master plan. Indeed, within later monthly military reports, a single "Capellán" (chaplain) is reported present at Barranco Colorado from Feb-1831 to Jun-1832.

During this period, Terán apparently felt the initial directives to Chowell and Arteaga were not sufficient, and he created a model and plan for construction of a fort, which was sent to them in the Fall of 1830. In a letter to Chowell accompanying these items, he wrote "*In a wooden box I am sending you the model and plan which is to serve for the construction of the fort. Please note that the thickness of the walls has not been drawn to scale, and they should have the same thickness as any ordinary house, in proportion to the material with which they are constructed. Around this building, for a distance of 400 varas (about 1100 feet) no building shall be permitted, for it is to serve as the citadel in the settlement which is to be formed in the course of time. Also you should try to clear the ground of brush and any other objects which might tend to limit the effectiveness of firearms.*" [Terán 12-Oct-1830]. Terán also instructed Chowell to take down the details, and then promptly forward the model and plan on to Antonio Elosúa for use in building Fort Tenoxtitlán, which Chowell did the next month [Chowell 8-Nov-1830 & 17-Nov-1830]. Terán had also notified Elosúa (who notified the commander at Tenoxtitlán, [José Francisco Ruiz](#)) of the plan. Ruiz responded by requesting it be sent to him, and Elosúa did so in early December [Terán 20-Sep-1830]. Interestingly, Ruiz sent the box south again with Ensign Santiago Navayra to Samuel May Williams (at San Felipe), asking him to translate the plan into English (so that Anglo-American laborers could read it) and also the ensign was "*to look for a man capable of building the said house*" since Ruiz wrote "*I find myself without the necessary knowledge for building fortifications*" [Ruiz 26-Dec-1830]. A footnote in this reference notes with irony "... *that apparently Ruiz was going to employ Anglo Americans to build this fort whose purpose was to keep Anglo Americans out of Texas.*". Although the model and plan have apparently not survived, the important point is that Barranco Colorado and Fort Tenoxtitlán may have the same design for any main structure. Jack Jackson also felt that this design was to be used for Fort Lipantitlán [Jackson et al 2006 pp. 63-65]. Thus, if archival or archaeological evidence is found for any one of these, it might be concluded the others resembled such a design as well.

The graphs then reveal a major increase in the number of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Active Company beginning with the Feb-1831 report, and the location of Barberena's reports switches from Goliad to Guadalupe, based on an order to move there from Terán [Terán 30-Oct-1830]. Dispatches in the Béxar Archives tell us that Arteaga moved his command to Barranco Colorado on 7-Jan-1831, and that Barberena moved from Goliad to Guadalupe to take command there [Arteaga 12-Jan-1831], in what was Arteaga's first letter written from Barranco Colorado. Now counted as part of the "Lavaca detachment", this cavalry unit increases headcount to almost 200.

As the summer of 1831 arrived, the Lavaca detachment was afflicted with an epidemic of fevers and chills. The first report was from Guadalupe, where Captain Barberena wrote that he was suffering an illness caught on his way from Tampico, and that he could not travel to Goliad, where Colonel Elosúa was making a visit [Barberena 12-Jun-1831]. Ten days later, Arteaga first reports that fevers are causing problems at Barranco Colorado [Arteaga 22-Jun-1831]. A week after that, Arteaga reported he had so many "*patients and convalescents*" that he could not cover essential services such as guarding a schooner (the *Hetta*?). He also wrote requesting quinine and "*the necessaries to contain this evil somewhere.*" By the end of July, Arteaga reported that the fevers had continued, and he had 23 men of the 11<sup>th</sup> (virtually the entire complement), 18 men of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16 prisoners (about half of each group) that were gravely ill. He also requested relief from the troops at Goliad, needs for building a hospital, and that he might move to Guadalupe. Elosúa responded by asking the Goliad commander to supply infantry troops of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion there to relieve Arteaga, and acknowledges the difficulty to occupy the confiscated *Hetta*. Work had also stopped on the fort. By the end of August, Arteaga requested additional medicines [Arteaga 28-Jun-1831]. The symptoms suggest the illness was probably malaria and/or yellow fever (spread by mosquitos), diseases which were not uncommon during this period in coastal Texas.

A major influx of troops from the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion occurred in the period of Jul-1831. Apparently, a fresh group of about 75 soldiers and officers (and their provisions) of the 4<sup>th</sup> Company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Permanent Battalion of Tamaulipas was sent to relieve those few posted at Barranco Colorado, under orders from José Mariano Guerra [Guerra 10-Jun-1831], who had been placed in temporary command at Matamoros while Terán was away [Terán 16-May-1831]. Subsequent military reports at Lavaca show about this same number of troops of the 11<sup>th</sup> at Barranco Colorado (with almost identical makeup), and the previous report (20-Jun-1831) showed 22 members of the 11<sup>th</sup>. So, it is assumed that the net increase of about 50 troops of the 11<sup>th</sup> observed after this point was due to an exchange of troops of that Battalion, pushing headcount to above 200 (the figure mentioned by Linn). As already stated, it also appears the illness experienced at Barranco Colorado helped expedite the move of these reinforcements.

It was also in the summer of 1831 that the seizure of the schooner *Hetta/Hesta* occurred, alluded to in the aforementioned account by John S. Menefee. At Barranco Colorado, first notice of its presence was apparently the arrival of a (small?) boat loaded with goods that arrived there on or about 4-Jul-1831, after which the schooner itself was confiscated in Lavaca Bay due to its reputation for handling clandestine cargo. The ship was first guarded by Lieut. José María Castillo, a Sergeant and 12 soldiers (perhaps the very ones in Menefee's story). Local authorities such as Juan José Hernandez, Bonifacio Galan (Commissioner at Goliad) and [Rafael Manchola](#) (Alcalde of Goliad) adjudicated and confirmed the seizure [Arteaga 6-Jul-1831]. Later reports revealed its full cargo, as shown below in Figure 25. These included many crates, each marked for its intended recipient, and included Flour, Biscuits, Beans, Fish,



11-Dec-1831]. By Apr-1832, Arteaga complained that Barranco Colorado had not been supplied since January [Arteaga 11-Apr-1832]. Elosúa even asked [Erasmo Seguin](#) about a loan to provide provisions [Seguin 16-Apr-1832], and wrote to both Seguin and [Ramón Músquiz](#) to summon aid in the form of money, meat and other food from Goliad and Guadalupe Victoria [Elosúa 16-Apr-1832a]. The stress of this situation apparently caused one of the young lieutenants who had authored many muster reports for Barranco Colorado, José María Castillo, to be declared insane [Elosúa 16-Apr-1832b].

The schooner **Cañon** and its captain (Edward Pettit) had played a role in an unusual controversy about tobacco smuggling at the Brazos in the summer of 1830, when seized by George Fisher in his abortive attempts to establish the “*Aduana Maritima de Galveston*” at that location. But, the vessel then appears absent from the records in the Béxar Archives until early 1832 at the port of Matagorda, when it is again involved in controversy. Its arrival on 26-Feb-1832 in Lavaca Bay was first reported from Barranco Colorado by Rafael Chowell, who informed Goliad that the vessel was importing goods for local merchant John Linn and two others, that he would travel to Goliad with the cargo, and the vessel intended to call next at Copano [Chowell 26-Feb-1832]. It arrived there on 7-Mar-1832 with passengers, including Irish priest Father John Molly, two nuns (or monks) and two youngsters in their care, all under a valid passport for settlements on the Nueces [Elosúa 27-Mar-1832]. José Bonifacio Galan (Commissioner at Goliad) became upset about the circumstances of the vessel’s arrival, and he wrote to high-level authorities in Leona Victoria/Saltillo (greatly avoiding the local Texas chain-of-command) to complain, apparently since he had not been informed or invited to certify the arrival, but the authorities referred the matter back to Terán in Matamoros [Fernandez Rincón 24-Apr-1832]. Incredibly, though, even the Mexican federal Minister of Relations and the Governor of Coahuila and Texas got involved and issued orders about where to locate the passengers of Copano [Del Valle 7-May-1832, Músquiz 24-May-1832]. Thus, it appears a nasty “turf battle” ensued between Galan at Goliad, and the folks at Guadalupe Victoria and Barranco Colorado. It appears Terán later requested statements from Chowell and Arteaga, which were provided and in which both men indignantly refute the claims of and counter-charge Galan with stupidity and bad faith [Arteaga 12-Jul-1832 frames 554-556, Chowell 12-Jul-1832]. In all of this correspondence, the **Cañon** is often described as a “*Goleta Nacional*”, implying that its seizure back in 1830 probably resulted in it being taken into permanent ownership by the Mexican government.

It is not clear exactly what transpired next (that is, was it another movement along the coast or a subsequent voyage’s return trip), and few details are given in available correspondence, but it was reported the **Cañon** “*fell to pieces in the Bar of Matagorda*” on or before 23-May-1832 [Cosío 30-May-1832], so its shipwreck is probably one of many yet to be found in the treacherous and shifting shoals at Paso Cavallo.

During this period of time, a letter from Terán to Arteaga indicates that approval had been granted for Arteaga’s retirement [Terán 12-Apr-1832]; however, this would change due to ongoing events (such as those described above) and into the summer of 1832.

Arteaga chose to move his command from Barranco Colorado back to Guadalupe on 1-May-1832 “*to escape from the illnesses that I experienced last year*”, as well as scurvy and bad water. He also repeated his complaint that the cavalry troop which had been posted at Guadalupe from Goliad did not have any supplies, that he could not provide for them, and pleaded for better-supplied cavalry [Arteaga

15-May-1832]. In light of these events, Arteaga recognized that he had to postpone his retirement, and wrote to Elosúa about its delay, and also that he had received orders to withdraw from Lavaca [Arteaga 28-Jun-1832 frames 105-106]. The shortages extended to their salaries, and also gunpowder and bullets in the summer, and was eventually referred up the chain of command to Matamoros for aid [Arteaga 1-Jul-1832]. Arteaga was told he could request ammunition from the limited supplies at Goliad [Elosúa 30-Jun-1832].

Aniceto Arteaga learned of the [Battle of Velasco](#) and/or its prelude quickly, as there were travelers that passed that way, and they left statements that were preserved by the authorities at Lavaca and Guadalupe. One was an account by an express mail rider from Guadalupe to Brazoria, Romualdo Quintanilla, who met one Cayetano Garza traveling the other way (from Brazoria to Mier) while stopped at the Garcitas Creek crossing. Garza reported that 100 Americans were marching from Brazoria to Anahuac as of 17-Jun-1832, and that he (Garza) had met one Vicente Padilla (traveling from Velasco to Nacogdoches) at the San Bernard, and that Padilla had said the same number of Americans had disarmed 100 men at the mouth of the Brazos as of 16-Jun-1832 (although he'd not directly witnessed such) [Quintanilla 24-Jun-1832, Arteaga 24-Jun-1832]. Apparently, Quintanilla had ordered one of his accompanying soldiers (Miguel Lopez) to take Garza to the Lavaca Post, where both Lopez and Garza were further interviewed, at the specific request of Arteaga. The dates would indicate these men probably observed the uproar among the Brazoria colonists about the [Anahuac Disturbances](#) but BEFORE the actual [Battle of Velasco](#) on 26-27 Jun 1832.

Arteaga got confirmation that a true battle had occurred at Velasco on or before 2-Jul-1832, since he was provided with a Spanish translation of a letter sent by one of the Texians at the battle, [James B. "Britt" Bailey](#), requesting reinforcements [Bailey 27-Jun-1832]. Apparently, the letter was translated by [José M. J. Carbajal](#) (probably at San Felipe de Austin) and then sent down to Arteaga, who copied it and sent the copy on to Elosúa at Béxar. [Rámon Músquiz](#), the political chief then visiting at San Felipe, also wrote twice to the military commander at Lavaca with news of the [Battle of Velasco](#), suggesting reinforcements [Músquiz 30-Jun & 2-Jul-1832].

The military responses of the Lavaca detachment to the [Anahuac Disturbances](#) and the [Battle of Velasco](#) are very difficult to reconstruct in modern times, due to the fact that many different commanders issued conflicting orders or dispatched forces often at a distance in terms of time and miles (some documents of which probably did not survive). These orders were also probably almost as confusing to the participants at the time. And, as discussed above, the Lavaca detachment had suffered many deprivations, difficulties and distractions. There were responses both before and after the [Battle of Velasco](#), which evolved as new information became available. Here, an attempt to reconstruct the main activities will be made to the extent possible, based on the available surviving documents. Before the [Battle of Velasco](#), apparently in response to the [Anahuac Disturbances](#), Guerra issued orders from Matamoros (again subbing for Terán) to Elosúa for Tenoxitlán, Lipantitlán and Goliad to reinforce [Fort Velasco](#). A week later, Guerra rescinded those orders, apparently after hearing from Terán, who thought [Stephen F. Austin](#) should preferentially handle the matter [Guerra 20-Jun-1832]. Apparently, the original order also went directly to Lavaca, which caused Arteaga to coordinate with the commander at Goliad (Mariano Cosío), standing by with 1 officer and 24 men to join with forces from Goliad on their way to Velasco [Arteaga 28-Jun-1832 frames 107-108], which did depart in that direction. Belatedly, and

perhaps against his better judgement (since he may have become aware of the [Battle of Velasco](#)), Cosío obeyed the superior order from Guerra and issued an express mail to recall troops from Velasco [Cosío 3-Jul-1832]. After the [Battle of Velasco](#) became known to him, [Rámon Músquiz](#), the political chief of Texas then nearby at San Felipe, also wrote directly to Arteaga (twice), suggesting reinforcements for Velasco [Músquiz 30-Jun-1832]. Amid these conflicting orders and after recalling his group of 70 soldiers, Cosío convened a meeting with his officers on 5-Jul-1832, and they decided that a troop of 15 dragoons should be divided, ten going to Arteaga at Guadalupe to help manage the prisoners, and 5 staying at Goliad to maintain the mail routes. The mail to Ugartechea was held up since they feared it would be captured if delivered to Brazoria/Velasco [Cosío 6-Jun-1832]. Although Ugartechea wrote to Arteaga on 8-Jul-1832 (from San Felipe) that the Velasco situation was all settled and that they were already headed back to Mexico, which Arteaga did not receive until the 10<sup>th</sup> [Ugartechea 8-Jul-1832], Arteaga was still planning to send troops to aid Ugartechea on the 9<sup>th</sup> based on Músquiz's request [Arteaga 9-Jul-1832]. Despite the confusion, there was really no point in reinforcing Velasco at this time (as Ugartechea had abandoned it and was already in San Felipe), so it is surmised all troops eventually returned to their home bases.

