

Chronological and Archaeological History of the Forts Velasco

... an illustrated narrative by Chris Kneupper

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Live links are available by [colored and underlined words, names or phrases](#), where more details can be found about that subject. Therefore, this report is most useful when read as an electronic document.

PURPOSE

It is a thesis of the author that old Velasco played a more significant role in early Texas history than is generally recognized today (currently referred to as an under-told story), and that efforts should be made to redress the situation by historical interpretation of the area, to teach locals and promote heritage tourism for visitors. So, extensive research into primary sources and others has been accomplished, to compile and tell this story. Believing that any interpretation should respect historical