The last extant documents sent by Arteaga from Lavaca appear to be a bundle of six letters on 12-Jul-1832 [Arteaga 12-Jul-1832], so it is surmised that he delayed his retirement until the withdrawal of his command from Texas was complete. One of these dispatches was a cover letter for a military report, although the report itself appears to be absent from the B́exar Archives. Another is a lengthy report on accusations surrounding the schooner *Cañon* and other ships that had called at Lavaca. Chowell also wrote a similar letter, indicating that a significant feud had developed with the Commissioner of Goliad (José Bonifacio Galan) [Chowell 12-Jul-1832], as discussed more fully above. Arteaga did receive some ammunition, brought by the 10 dragoons which came from Goliad, in the form of 1500 cartridges [Cosío 13-Jul-1832]. Rafael Chowell wrote a cover letter for a budget report in July to [Erasmio Seguin](#), still seeking financial assistance or loan for Lavaca's accounts, but the attached report is also missing [Chowell 15-Jul-1832].

During this two-year period, there are many mentions of individual desertions or deaths in the Lavaca detachment, too numerous to mention here, found in the [B́exar Archives](#) in specific dispatches or in the side notes of the monthly military reports. Indeed, in the graphs shown in Figures 23 and 25, a gradual decline can be seen in the complement of each unit, reflecting this attrition. It would seem likely that deaths among the soldiers and prisoners resulted in burials in a nearby small cemetery, although no direct mention of such has been found. The population of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the prisoners ended up being about half of the starting amount. Illness, desertions, lack of funds for salaries and provisions, the isolated location and long-distance communication from many commanders must have made it almost impossible to accomplish the goals that Terán had in mind. And, then Terán committed suicide on 3-Jul-1832 behind a church in Padilla, Tamaulipas near his new headquarters, already ill and overworked, despondent over Mexican politics (since he had sided with the unsuccessful centralist regime that had just fallen to Santa Anna) and his belief that Texas was lost.

The details surrounding the actual departure of Arteaga from the Lavaca area are a bit murky but seem to involve a bit of intrigue. It seems that Arteaga unexpectedly declared support for Santa Anna on 4-Aug-1832 and fled to "*Garcitas*" with the majority of his command (6 officers and 70 soldiers) [Moret 6-



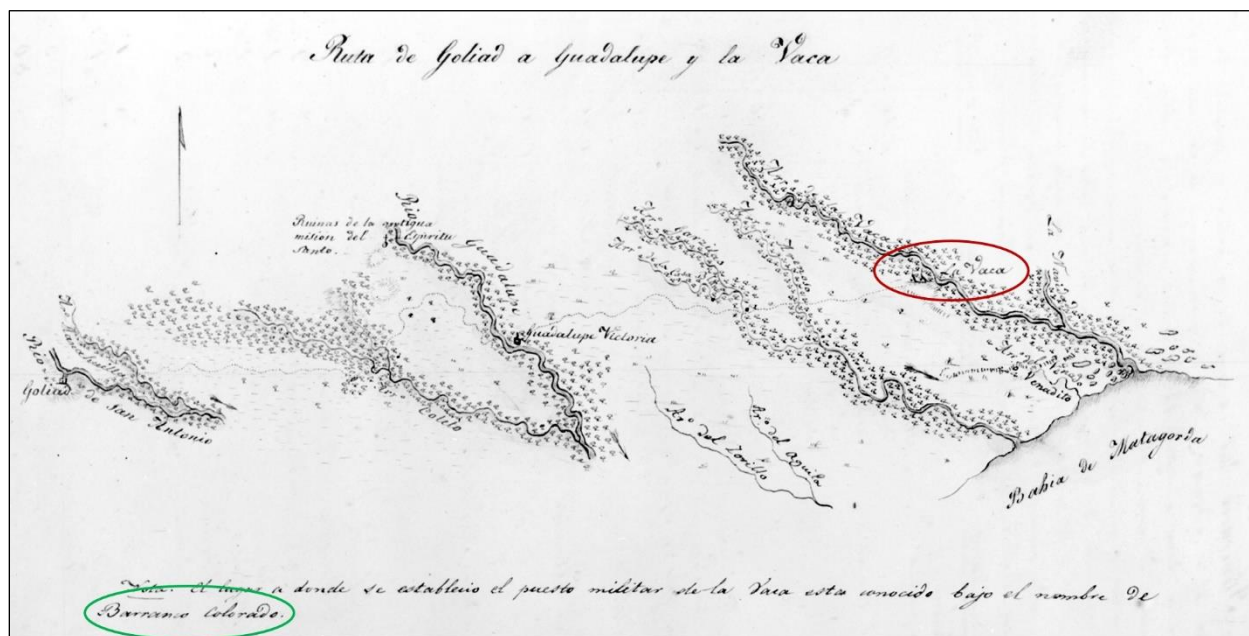
Aug-1832], where he embarked for Tampico through the mouth of Matagorda Bay [Hernandez 1832]. The author of the former letter (Juan Moret) was a junior officer known to have been in Ugartechea's command at the [Battle of Velasco](#), and is presumed to have been traveling overland back to Matamoros (being then in Guadalupe) where he took some responsibility to command the abandoned post, although he intended to continue travel on to Matamoros with a group of troops remaining loyal to the Bustamante government. He further reports that his "*Jefe primer Ayudante*" also went with Arteaga and that Lt. Miguel Nieto had disappeared. In the Mexican custom, Arteaga even penned a "pronunciamiento" sent to Elosúa [Elosúa 16-Aug-1832], and that, pursuant to orders from [José Antonio Mexía](#), he embarked with his troops. The original document itself seems to have been forwarded with this message to Terán's replacement (thought to have been Ignacio de Mora), and appears absent from the Béxar Archives. Rafael Chowell apparently did not join Arteaga, and instead traveled to Goliad where he confirmed Arteaga's pronunciamiento, and sought instructions from Elosúa and the Commissioner at Matamoros [Chowell 10-Aug-1832].

It is known, of course, that Mexía (commander of the Tampico garrison) had sided with the Santa Anna party, and had left Matamoros with 6 ships (3 schooners, 1 brig and 2 smaller vessels [Guerra 27-Jun-1832 frames 75-76]) and 400 men in response to the [Battle of Velasco](#) and the [Anahuac Disturbances](#), and then arrived off the mouth of the Brazos River on 16-Jul-1832, staying about a week in the Velasco/Brazoria area [Cotton 1832, Turner 1903 pp. 12-13]. In attempts to recruit the Anahuac garrison to his cause, Mexía and his ships then traveled by sea to Galveston Bay on or about 24-Jul-1832 where they met members of this garrison aboard two or three ships as they were leaving Galveston Bay, under the command of Felix Subarán declaring for Santa Anna [Mexía 18-Jul-1832, Turner 1903 p. 14-15], after which they all returned by sea to Matamoros and then to Tampico. It is also known that military commanders along the Texas coast had been warned of Mexía's "*dissident flotilla*" in advance [Guerra 27-Jun-1832]. So, given the coincidental timing, it is possible that covert dispatches were exchanged between Arteaga and Mexía in late Jul-1832, and arrangements were made for one or more ships to secretly pick up Arteaga at Lavaca Bay on Mexía's return down the coast. Some details might be found by recalling the words of John Linn that "*... After the surrender of Velasco and the intrigues of Santa Anna had been developed, and after the death of General Teran, who committed suicide by falling upon his sword, Commissioner Choval resigned, and Captain Artiaga informed General Mexia that he wished to be relieved of the responsibilities of his position, as he did not favor the movements of Santa Anna. An order arrived directing the removal of the whole army, together with the workmen at the brick-kiln, some thirty or forty in number. .... Lieutenant-Colonel Villasana arrived in a schooner in the bay to transport the troops to Matamoros .... Captain Artiaga called on me and stated that he was ordered to abandon the proposed fort; that he needed supplies, and that Villasana would draw on the Matamoros custom-house for the same.*" Linn's words suggest that Arteaga was opposed to the Santa Anna party, but perhaps he had a change of heart in the summer of 1832. Arteaga was remembered in Guadalupe Victoria, as one of the old downtown streets was named after him, now known as Forrest Street. Rafael Chowell also had a street named for him (as Choval Street), now Constitution Street. These two parallel east-west streets bracketed a city block called "Plaza de Constitution" originally, then considered the center of Guadalupe Victoria, now known as "DeLeon Plaza" [Shook 2007 p. 473].

It will not be considered unusual that both the Tejano and Anglo-American colonists in and around Guadalupe Victoria also sided with the Santa Anna party (then supposedly supporting the Mexican

Constitution of 1824), and that specific meetings were held there in support of this “liberal” or “federalist” party (one on July 16<sup>th</sup>, which elected a committee of vigilance) [Turner 1903, pp. 17-18]. What is not known, is what influence these discussions may have had upon Arteaga and his command, then stationed in the same small town. Arteaga and his men had suffered illness, as well as lack of salary, funds, provisions, ammo and other supplies, the **Cañon** controversy, the death of Terán, and abandonment of Forts [Velasco](#) and [Anahuac](#) – all of which may have caused them to now side with the Santa Anna party. But, it does appear that Arteaga secretly fled with the majority of his command at some point in early August of 1832, perhaps posting his “pronunciamiento” as he left (received by Elosúa on the 16<sup>th</sup>), as he was still present on the 4<sup>th</sup> when Moret learned of his declaration. And, as we have seen, Arteaga was not alone in joining with the Santa Anna party (then achieving more success in its revolution in Mexico), and helps to explain the rapid abandonment of forts at [Velasco](#), [Anahuac](#), Nacogdoches and Lavaca that summer. In a larger sense, the resulting lack of military control of Texas, followed by its harsh reapplication in 1835, were important antecedents to the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836.

Two years after it was abandoned, the location of Barranco Colorado was shown on a chart thought to have been drawn by [Jean Louis Berlandier](#) in 1834, shown in Figure 26 below [Berlandier 1834]. He was a naturalist who had also accompanied Terán’s boundary expedition to Texas in 1828, and passed through this area in 1829 on an excursion from Bexar by land to La Bahia, Copano, and then by sea to New Orleans, returning the same way. He returned to La Bahia (Goliad) in 1834, probably drawing this map of his route while traveling in that vicinity. The chart shows "La Vaca" (red oval) on "Arroyo de La Vaca", which the caption says was named "Barranco Colorado" (green oval), and that a largely east-west road existed between “Victoria” and “La Vaca”.



**Figure 26: "Ruta de Goliad a Guadalupe (Victoria) y la Vaca", ascribed to Jean Louis Berlandier, circa 1834, from Beinecke Library (Yale University), WA MSS S-300, Box 8, Volume II**

Caption translation: The place where the military post of La Vaca was established is under the name of Barranco Colorado

Dr. Robert W. Shook concluded that this map was drawn in 1829, when Terán (and presumably Berlandier) traveled on their return trip through Guadalupe Victoria and La Bahia to Matamoros [Shook 2007 pp. 342-352]. But, we know from Berlandier's journal that he came instead from Béxar to La Bahia, so he could not have traveled through Barranco Colorado, especially since it did not yet exist. It seems more likely that Terán traveled down the San Antonio Road to the Trinity crossing, and then on the more-southerly Coushatta Trace to San Felipe, before continuing on to Guadalupe Victoria and La Bahia and eventually Matamoros. As indicated in the book "Texas by Terán" on pages 148 and 154, those authors conclude that the Berlandier map (Figure 26) was drawn by him during or after a later visit in 1834.

The 1830-1836 versions of the Austin/Terán/Tanner map (as seen in Figures 1 and 3) show a road directly from Victoria to San Felipe, and is drawn taking a more-northerly direction out of Victoria than shown in the Berlandier map of Figure 26. Dr. Shook labels this road as the San Felipe-Atascosito Road – it passed north out of Guadalupe Victoria, then bearing northeast to San Felipe, and from there through Harrisburg to the lower Trinity River. Another map of Texas came out in 1839 (by Richard S. Hunt and Jesse F. Randel) which has a more accurate rendering of Labaca (Lavaca) and Matagorda Bays, and especially so for Espiritu Santo (modern San Antonio Bay), Aranzazua Bay (modern Aransas Bay) and Copano Bay (please see Figure 27). The town of Texana is incorrectly shown on the left (east) bank of the Lavaca River, when it was really about 3 miles east on the right (west) bank of the Navidad River; however, it marks the approximate location of Barranco Colorado (which was on the opposite or right bank). As in Figure 26, a largely east-west road is shown from Victoria, which has a north fork bearing northeast to San Felipe, and a south fork or detour continuing east through the Barranco Colorado area and into Texana. This is very similar to the road segments shown in the 1858 Pressler map (Figure 13) and 1838 Linn map (Figure 14). Thus, the appearance of Barranco Colorado and then Texana caused a southern shift of the [Atascosito Road](#) east of Guadalupe Victoria. The Hunt-Randel map is also notable for showing the locations of many early short-lived towns such as [Copano](#), [Aransas](#) (modern Fulton area), [Lamar](#), [Calhoun](#), [Linnville](#), Dimmits ([Dimmit's Landing](#)), Cox's Point and others.



**Figure 27: Detail from 1839 Hunt-Randel map of "Texas"**

After 1832, Barranco Colorado was abandoned, while the towns of [Texana](#) and [Red Bluff](#) grew up nearby. If the structures of the Mexican fort were made of wood, as suggested in the *Texas Gazette* newspaper (Figure 16), any evidence may have decayed before the area became settled, and knowledge of the site was "lost to history". Primary documents make little or no mention of brick-making at Barranco Colorado, let alone being shipped elsewhere.

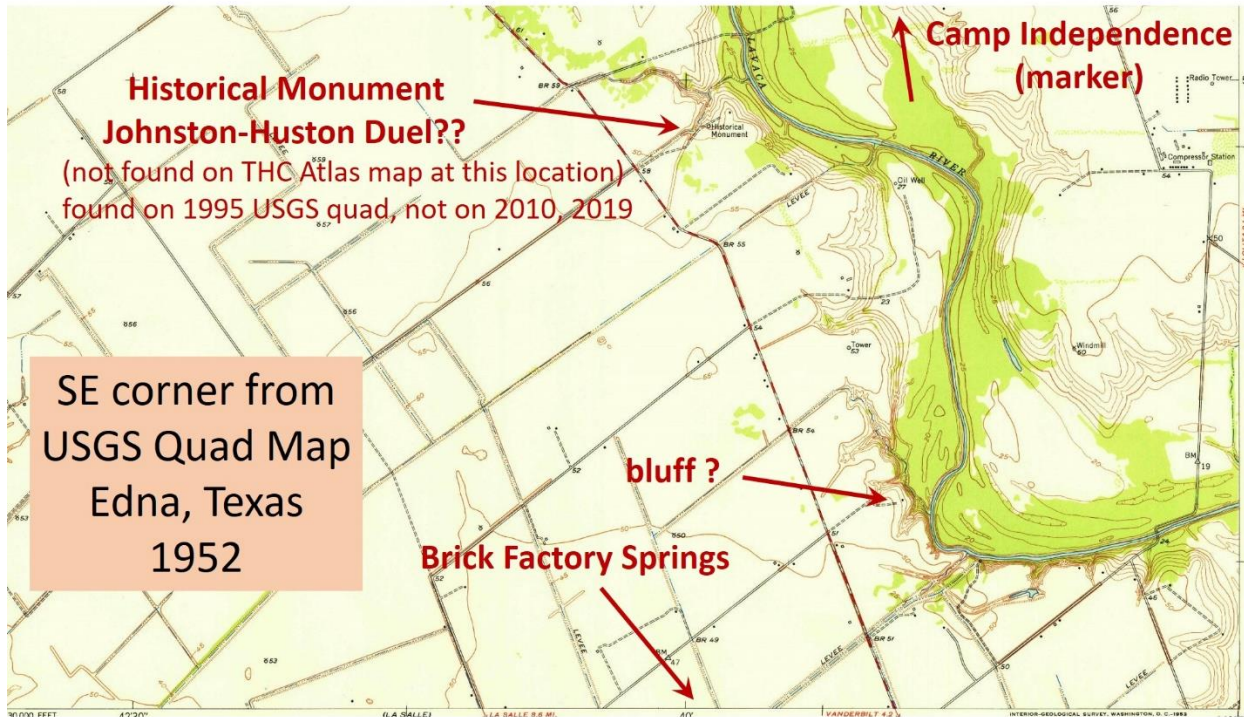
There is a database or registry, maintained by the [Texas Archeological Research Laboratory](#) (TARL) in Austin, which formally records archaeological survey results and observations of potential archaeological sites throughout the state, typically reserved for use by professional archaeologists. One such reported site in Jackson County is known as 41JK29 (41 = Texas, JK = Jackson County, 29 = the 29<sup>th</sup> reported site in that county). Since brick was reported present, and the location is essentially the same as shown above for Barranco Colorado, it is concluded that the reported site must be associated with the 1830-1832 Mexican fort, despite the fact that the original reporter of the site (in 1967) failed to recognize or report it as such. The meager data reported for this site is shown below in Figure 28.

<b>Site Description</b>	Open area on terrace above the Lavaca Rv.-Plowing has turned up lots of bricks-Neighbor boys throw in river.
<b>Area of Occupation</b>	Bricks-40 by 40 ca. (Frank: this doesn't make sense)
<b>Present Condition</b>	Has been plowed for years
<b>Character and Depth of Fill</b>	Bricks found about 1 ft subsurface (now disturbed and on surface)
<b>Previous Designations for Site</b>	Old Brick Factory, Blair community (I.T. Taylor) Frank: I.T. Taylor's Book, <i>the Cavalcade of Jackson County</i> , is incorrect. The Blair community was quite distant from this site.)
<b>Date</b>	7/25/1967

**Figure 28: Information from TARL database for 41JK29**

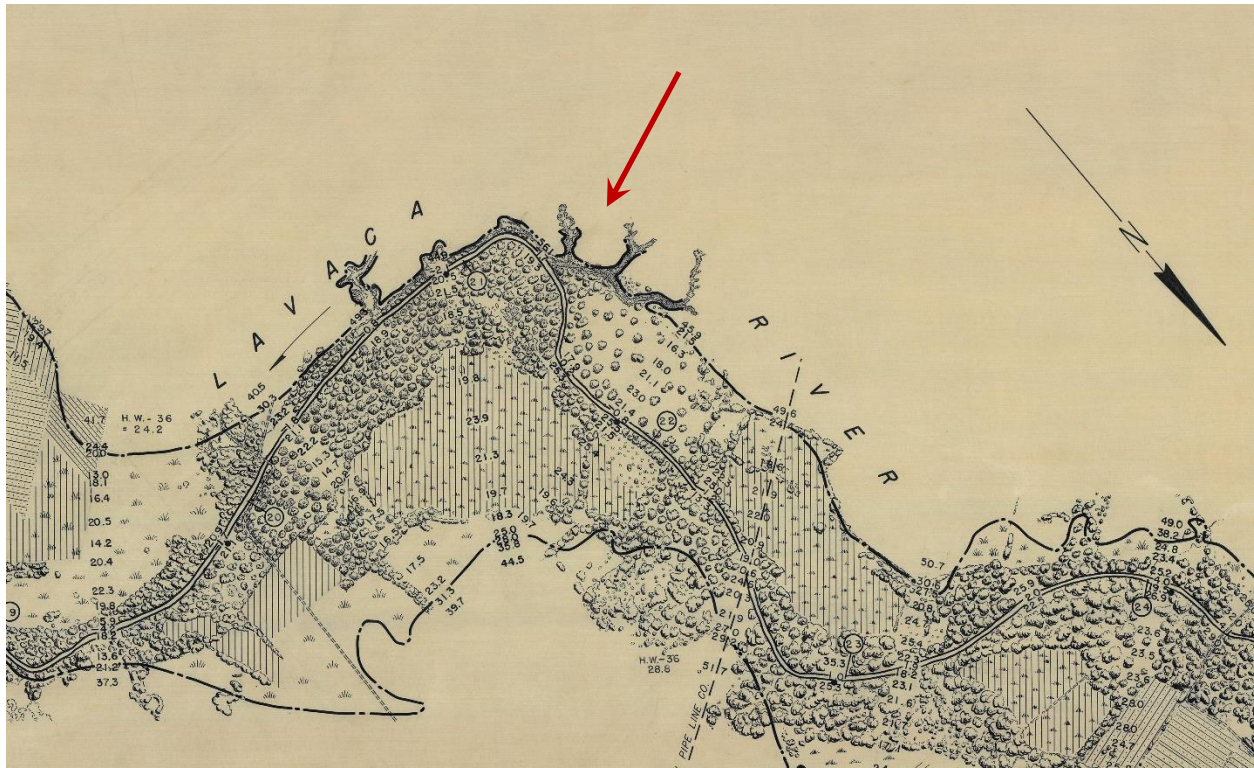
A nearby landmark observed on older USGS maps is labeled as “Brick Factory Springs”, which are described by Gunnar Brune: *“The Brick Factory Springs were on the west bank of the Lavaca River ten kilometers south of Edna, on James Reid’s farm at latitude 28° 52’ and longitude 96° 39’.* The Mexican army was stationed here in 1831 and established a brick factory, using the red clay from the 16-meter high bluff. Below the clay beds and close to the river are silt and sand beds from which the small springs once flowed. The recharge area is one kilometer to the west, where these beds crop out at the surface. The springs have been dry for many years. Nearby some bones of a mammoth, such as were hunted by the Paleo-Indian people, were found.” [Brune 1981 pp. 253-254]. These springs seem to fit the description of fresh healthful water asked for in Terán’s initial directives, while the face of the bluff offered clay-bearing strata for use in brick-making.

Based on all of the information above, the location of Barranco Colorado is surmised to be about 6 miles south of Edna TX, and is illustrated on a 1952 USGS map below in Figure 29, in concert with other historical markers found in the immediate area. A bluff approaching 50’ elevation stands directly above the river at this point, with prairie covering its top, and an adjacent bottoms show a wooded terrace at about 20’ elevation. An intermittent creek draining from the north cuts through from higher elevation and then runs at the base of the bluff before emptying into the river, and the springs must emanate from the base of the bluff into this creek. The bluff so marked seems to be the most likely location, although the fort itself may have been located some distance away from the river on the higher flat prairie to maintain an open defensive perimeter and to avoid floods. The brick operation may have been close to the river, where the wooded bottoms provided fuel for the kiln/cooking/heat and timber for structures.



**Figure 29: Likely Location of Barranco Colorado using 1952 USGS Map as Basis**

A survey of the Lavaca and Navidad watershed was conducted in 1938 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is documented with charts found in the National Archives. [Sheet 4 \(Plate 21\)](#) involves this area of the Lavaca River, and shows additional information with some elevation transects and topography. A portion of Sheet 4 is shown below as Figure 30. The north direction is different, but a red arrow shows the same bluff and creek at its base.



**Figure 30: Portion of Plate 4 from 1938 USACE survey of Lavaca and Navidad River watershed**

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Barranco Colorado was the name for an isolated post on the lower Lavaca River, as part of the implementation of the Mexican Law of 6-Apr-1830 and under the overall direction of Manuel de Mier y Terán. Its military commander was Aniceto Arteaga, and its commissioner was Rafael Chowell. The post was not established immediately upon arrival of Arteaga and his infantry troops in the summer of 1830, but was occupied in some form or fashion from Oct-1830 to May-1832, after which it was abandoned. Barracks and a brick kiln were apparently built at the site, although it does not seem that any significant brick structures, especially a stronghold or fort, was completed there.
2. Establishment of this post appears to have replaced the need for a small detachment or camp placed near Paso Cavallo known as “Matagorda” or “Port of Matagorda”, which had been manned by troops out of La Bahia in the years prior, say 1826 to 1830.
3. No evidence was uncovered in primary documents to suggest that the brick-making operation was substantial, or that bricks were actually shipped off-site.
4. The existing community of Guadalupe Victoria, established in the 1820’s under the Mexican empresario Martin de Leon as the headquarters of his Guadalupe colony, was used as an initial base of operations by Arteaga. Once Arteaga and his infantry moved to Barranco Colorado in Jan-1831, a large cavalry unit under José Manuel Barberena was garrisoned at Guadalupe Victoria until Nov-1831. Arteaga and his detachment returned there in May-1832 until they departed Texas in Aug-1832.

5. The combined command at Guadalupe and Barranco Colorado appears to have been referred to as “Comandancia Militar del Establecimiento de la Vaca”, translated as “Military Command of the Establishment of Lavaca”. Its headcount exceeded 200 troops for a period of some months in the latter half of 1831, but was less at other times. This detachment stood astride the Guadalupe and Lavaca Rivers near their mouths, in an attempt to control access to that part of the Texas coast.
6. The detachment suffered from lack of provisions, lacks of funds and pay, disease, desertions and deaths – making it very difficult to succeed in the purposes imagined by Terán. It is also likely that a small cemetery was located in the area of Barranco Colorado.
7. Lavaca was one of the larger detachments among the six new forts that Terán commissioned in 1830-1832. Yet, despite this, its presence is an under-told aspect of the era’s history. Together with the failure of the other Terán forts, it was an antecedent of the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836.
8. And, finally, Barranco Colorado capped a long, difficult period for “Bahia de San Bernardo” during the colonial period, many elements of which have been lost to history but bear remembering.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A formal historical marker does not exist for Barranco Colorado or Comandancia Militar del Establecimiento de la Vaca. For the former, a location on a nearby public road (for example, along FM-234 near its intersection with Jackson County Road 320) might be appropriate. Such an effort might be considered by the local county historical commissions.
2. If permission can be obtained from the private landowner of 41JK29, modern techniques for geophysical surveying (such as ground-penetrating radar or magnetometry) might be useful to identify the extent or exact locations of any remaining portions of Barranco Colorado.

***People who take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants.***

- Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay

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***Not to know what happened before you were born is to be a child forever. For what is the time of a man, except it be interwoven with that memory of ancient things ....***

***- Marcus Tullius Cicero, 46 BC***

## **Appendix A – Notes about the Mexican ports or anchorages of Matagorda, Lavaca and Sabinito in the period of 1826-1830**

Before 1830 and beyond, maritime access to the middle Texas coast was managed by Mexican civil and military authorities posted at La Bahia (renamed Goliad after 1828), through a series of small semi-permanent outposts called “detachments” or “ports” that encamped at locations at or near certain anchorages, such as Matagorda (somewhere on the southwestern end of modern Matagorda Bay), Lavaca/Garcitas (presumably near the mouth of Garcitas Creek at the NW corner of modern Lavaca Bay), Sabinito/Muelle del Savinito/Los Mosquitos, Punta Balandra (at head of modern San Antonio Bay), [Copano](#) (on north shore of modern Copano Bay), and also Aránzazu and Bergantín (at Live Oak Point and Goose Island, respectively, at juncture of Copano and Aransas Bays). These detachments would observe and make first contact with arriving ships, and then communicate to their superiors, and also conduct owners/captains/passengers on to La Bahia to attempt compliance with existing laws or customs duties. These early locations were probably modest and ephemeral, perhaps switching precise locations over the years, and have largely been lost to history. They were supplanted later (circa, the Texas Revolution) by more-permanent and/or better-remembered sites such as [Calhoun](#), [Saluria](#), [Indianola](#), [Linnville](#), [Lavaca \(later Port Lavaca\)](#), [Dimitt’s Landing](#) and [Cox’s Point](#) (Matagorda/Lavaca Bay area), Austin and Palacios (at Palacios Point), Tidehaven (at head of Trespalacios Bay), Chapin’s Landing (San Antonio Bay area), [Lamar](#) and [Aransas City](#) (at Aransas Bay area, same as Bergantín and Aranzazu), most of which were also lost to history.

### **Matagorda**

One such “port” that seemed to be a predecessor of Barranco Colorado was simply called Matagorda (also Puerto de Matagorda or Marina de Matagorda). Monthly military and budget reports, of the sort discussed above for Barranco Colorado are sporadically found in the B exar Archives for “Matagorda”, both before and during the period of Barranco Colorado, but generally reported from La Bahia, so it is assumed that the Matagorda detachment’s chain-of-command continued to be through the commandant at La Bahia. The exact location of this port/detachment/anchorage is not currently known with any certainty. It must also be realized that the Spanish authorities used the term “puerto” to describe the entire area of a bay, such as Matagorda and Lavaca Bays, although any detachment had to occupy a specific point. Docks and wharves did not exist (as would at a modern “port”), so the ships themselves probably anchored at any convenient offshore spot with deep-enough water. One might imagine that the ideal location for “Matagorda” would be one to observe the comings and goings for the entire bay system (near Paso Cavallo?). It does not seem to be the same as the town of Matagorda founded later by the Anglo-American settlers of Austin’s Colony circa 1828 at the mouth of the Colorado River, although some references suggest this location [for example, Guthrie 1988 pp.114-117]. The shallower water at the northeast end of Matagorda Bay, reefs off Palacios Point shown in early maps (e.g, Figures 4, 5b, 6, 10, 27), Dog Island Reef requiring ships to anchor some distance from the Colorado River mouth, and increased distance to La Bahia (almost double) with river crossings at the Colorado, Lavaca and Guadalupe, argue against such a location. Instead, this author hypothesizes it existed at the opposite end of Matagorda Bay, somewhere near the location selected later as Indianola, Port O’Connor

or the tidal islands forming the west bank of Paso Cavallo (where Calhoun and then Saluria were created a few decades later).

As mentioned above, the first known use of the term “Matagorda” seems to be in the 1722 Aguayo map. Subsequent to this, the first occurrence of the name in the Béxar Archives is a letter in 1768 from [Francisco Tovar](#) (Captain at La Bahia) to [Hugo Oconór](#) (Governor of Tejas province of New Spain), describing his investigation of a shipwrecked Spanish vessel of late 1767 at the “*Port of Matagorda*”, in which the Karankawas had treacherously murdered the crew after feeding them a banquet of fish “... on the island of said Port.” [Tovar 1768]. In 1780, [Domingo Cabello](#) (then Governor of Texas) made a detailed report about La Bahia, in which one note says “*This presidio of La Bahía de el Espíritu Santo is 25 leagues distant from the port of Mata Gorda, which is formed by the islands of [Toboso](#) and [La Culebra](#)*” [Cabello 1780]. In this same period, Cabello also became involved in the investigations of the demise of an almost-complete Spanish mapping expedition of the coast under [Luis Antonio Andry](#) and his ship *Señor de la Yedra* in Mar-1778, again at the hands of murderous Karankawas. A notebook of documents, authorizing punitive actions against the Karankawas by [Teodor de Croix](#) in 1782, mainly based on the testimony of a lone survivor (Tomas de la Cruz) rescued a year after the incident, mention the harbor/port/beach of Matagorda several times as the site of the tragedy [Croix 1782]. Within this bundle, a 1779 statement by Joseph Santoja (then commander at La Bahia) mentions the harbor of Matagorda is “... almost in a direct line to this presidio.” [page 36]. In another statement, Cabello suggested “*it would be most appropriate to build a fort on one of the islands that extend along the harbor of Matagorda*” [pages 40-41]. Cabello personally interviewed Tomas de la Cruz at Béxar in Mar-1779, who described that the harbor of Matagorda could hold 5 ships (just like port of San Bernardo), but it was “... more ample, that it lay due north (from the entrance?), that from where the ships could be anchored it must have been a quarter league (0.65 miles), and that from the beach where one disembarks to the presidio of La Bahía del Espíritu Santo it seemed to him that it must be 12 leagues by land.” [pages 46-47]. It is not clear what is meant here by “port of San Bernardo”, which “*lies to the northeast*”, but Andry may have mapped San Luis Pass and/or the mouth of the Brazos before reaching Paso Cavallo, and confused the names. Unfortunately, any maps by Andry were lost with him and his crew.

In 1785, Cabello ordered an expedition under Lt. Antonio de Mézières (descendant? of [Athanese de Mézières](#)) to the mouth of the Colorado due to a rumor of a settlement there from Louisiana (although none was ever reported later), and wrote a letter to the supposed commander to warn him of dangers with the Karankawas such as the Andry massacre, saying “*The island of La Culebra begins across from the port of Matagorda beyond the presidio of La Bahía and passes the mouth of the Colorado ... The harbor of La Bahía is where the ship which came from Veracruz was coming to disembark. That harbor is called Matagorda at the part that is the furthest from the Guadalupe.*” [Cabello 1785].

Given these descriptions from 1768 to 1785, one gets the feeling that at this point in time, the port of Matagorda was in occasional use, and at or near Paso Cavallo. In the period of 1787 to 1799, there are sporadic additional dispatches in the Béxar Archives which mention Matagorda or the bay, but do not give any specifics on location, although they do reveal that the bay continues to be occasionally used, although the Spanish at La Bahia often had to rely on missionized Indians to keep watch at “ports” along the coast.

The tempo of use seems to have increased beginning in the period of about 1805, and Bahia de San Bernardo was officially authorized by the King of Spain in Sep-1805 as a duty-free port, as discussed above [Soler 1805]. Within days of the duty-free decree, [Manuel Antonio Cordero](#) (Governor of Texas) ordered Lt. Miguel Serrano to take 20 men, a Padre from the mission at Refugio, and a local guide to explore *“the port of Matagorda”*. In reply, [Francisco Viana](#) (commander at La Bahia) wrote *“I shall order the aforesaid officer to set out for the coast ... to reconnoiter the port of Matagorda. There is no one here who can give an accurate account of it. The ignorance of that which port, beach, and even sea, in my opinion, lies in the fact that after the parties which set out every fortnight have reconnoitered the large lagoon or marsh, they return satisfied with their expedition. As in some low places they need a canoe ... The Indians, Your Lordship, present an even greater obstacle. Previous expeditions have dared not oppose them, as the expeditions have been small, and the place has been made terrible by the Indian Fresada Pinto, who, until his recent death, instigated the depredations committed by his tribe.”* [Cordero 5-Oct-1805]. Cordero followed up with his opinion that the port of Matagorda *“... exists between east and south of the Presidio of La Bahia, past the confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers, about twenty-five leagues from the aforesaid rivers, where it forms a canal with the Copanos Island.”* [Cordero 16-Oct-1805]. Afterwards, the Padre from Refugio (Fr. Josè Manuel Gaitán) wrote *“We arrived at what was once thoughtlessly called the port of Matagorda. It was sounded by my workman, Monsieur Juan Rosales, who has been a sailor many years. He assured me that it was the port and that it was in good condition. I may add that the native Indians from my mission, whom I took along with their canoes, assured me that they had seen ships come very near the shore at that place ...”* [Gaitán 15-Nov-1805]. Although Serrano apparently submitted a detailed report to Viana, it was sent to Cordero (at Bèxar) who then sent it on to [Nemesio Salcedo](#) (the Commandant General of the Internal Provinces at Chihuahua), and it is not found in the Bèxar Archives. But, Cordero commented in his cover letter (which is retained in the BA) that *“... even though the said port of Matagorda is difficult of access by land, it is adequate for the anchorage and shelter of every kind of vessel.”* [Cordero 19-Nov-1805].

By the following spring, Viana inquired if the duty-free port of San Bernardo included goods from Louisiana and the US, or those exported there, to which Salcedo responded in the negative [Viana 17-Mar-1806]. Early the following year, a Lt. Francisco Vasquez had been appointed as a coast guard, and had departed on 13-Jan-1807 *“... to carry out the examination of the Lagunas de la Ensenada at the port of Matagorda, and the island named Del Bergantín.”* [Salcedo 24-Feb-1807]. Another set of expeditions followed, by Cadena and Castillo in 1808, but these, along with the Serrano and Vasquez expeditions appear to have been done by small groups of unskilled land-based soldiers, resulting in vague written reports which seem to have confused and/or included the areas of Aransas/Copano and San Antonio Bays with (the old) Espiritu Santo/San Bernardo/Matagorda Bays. However, by late 1808 a detachment had been created at Los Mosquitos, and in early 1809, others had been posted at places labeled as Aranzazu, Bergantín, and Matagorda, although their location is never fully described. Hand-drawn maps were created (which apparently showed the locations) but, frustratingly, these are no longer found with their cover letters in the archives. Details on these locations can be found in their sections below.

One interesting outcome of Stephen F. Austin’s survey of Galveston Bay in early 1826 (mentioned above) was that he facilitated the purchase of his rented sailboat ***Mexicana*** and smaller rowboat from [John R. Harris](#) in the months following the survey, and had them delivered to the port of Matagorda for

that port's use, probably to scout and patrol the bay. One dispatch of this period from Mateo Ahumada (then, the principal commander of Coahuila y Tejas, headquartered at Béxar) instructs the commander at La Bahia that the two ships from Austin were to be accepted, the port "*Lagunas de Matagorda*" was to be manned by one corporal and four soldiers from La Bahia who would also crew the ships, the soldiers were to be exchanged every eight days, and they were to fly the "*bandera trigarante*" [Ahumada 10-Apr-1826] – presumably the Ejército Imperial de las Tres Garantías flag, as shown below.



**Figure A1: Ejército Imperial de las Tres Garantías flag**

The boats were delivered by [John R. Harris](#) to "*Sabino*" or "*destacamento de la Balandra*" on 24-Jul-1826 with sails, tools and other supplies [Manchola 29-Jul-1826]. Later that year, American ship captain George Midkiff was temporarily named to command the boats at the "*destacamento de Matagorda*" (salary of 25 pesos monthly) with two sailors as helpers (14 pesos monthly) and use of soldiers from La Bahia as needed [Ahumada 1-Dec-1826], perhaps because they were in need of an experienced mariner. However, the Mexican Minister of War, [Manuel Gómez Pedraza](#), ruled against this appointment, wanting further information about Matagorda and Galveston as ports, as explained by [Anastacio Bustamante](#), then commander of the Eastern Interior Provinces [Bustamante 1826]. In addition, just a year after receiving the Harris-made vessels, they were reported to be in poor condition [Ahumada 6-Aug-1827].

The next year, a formal petition was made to authorize the port [Blanco 1827], although Bustamante reported the port to already be active, and that Stephen F. Austin was requested to separately watch the mouths of the Colorado and Brazos Rivers [Bustamante Aug-1827]. Bustamante also seemed to have reservations about establishing a formal establishment at Matagorda [Bustamante Oct-1827], apparently due to concerns about smuggling and lack of resources, when compared with the port at Galveston that had already been authorized on 17-Oct-1825. Eventually, the Mexican Congress authorized the "rehabilitation" of the port and creation of a customs-house in 1828 "... *en la isla de Matagorda*" (on Matagorda Island) [Cardenas et al 1828, Arciniega 1828], also covering Aranzazu (at

Live Oak Point, modern Fulton). Of these two references, the former has a brief review of the prior history of the port, but also gives this clue to its location.

Please also note that, in the 1829 Berlandier map of Figure 18, the connection between Paso Cavallo and Espiritu Santo Bay (just behind Punta de San Francisco) is labeled as “*bayou del puerto*” – could this be a another clue to the location of the “port”?

In 1829, Antonio Elosúa (new Principal Commander of Coahuila y Tejas) indicated that George Midkiff was operating one sloop but was again seeking help in the form of two sailors, since the government had been unsuccessful in obtaining such, and even suggested a higher salary that would attract some mariners [Elosúa 4-Jun-1829]. As mentioned above, this must have been the schooner **Zorra**, which was reported in early 1830 to have deteriorated after two years of use, but was being salvaged for parts [Elosúa 2-Mar-1830]. In May-1830, Mariano Cosío (military commander at Goliad) reported that expenses for three months at “*Marina de Matagorda*” were one hundred and thirty-one pesos, three reales and six grains, and that Midkiff’s monthly salary was now 40 pesos [Cosío 21-May-1830]. Later that year, Terán authorized payment to Midkiff of 200 pesos for his service to the port of Matagorda [Terán 30-Sep-1830]. Obviously, the port of Matagorda was in active use in this period, although it appears they struggled to staff it properly.

Other than these meager clues, though, no direct mention of this detachment’s specific location has been found. However, three separate “*diarios*” (a daily log or journal) of patrolling expeditions or other visits to Matagorda in 1830 were found in the Béxar Archives, which do describe their route to the port at that point in time, however briefly. Excerpts of this author’s translations are shown below (underlining and highlighting are mine):

**131:596-599 (12-Jun-1830), specifically 598-599, Francisco de la Garza’s diary, 19-May to 11-Jun-1830**

*May 19 – I left from town (Goliad) to the east until I reached the “mota del oso” (Bear Butte?) where I spent the night and woke up without incident. (Might be “El Oso” – as in <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/diaz-de-leon-jose-antonio>), perhaps later known as Terrell’s Crossing [Huson 1953 I:7].*

*20. I undertook my march towards the south until they reach the lagoons, I spent the night without incident.*

*21. I continued my march towards the east and spent the night in the port of Matagorda. I woke up without incident.*

*22 I spent the night at that point, I woke up without incident. On the same day, at twelve noon, the skipper appeared with a soldier in the skiff at the mouth of the valluco (bayuco? = bayou) Matagorda, giving me a report. He had no news about his transit, meeting me at that point. We took a skiff to the Punta de Matagorda where I spent the night without incident.*

*24 I made night I woke up without incident.*

*25 I spent the night at that point, I woke up without incident. On the same day I went out to cut south with a soldier and I found a useful boat on the beach by the sea.*

*26 – I woke up without incident on the same day I went out to fetch her with the boss and two soldiers and arrived without incident at the “punta de Matagorda”.*

**131:347 (5-Jun-1830), Guadalupe Martinez's diary, 29-May to 5-Jun-1830**

29. Around three in the afternoon of this day I undertook my departure by order of my commander I went to spend the night at the place of the **little waterhole** and woke up without incident.

30- \_\_\_\_ marches towards the **east** to the place of **Cayo del Bergantín**, and I woke up without incident.

31. I left this place at about nine in the morning, passed **Las Lagunas** and arrived overnight at the last channel near the **port of Matagorda**.

1<sup>st</sup> of June - I marched, and at about eight o'clock in the morning I verified my arrival at that port where the corporal and troops stationed at that point were located: I handed them over the supplies I was carrying, that position I had not maintained for the many rains.

2. About four in the afternoon of this day I made my return trip, and I came to spend the night immediately after a channel.

3.- I left this place until I reached the **first lagoons**, and having passed them at about three in the afternoon, I had to spend the night in front of the **Bergantín oak forest**.

4. I came to spend the night at the Caohitas ranch.

5. I verified my arrival at this Villa a little after noon.

**132:37-41 (29-Jun-1830), specifically 40-41, Eugenio Navarro's diary, 18 to 21-Jun-1830**

(June) 18 - At 6 in the morning I set out with 20 troops and spent the night in the **bayuca (bayou?) called the Bergantín** heading **east and 18 (possibly 12) leagues from this plaza**, leaving a soldier in transit because he was tired his dress.

19 - At 4 o'clock in the morning I started the march towards the **southeast**, I passed the **great lagoons** on horseback and at eleven o'clock in the morning I took the beach whose course I followed towards the **north**. At 7 o'clock at night I arrived at the mere point of Matagorda where I found the American sloop **Hetty (Hetta)** anchored on its way back from Lavaca, and at the troop detachment at the usual point, by Corporal Commander I went without training that the boat I was driving 13 men had already set sail the afternoon of the previous day in the direction of bar of (Brazos) Santiago from where they had come by order of the Captain of that point to recognize and lead the schooner **Oposición** that was supposed to be loaded with tobacco, according to what they said. = Incontinenti went aboard the **Hetty (Hetta)** for the purpose of learning more about the matter of my commission, and spent the night ashore on the insecure highest.

20 - I stayed until noon at which time I arranged for the troops to stay with a Sergeant until the next day and I returned with a corporal and a soldier and spent the night on the beach.

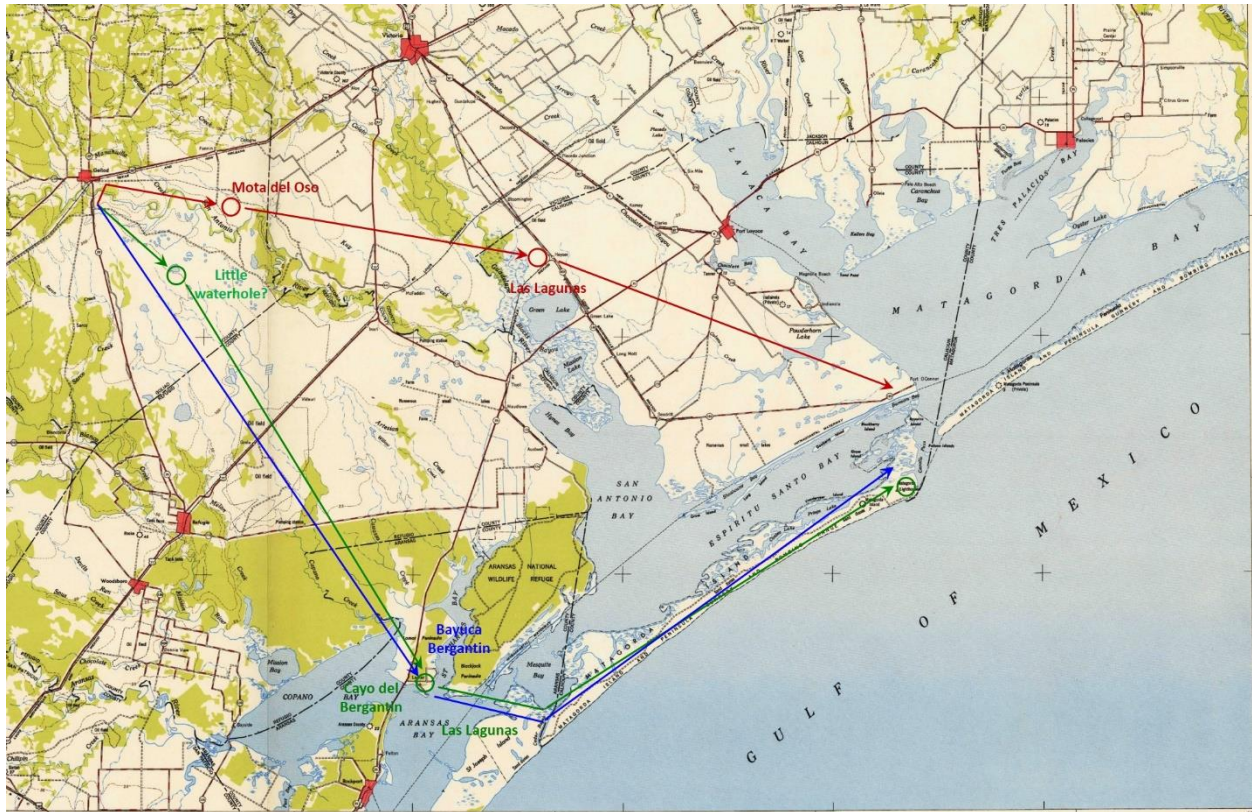
21 - I set off and at seven at night I arrived at this barracks without incident. = I ordered the Sergeant that the march with the troops should be slow so that **most of the horses were cut with the oysters from the lagoons**.

So, what route do these diaries suggest was taken to "Matagorda"? Broadly, they indicate the detachment of Matagorda was within 2 to 3 days of travel on horseback. The direction from Goliad is mentioned as east in the first passage, but through a place called Bergantín in the last two. A straight line from Goliad to Paso Cavallo would pass very near to another port or landing used at the time called Sabinito, yet it is not mentioned at all. These other "ports" of Bergantín and Sabinito are discussed further in their own sections below.

Other clues exist, for example, near the end of the third diary excerpt above, it is mentioned that the horses' feet were cut due to walking over an oyster reef to reach the port. Another passage mentions use of a skiff to visit Matagorda Point, so the port must have been within easy sailing/rowing distance via a skiff to Punta de San Francisco, later known as Punta de Matagorda. Interestingly, the first of these diaries also lists an event in which an abandoned vessel was found on the Gulf beach by Francisco de la Garza, apparently during a reconnaissance to the south (southwest?) of Punta de Matagorda, and they recovered it back to that point. This appears to be the "launch" referred to in dispatches as arriving first at Matagorda with 13 armed men from Matamoros, claiming orders to direct all ships back there, but abandoned the vessel near the port. This ship was subsequently considered for use at the port of Matagorda to replace the **Zorra**. For details, see the body of the main report.

In an attempt to decipher the location of the 1830-era "port of Matagorda" and these routes, one can use the oldest-available (1953) USGS 1:250,000 quad map (named Beeville), since it shows the vegetative cover and surface elevation in the region between Goliad and the southwestern coast of Lavaca and Matagorda Bays, Figure A2 below. Hypothesized lines-of-travel based on the "diarios" are also shown, in red (Francisco de la Garza), green (Guadalupe Martinez) and blue (Eugenio Navarro). The first diary indicates a path east to Mota de Oso with a second night at Las Lagunas. The other two diaries indicate a night's stay at Cayo or Bayuca Bergantin, which was more south of Goliad in the area of St. Charles Bay, which leaves no other reasonable path to Paso Cavallo except directly up the beach along Matagorda Island by wading across the bay on the oyster reefs and tidal islands at the bottom end of modern Carlos Bay, just as Cazorla did in his 1776 expedition [Weddle & Thonhoff 1976 pp. 36-38]. The second diary also indicates a return to the "oak forest of Bergantin". The third diary even directly mentions taking the beach to the north. Since this hypothesized route is not as direct, yet was made almost simultaneously with the first (de la Garza) expedition, it may have been intended that way, to inspect the areas along both routes. The first diary mentions that it went as far as Punta Matagorda and then down the beach to find the "launch", so the other two would have passed the same spot, but the first had already recovered the vessel back to Matagorda. In addition, Eugenio Navarro may have obtained his first impression of Aransas Bay here in 1830, which showed up in his 1832 map of the bay (Figure 11).





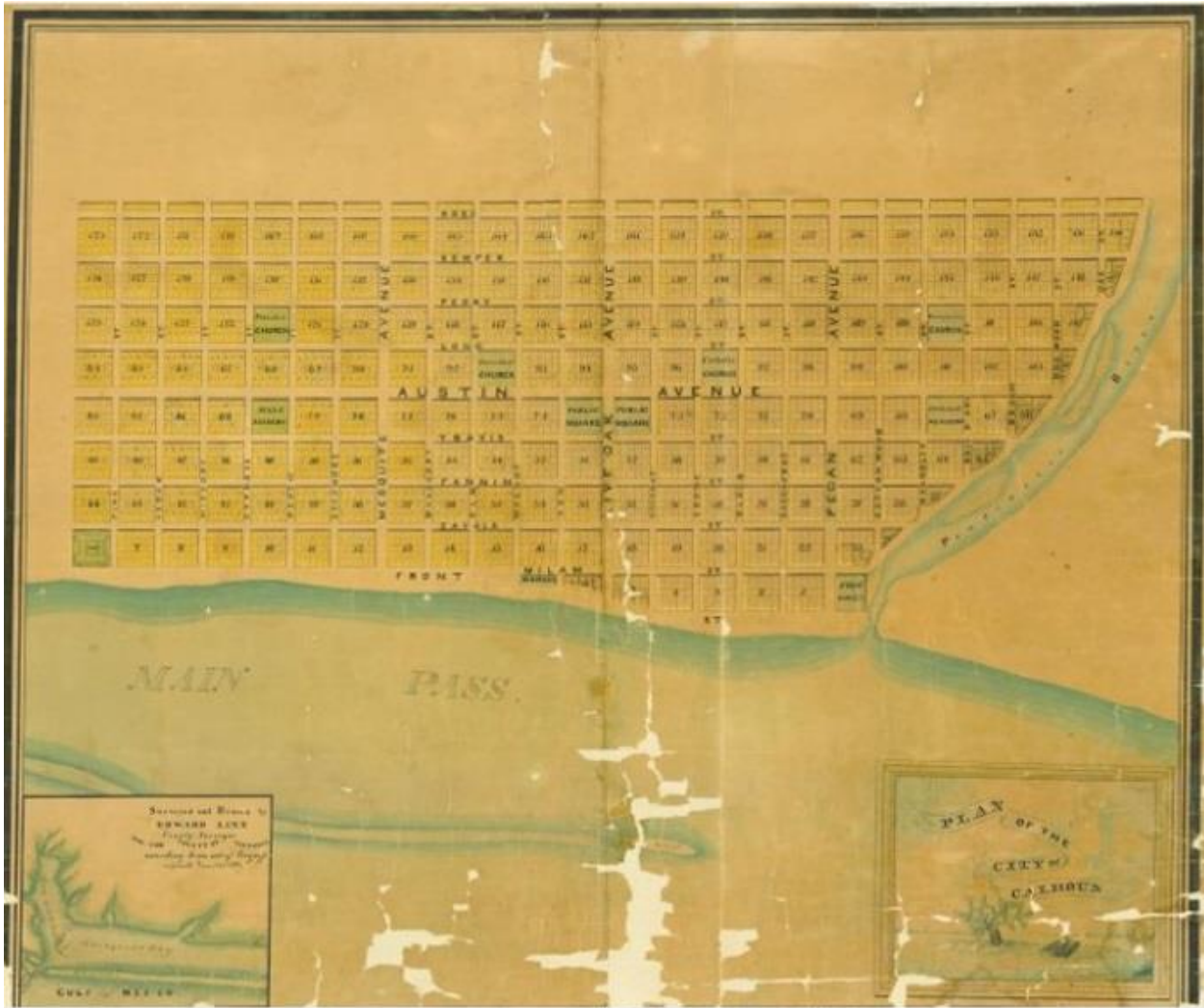
**Figure A2: Detail from 1953 USGS 1:250,000 map of Beeville, Texas**

A survey of Paso Cavallo was accomplished in 1839 by W. D. Wallach, which produced the chart shown in Figure A3, found in [Kennedy 1841 I:39] and [Guthrie 1988 p. 112]. The chart reveals the “Main Entrance” and a deep-water channel directly adjacent to St. Joseph’s Island (now called Matagorda Island), and “Beacons” and “Pilot Houses” on its eastern end. A “Lone Tree” is marked in the area that would become Saluria and Saluria Island, and the deep water extends to there. The land mass in the upper right appears to correspond to the spit of land just off Alligator Head (now Port O’Connor), with an unnamed bayou separating it from an unnamed island (later known as Bayucos Island). A shallower extension of the deep water extends beside this island, labeled as “Pocket” with 8 feet depth, protected by a sandy “West Shoal”. Passage into Matagorda Bay itself would seem to require tricky sailing around the West Shoal or down the inland side of Matagorda Peninsula.



**Figure A3: W. D. Wallach 1839 survey of Paso Cavallo**

About this same time, the new government of the Republic of Texas wanted to create a port and customs-house for Matagorda Bay, and attempted to build the town of [Calhoun](#) at Matagorda Point (where the “Beacons” and “Pilot Houses” are shown in Figure A3), since many shoreline points within the bay were too shallow, most especially the town of Matagorda (at the mouth of the Colorado). Edward Linn surveyed the area and created a map (Figure A4), circa 1839. Please note that North on this map is to the right, Gulf is to the left, and that a bayou named as Prudencio Bayou borders the townsite on its inland side.



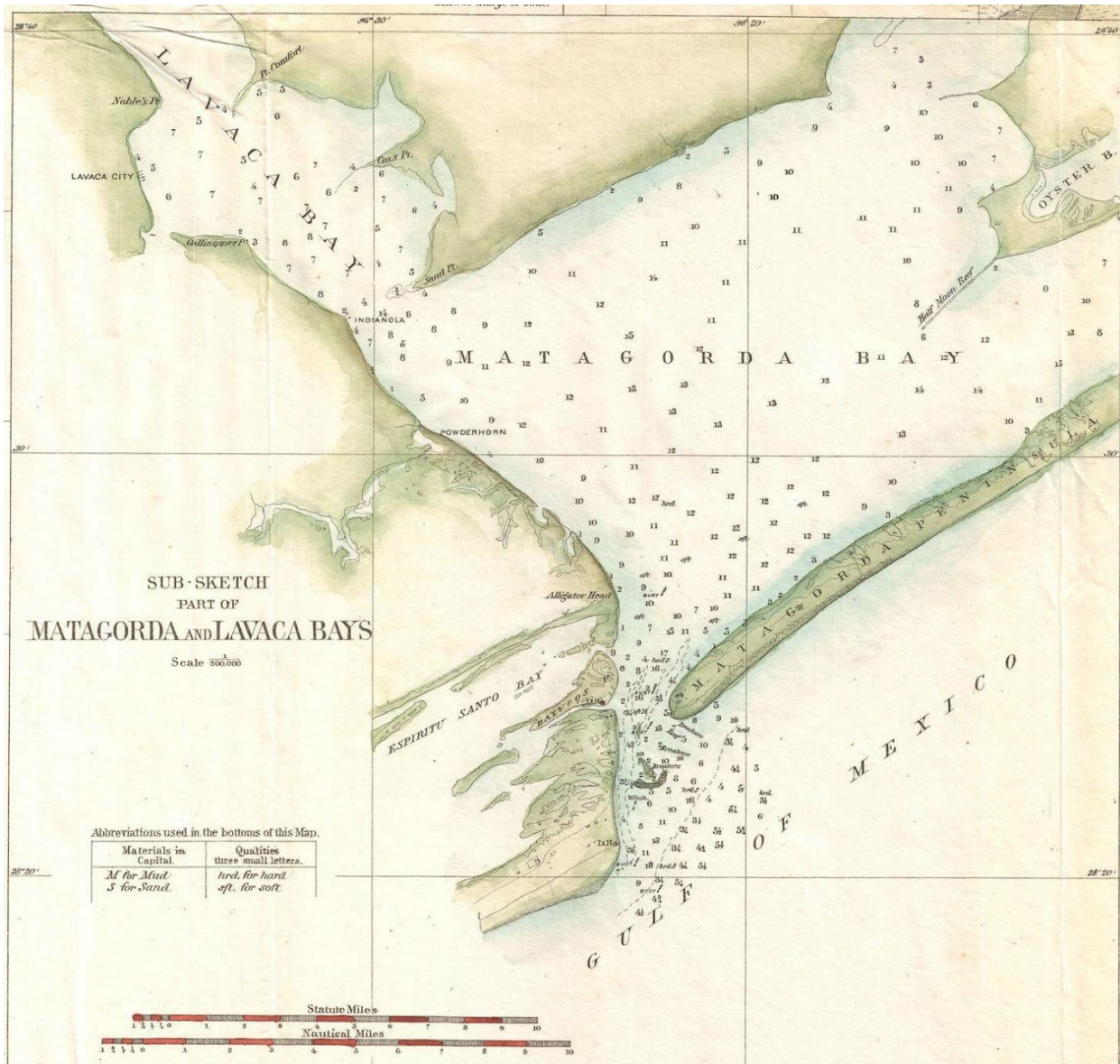
**Figure A4: Plan of the City of Calhoun by Edward Linn (TGLO Map # 2175)**

In the lower left is an inset for the larger bay, and the lower left corner of that insert is shown below in Figure A5. Please note that Calhoun is in the extreme lower left, and that Prudencio Bayou is the first passage directly behind Matagorda Island, and the other two bayous are labeled as McHenry and Bayou Pierce. Although Calhoun failed to develop and was abandoned by 1845, it does appear that Texans of 1839 may have selected a very similar place as did the Mexicans the decades earlier, and for the same reasons, in attempts to control access to Matagorda Bay. As the Calhoun site failed, the customs-house was moved across Paso Cavallo to Decrow's Point (aka Port Caballo), and by 1847 the townsite of [Saluria](#) was created, again back on the west side of the pass, but on the next more-inland of the tidal islands forming the west bank, later called Saluria Island.



**Figure A5: Detail of inset in Plan of the City of Calhoun (TGLO Map # 2175)**

More details can be found in the U.S. Coastal Survey map of 1857 (Figure 15), consisting of several sub-sketches, two of which are highlighted below in Figures A6 and A7. Figure A6 reveals the area of modern Port O'Connor was then labeled as Alligator Head, and that both Bayucos Island and Matagorda Point have a Lighthouse. Confusingly, the soundings are shown in both feet (within the dotted lines, 18' and less) and fathoms (beyond the dotted lines). But, the soundings for Paso Cavallo are very similar to the 1839 Wallach chart, with depths in the main pass of 3.5-5 fathoms (21-30 feet). It also shows depths in the bay are about 12' but are about half that in Lavaca Bay. Unfortunately, the upper end of Lavaca Bay is not shown.



**Figure A6: Sub-Sketch of 1857 USCS chart of Entrance to Matagorda Bay [Bache 1857]**

Greater detail for Paso Cavallo itself can be seen in the sub-sketch seen in Figure A7. Individual structures can be seen at Saluria and Decro's Point, and the bayou next to Saluria is labeled as McHenry's Bayou. Offshore of Saluria and the mouth of McHenry's Bayou is seen to be a "Wharf". Some portions of deeper water are seen along Bayucos Island as far as its inland side, resembling the "Pocket" in the Wallach survey. By this time, the bayou named as "Bayou del Puerto" or "Prudencio Bayou" seems to no longer exist.

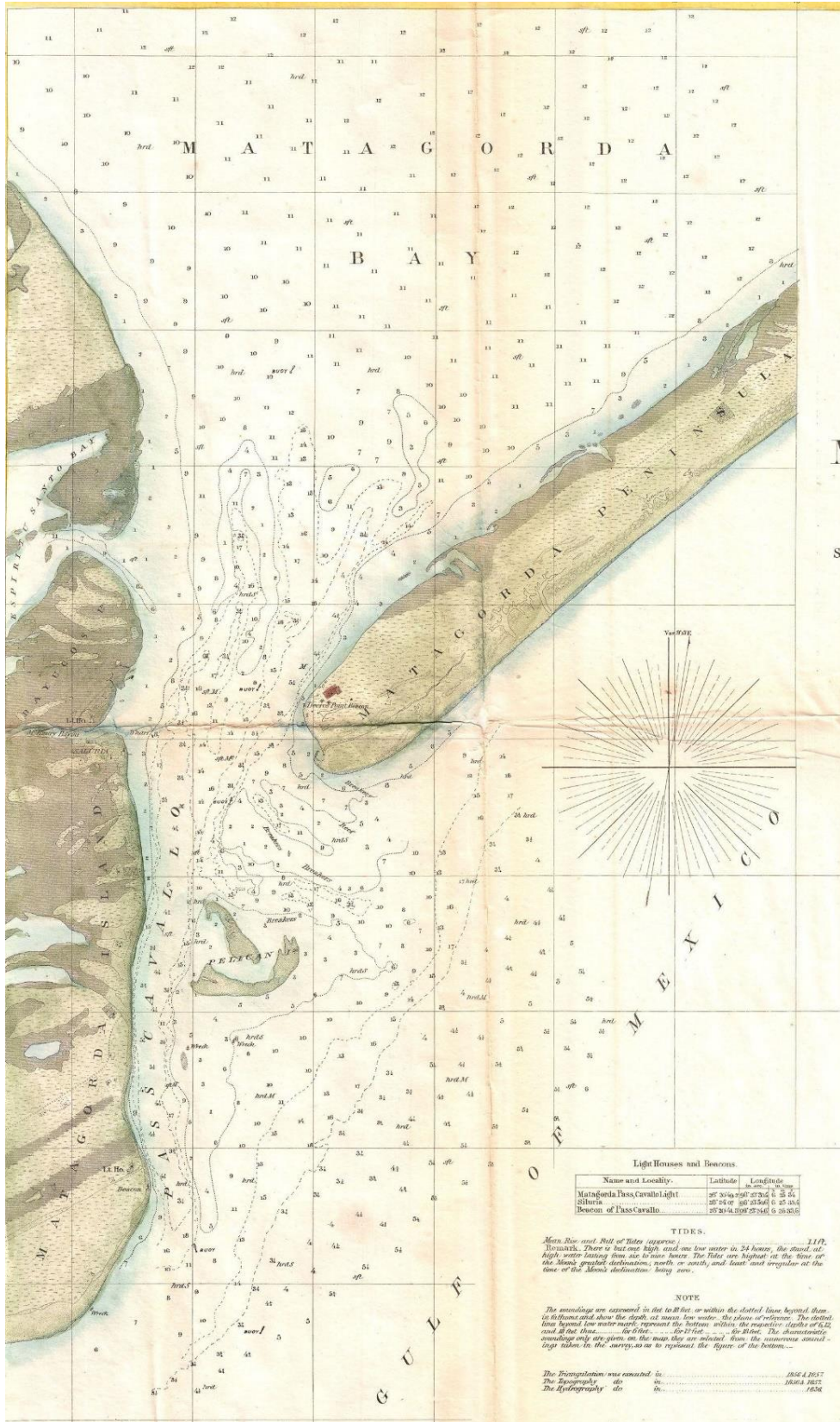


Figure A7: Sub-Sketch of 1857 USCS chart of Entrance to Matagorda Bay [Bache 1857]

Could the island named as Bayucos Island have also been the site of “port of Matagorda”, as the term “bayuco” seems to repeatedly occur in the 1830 diaries? Or, could it be the next island upon which [Saluria](#) would be founded some two decades later, and [Fort Esperanza/Fort DeBray](#) during the Civil War? An 1862 map of Paso Cavallo is shown in Figure A8 below, indicating a levy (road?) existed from Alligator Head (across Shea’s Bayou) to Bayucos Island, (across Saluria Bayou) to Saluria to Fort Esperanza to a “line of redans” and beyond to a lighthouse and “Old Fort Washington” (a Republic of Texas-era fort built circa 1843 in association with the town of Calhoun), indicating that access was possible from the mainland a few decades after the 1820’s. Indeed, if Fort Esperanza could be reached, then the dunes at Matagorda Beach actually provide the best look-out point. Only the need for a harbor or anchorage protected from wind and waves argue for a location further from the Gulf.



**Figure A8: 1862 map of Paso Cavallo [Hershey 1862]**

A series of hand-drawn sketches were also made by the Confederate Engineers Dept. under Major Felix A. Blucher, today found in the National Archives, which show additional perspectives on the bay and especially Paso Cavallo:

Sketch 1 – [Sketch of Matagorda and Lavaca Bays, Texas](#)

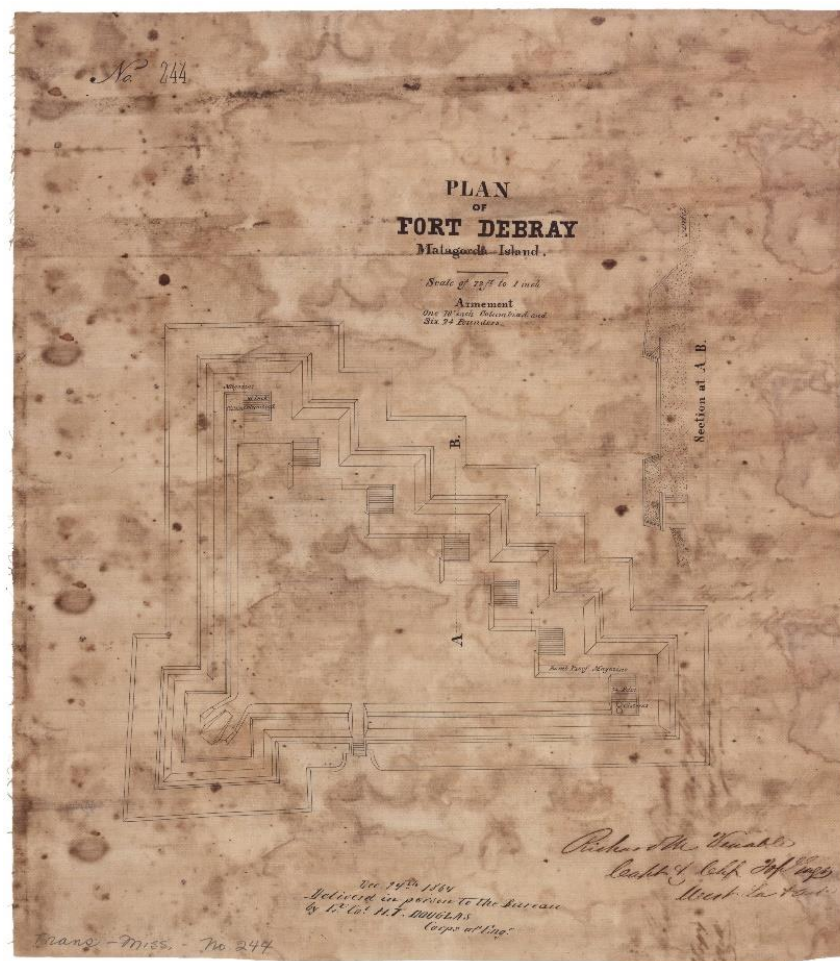
Sketch 3 – [Pass Cavallo and Vicinity](#), dated 6-Sep-1863

Sketch 4 – [Pass Cavallo and Vicinity](#), Co-signed by Valerie Sulakowski

Sketch 5 – [Map of Pass Caballo showing Vicinity of Fort DeBray](#)

These seem to show a “boat channel” in use to Espiritu Santo Bay, elsewhere labeled as Saluria Bayou, and bridged at its end with Paso Cavallo.

A diagram of Fort DeBray is shown below in Figure A9, indicating it was a substantial construction, so the area seemed capable of a minor Mexican encampment in prior decades.



**Figure A9: Fort DeBray diagram**  
from [Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection](#), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

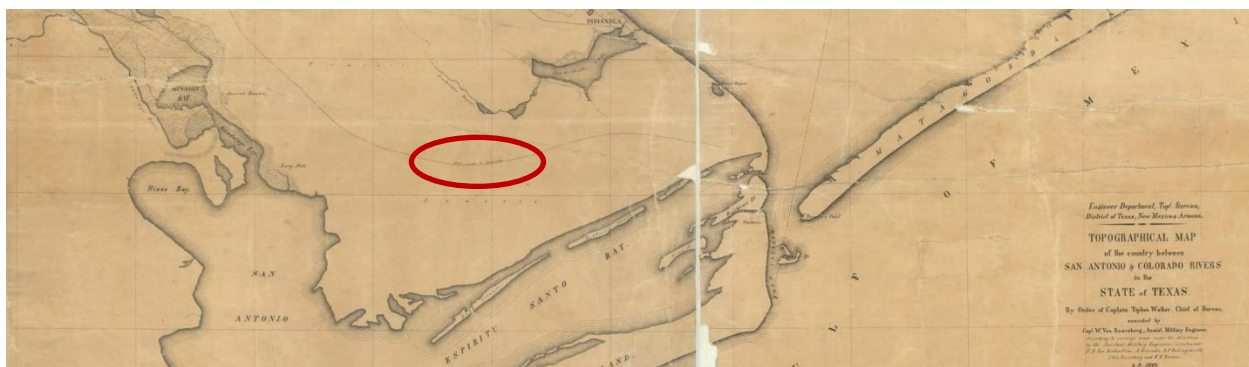
This area is also shown in an 1863 map of Calhoun County, illustrated in Figure A10 below. This map shows deeded properties, and names the bayou between Alligator Head and Bayucos Island instead as Pierce’s Bayou, and the one next to Saluria as McHenry’s Bayou.





**Figure A10: Detail from 1863 Map of Calhoun County ([TGLO Map# 887](#))**

Still-another map of the Civil War era comes from a series published in 1864 by the Topographical Bureau of the Confederate Engineers Dept., titled as “Topographical Map of the country between San Antonio & Colorado Rivers in the State of Texas” [Walker 1864], and Plot No. 1 (Sheets 1 and 2) cover the area near the coast. A portion of these two sheets has been digitally spliced and is shown in Figure A11 below. Please note that a road is shown east of Mission Lake, heading southeast and then east toward Alligator Head, and it is labeled as “Old Road to Saluria” (red oval).



**Figure A11: Portion of 1864 Tipton Walker map, from National Archives, Z41-9, Plot No. 1, Sheets 1 & 2**



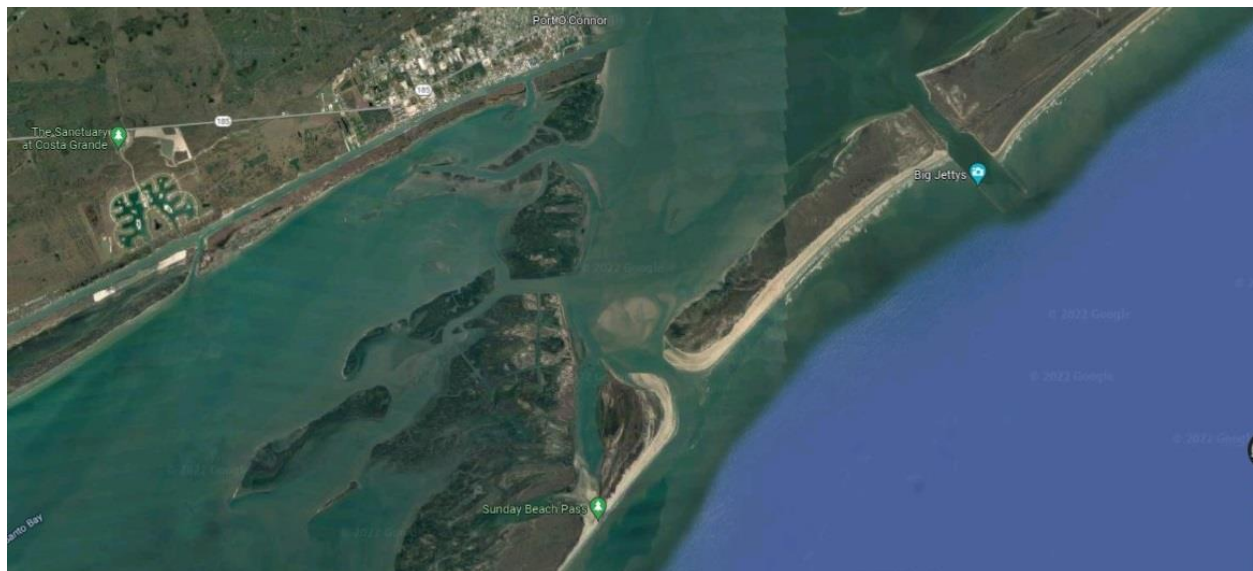
The 1953 USGS map of Beeville (Figure A2) indicates that the eastern end of Matagorda Island still showed an immediately-adjacent deep-water channel as Cavallo Pass, between it and Pelican Island. However, the construction of the Matagorda Ship Channel four miles east of the pass in 1965-1966 reduced the tidal flow through the old pass, and has allowed the historic “main” or “west” channel to silt-in on the Gulf end. Basically, Pelican Island and Matagorda Island have grown together, abolishing the historic channel entrance. At the location of the mouth of the old channel, a new beachfront has formed now called Sunday Beach, complete with dunes behind the beach. In 2017, though, Hurricane Harvey destroyed the dunes and re-opened a new shallow pass, which is referred to as Sunday Pass. Some recent articles provide additional details and images:

<https://texasoutdoorsnetwork.com/sunday-beach-port-oconnor/>

[Identifying the Inlet of Espiritu Santo](#)

[A history of Pass Cavallo](#)

A 2022 satellite image from GoogleMaps indicate that Sunday Pass has silted in yet again, and the former Pelican Island and the tip of Matagorda Peninsula are closing the remaining gap of the former eastern side of the pass, see Figure A13. It won't be long before Paso Cavallo will be lost to history too!



**Figure A13: 2022 satellite image of Paso Cavallo and Sunday Pass**

All of the historic maps seem to indicate that the tidal islands along the west bank of Paso Cavallo were perhaps slightly higher in elevation than seemingly found in modern times. In the past they supported activities and structures, which no longer seem possible. Consequently, it seems that the detachment for the “port of Matagorda” might have existed at some point between “Punta de Matagorda” and Port O’Connor. Maybe the “Pocket” (as seen in Figure A3) was a protected spot where ships could anchor to make first contact, or perhaps any of the three deep-water bayous connecting to Espiritu Santo Bay, or all of this functioned as the harbor. As discussed in the section below on “Sabinito”, if these side bayous were the path used to reach Espiritu Santo Bay, then they could have been used as an anchorage as well.

## Bergantín

The term “Bergantín” is used several times in the 1830 “diarios”, and this location is as mysterious as is the location of the Mexican “port of Matagorda”. There seems to be at least three loci for such a place name, usually associated with stories about an ancient wreck of a brigantine – although near, none really match a place that is one day’s ride east of Goliad!

If one examines the Puelles map closely (Figure 7), the pass south of “P. Matagorda” is labeled as “P. del Bergantín”. The name may be an abbreviation of “*paraje del bergantín, a wharf near the mouth of San Antonio Bay*”, derived from the discovery on [Toboso Island](#) in the 1776 Cazorla expedition of “*a deep-draft English commercial frigate, lay on the beach, having broken up and released her cargo for the natives to plunder.*” [Weddle 1992, p. 111]. One wreck of this period is mentioned in the Béxar Archives, as being reported in late 1762 for a “*... shipwreck of a brigantine, which ran aground on the coast of the Espiritu Santo Bay.*” [De Montserrat 1762].

Bergantín is mentioned as being one of three seaports listed for La Bahia in an 1804 report, along with Matagorda and Aranzazu [Uranga 1804, Guthrie 1988 p. 116]. Dispatches in 1809 seems to mention “Isla de Bergantín” in a way that suggests it was used at that time for what is now known as Matagorda Island [Herrera 18-Feb-1809, Salcedo 6-Mar-1809].

Today, a place name of [Burgentine Creek](#) is used for a drainage starting near Austwell (today, found as channelized drainage ditches in its upper portion) and draining south into Aransas NWR and Burgentine Lake at the upper end of St. Charles Bay, arising from an old tale that a Spanish treasure brigantine was blown upstream and ashore during a storm. This version was written down in a short passage mentioning “*... one Spanish barkantine, laden with specie for pay of the military, came into Copano Bay, and was blown ashore by a terrific storm and left there high and dry, near a creek which is now known as Barkentine Creek. The gold, it is said, was stolen by the Karankawas, and the iron and wood were used by the Fagan family in 1829 in building their home on the San Antonio River*” [Huson 1935 p. 6]. The story is repeated in Huson’s later two-volume history of Refugio County [Huson 1953 I:8-9 & 173]. Figure A14 is a detail from an 1875 land deed map of Refugio County, indicating Burgentine Creek (red oval) was a place name at least that far back.



**Figure A14: Detail from 1875 Map of Refugio County (TGLO Map# 3988)**

Another modern story speaks of a brigantine wrecked in the area of Mission Bay and Lake on the north side of Copano Bay in modern Refugio County: <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/sleeping-booty/>, apparently based on an unlikely story in a recent book [Jameson 2006] which confuses Burgentine Creek (of far eastern Refugio Co.) with the Mission River (in southwestern Refugio Co.), and also the Spanish and Mexican periods of Texas. It mentions a date of Sep-1822, the captain's name (Sotomayor), and also the Fagan family but in the 1870's, all without any references.

In these stories, it is mentioned that the [Nicholas Fagan](#) family hauled timbers from a wreck on Copano or St. Charles Bay when establishing their homesite on the San Antonio River in 1829 (between modern McFaddin and Tivoli). The Fagan land grant (red arrow) can be seen elsewhere on the same 1875 map of Refugio County, see Figure A15 below. It is found on the south side of the San Antonio River where the river divides around an island, upstream of the confluence with the Guadalupe River about the same distance that the river mouth on Guadalupe Bayou is below the confluence.



Figure A15: Detail from 1875 Map of Refugio County ([TGLO Map# 3988](#))

### Lavaca/Garcitas

The precise location of port of Lavaca (aka Garcitas) has also been lost to history, but one passage was found in a “diario” of José María de la Garza dated 11-May-1830 for his trip to the “Puerto de la Baca”, which was transmitted from Cosío to Elosúa about a month later [Cosío 18-Jun-1830].

22 – I left this garrison with four soldiers towards the East and spent the night along Manahuilla Creek

23 – I woke up without incident, along the same route at three in the afternoon I arrived in Guadalupe and spent the night

24 – I woke up without incident. I continued my march to the east at four in the afternoon I arrived at that little hole and at night --

25 – I woke up without incident. I continued my march towards the east at six in the morning I arrived at Puerto de la Vaca --

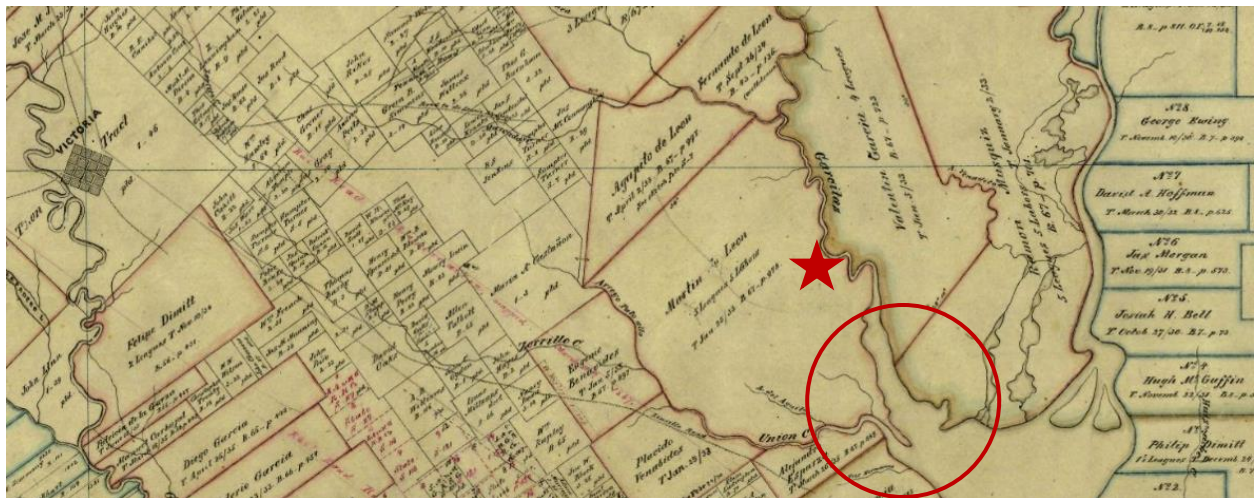
26 – I woke up without incident.

27 - I woke up without incident, at eight o'clock in the morning, a boat was seen entering the exit of the Callo del Presidio Viejo and after it saw us delayed backwards from where it had entered and anchored in the middle of the lagoon on the same day late heading west to the Ranch of the Citizen Martin de Leon for news that they were waiting for. At seven o'clock in the morning, even a ship arrived at the ranch where the owner of said ship was found, the same one that was seen in Puerto de la Vaca. This owner of this ship is called Juan Lino, who is the same person who was immediately waiting for a soldier. of my departure to town of Guadalupe to ask for help from the authority of said town for having more knowledge of those corners.

This journal describes travel straight east from Goliad through Guadalupe Victoria to the port, but does not mention crossing of Garcitas Creek or the Lavaca River. It also describes the arrival of an unnamed vessel, thought to be the schooner *Opocisión* which is discussed in further detail in the main section of

the report above; references are in [DeLaGarza 7-May-1830]. It describes the vessel's entrance to or near Garcitas Creek, and then retreating into Lavaca Bay to anchor. It also sounds like they landed a rowboat on the west bank, to travel on to the ranch of Martin de Leon. Another section of the 1858 Pressler map of Victoria County (Figure 13) may help orient the location; see Figure A16 below. The mouth of Garcitas Creek is seen to widen as it enters Lavaca Bay, and this estuary later became known as Garcitas Cove (red circle). One can also see that Martin de Leon held title to a large property of 5 leagues and 5 labors on the west side of Garcitas Creek, encompassing the site of Ft. St. Louis (known to the Spanish and Mexicans as Presidio Viejo, marked with a red star) and all the way to the bay. The western boundary of the ranch is marked by Arroyo Palo Alto and Union Creek (modern Placedo Creek). Two small tributaries are seen near the mouth of Union Creek, one is labeled as Arroyo del Aguila. These appear to be modern Agula and Kentucky Mutt creeks. The spit of land jutting into the bay between the mouths of Garcitas and Placedo Creeks is now known as Keeran Point.

So, since the journal uses the term "Puerto de la Baca" while describing a location at the mouth of Garcitas Creek, it is concluded the terms for port "Lavaca" and "Garcitas" refer to the same place. It is possible that the term for "port of Lavaca" might apply elsewhere on the bay (such as what would become known as Dimitt's Landing or Cox's Point), but this document seems to limit it to Garcitas at this point in time (1830).

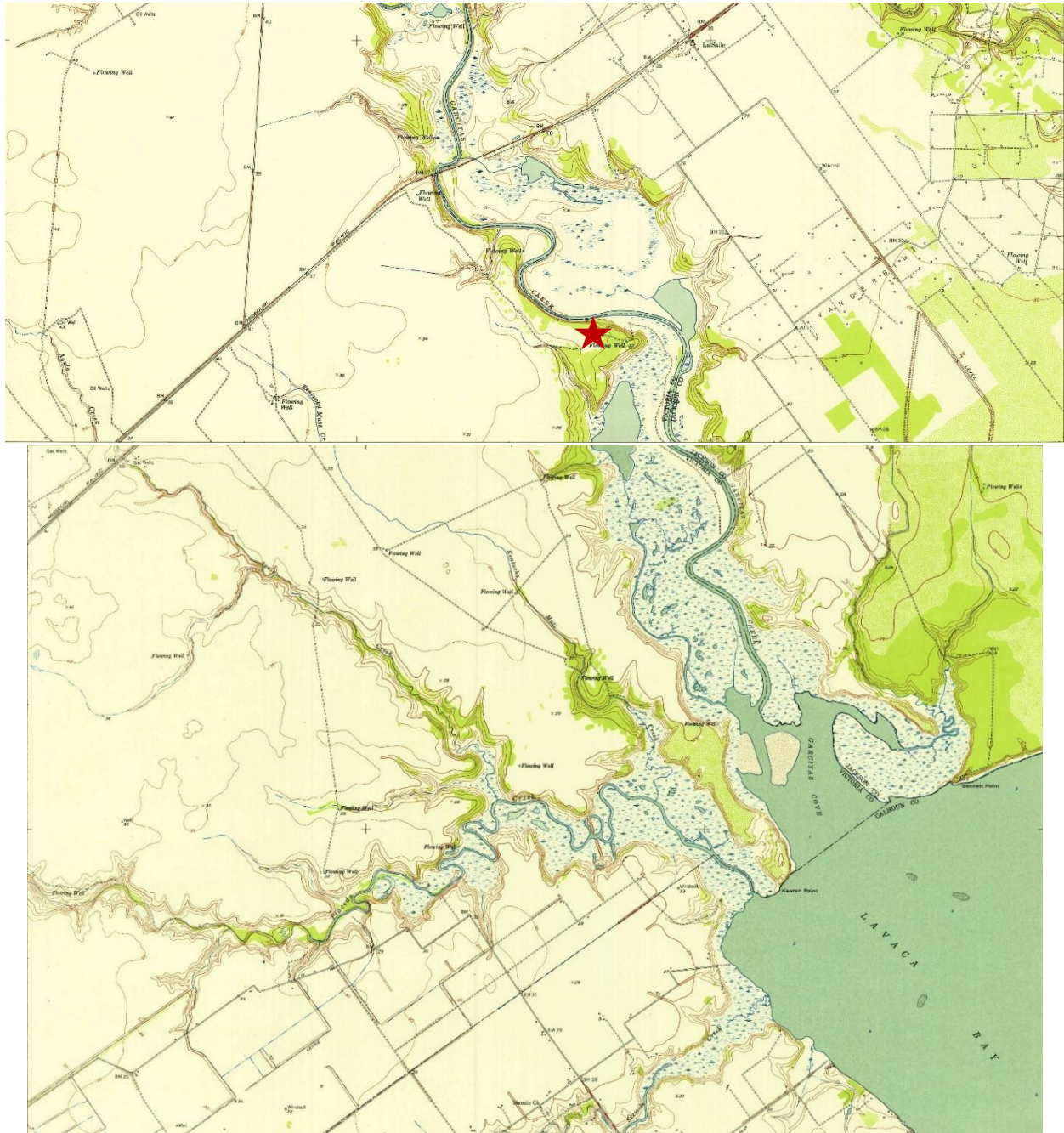


**Figure A16: Detail from "Victoria County" map, 21-Nov-1858 by Charles W. Pressler ([TGLO Map# 4115](#))**

To gain some perspective of the topography in this area, one can consult the oldest-available USGS maps, the 7.5-minute Quadrangles from 1952 entitled Kamey and La Salle, Texas, digitally-spliced portions of which are shown in Figure A17 below. One can see that Keeran Point is not as slender as shown in Figure A16, and that the lower reaches of Agula and Kentucky Mutt Creeks are wooded. The contour lines indicate a relatively high ridge following the west bank of Garcitas Creek near its mouth (with marsh along the creek itself), and along the west bank of Garcitas Cove. The southern end of this ridge is Keeran Point, which even has a small prominence reaching above 25 feet elevation (today a small wooded knoll surrounded by grassy prairie), and which would have made a great vantage point to view the bay. To the north, this ridge forms a bluff directly above the creek, indeed the site once chosen for Fort St. Louis (known to the Mexicans as Presidio Viejo, red star). Perhaps, Martin de Leon chose his

boundaries carefully, to include the peninsula of Keeran Point to have direct access to the bay from high land, and to benefit from any “Puerto de Lavaca” established there.

Therefore, in view of the modern topography seen in Figure A17, one might imagine that the de la Garza diary describes a day’s ride east from Guadalupe Victoria, perhaps to pass above or easily ford the creeks known as Agula Creek and Kentucky Mutt, to camp at the unnamed lake on the west bank of Garcitas Creek and just south of the former site of Fort St. Louis (the “little hole”?). The route then turned south-southeast, following the ridge to Keeran Point.



**Figure A17: Detail from 1952 USGS 7.5-minute Quadrangles of La Salle and Kamey, Texas**



Although only a hypothesis, this would seem to be the best location for the detachment of “Garcitas”. Since older charts of Matagorda Bay seem to have neglected this portion of upper Lavaca Bay, we must turn instead to relatively modern nautical charts to gain understanding of water depth off Keeran Point or in the channel formed by the discharge of Garcitas Creek along the west side of Garcitas Cove. Multiple NOAA charts are available since the 1970’s, but the earliest seems to be Chart# 522 from 1971 (a modern descendant of Figure 15), detail of which is shown in Figure A18 below. Although 141 years after 1830, one can see that Garcitas Cove is now extremely shallow (1-2 feet) while water in the center of the bay is only about 5 feet depth, amid some very shallow oyster reefs.



**Figure A18: Detail of upper Lavaca Bay from NOAA Chart 522**

Thus, the anchorage at Garcitas might have worked only for smaller and/or shallow draft vessels, providing a location for ships to anchor, and lighter off their cargo or passengers. Might this be where the **General Bustmanate** was lost, probably grounding but not losing the men or gear of Arteaga’s first delivery? An alternate hypothesis for an anchorage by the name of Lavaca might have existed almost anywhere along the west bank of Lavaca Bay, though, in the areas later to become Linnville, Noble Point or Port Lavaca, although these locations do not seem to offer any deeper water off their shores.

## Sabinito

The port (“landing” might be a better description) was described by Jean Louis Berlandier in his journal on a trip from Goliad to Copano in 1829, writing “*To our left, that is to say towards the northeast, we left the San Antonio and the Guadalupe rivers ..... After their confluence one finds two anchorages, named Mosquito and Sabinito, where small schooners sometimes arrive to unload their merchandise.*” [Berlandier 1980 p. 390]. This area is shown in an 1863 map of Calhoun County, illustrated in Figure A19 below. The rivers join east of Green Lake, flow past Mission Lake and then discharge into Guadalupe Bayou, a northern extension of modern San Antonio Bay.



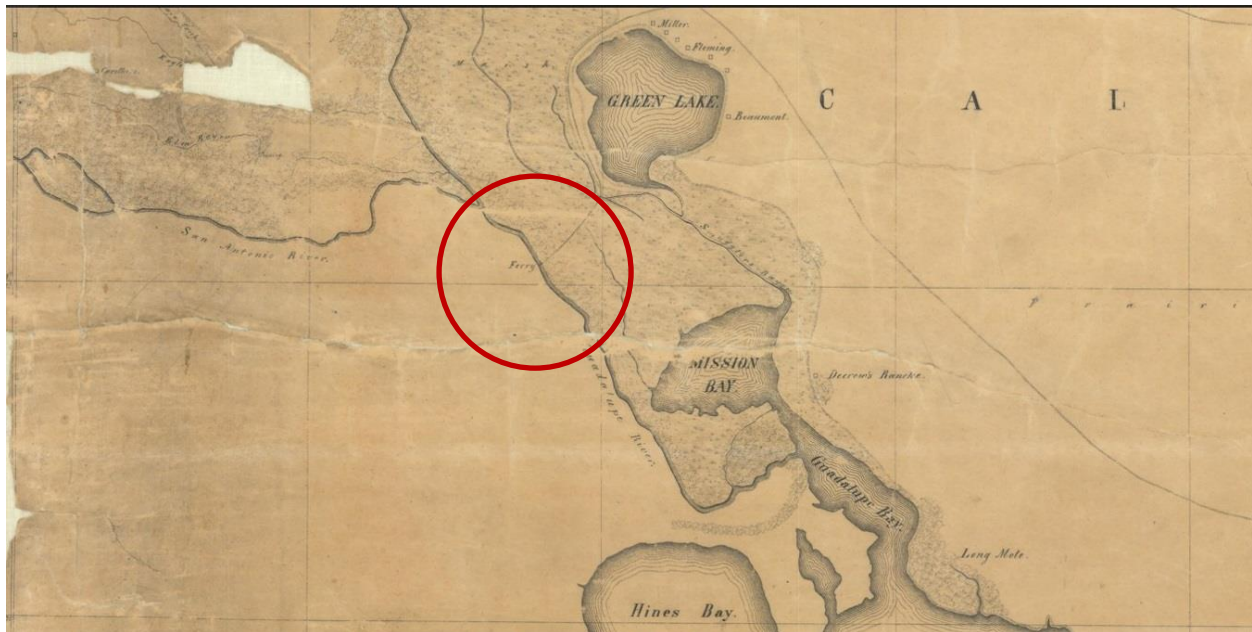
**Figure A19: Detail from 1863 Map of Calhoun County ([TGLO Map# 887](#))**

After an 1834 inspection of Texas, [Juan Almonte](#) composed a “[Statistical Report on Texas](#)” which mentions “... Sabinito which is .... At the confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers. In order to reach .... One must enter by way of Paso del Caballo and follow a westerly direction. Ships with a draught of not more than six feet can arrive safely at ... Sabinito.” [Almonte 1925, p. 191].

In earlier decades, this area was also known as Rancho de los Mosquitos and the second site of [Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission](#), and later became known as [Mesquite Landing](#), also known as El Muelle Viejo [Huson 1953 I:5]. Apparently, the mouth of the Guadalupe River in the period of the mid-1800’s was navigable to the smaller vessels of the period, although the modern channel seems relatively long

and narrow. This seems to be about where modern Schultz Road crosses the conjoined river, known also as the Guadalupe River below its juncture, and also where modern topographic maps show evidence of a railroad crossing (now replaced by another line further inland).

The historic ferry mentioned for this point must have been located such that a coast road passed between Green and Mission Lakes to cross the merged river (red circle), perhaps along a route approximated by the path of modern Highway 35. However, a map created during the Civil War by the Confederate Topographical Bureau under Captain Tipton Walker shows a ferry near this location, where the road (then in use) passed north and west of Green Lake to the ferry southwest of that lake [Walker 1864], a portion of which is shown below in Figure A20.



**Figure A20: Portion of Tipton Walker map, from National Archives, Z41-9, Plot No. 1, Sheet 1**

Another interesting question is how did ships come into San Antonio Bay and then Sabinito from the Gulf? It seems unlikely that they would enter at Aransas Pass, travel up Aransas Bay (bypassing the entrance to Copano Bay and Copano, and the “ports” at Aranzazu and Bergantín), and then negotiate the reefs at the both ends of modern Carlos Bay to enter the lower end of San Antonio Bay. Alternately, the cut through Matagorda Island known as Cedar Bayou would seem to be too small or intermittent, although was mentioned in the period and was even reputed to be a secret entrance once for Jean Lafitte. Might it even be what Puelles drew as “P. del Bergantín”? Thirdly, did they come in at Paso Cavallo, and then navigate through Saluria (aka McHenry’s) Bayou [Huson 1953 I:4], or possibly through Shea’s (aka Pierce’s or Big) Bayou into Espiritu Santo Bay? A book published for the 1828-1843 period on Matagorda Bay, had this to say “... vessels drawing six feet may pass through the connecting bayou between Passo Caballo and the bay of San Bernardo (current Espiritu Santo Bay?), and thence to Mesquite Landing near the junction of Rios San Antonio and Guadalupe, with the exception of some obstructions among some small islands in the bay of San Bernardo.” [Helm 1884 p.178]. This would agree with Almonte’s comment above, but why would a ship risk all that trouble, when they could just stop right there in safety at the “port of Matagorda”. It is true that the distance from Sabinito to Goliad

is less than from the Matagorda ports, but perhaps more importantly, a landing on the west bank of the San Antonio River avoids the need for any major river crossing on the land path to Goliad (that is, directly up the right/west bank to Presidio La Bahia). Victoria is better served from Lavaca Bay, so the creation of this town in the 1820's probably added incentives for Matagorda/Lavaca ports to be used for goods headed there.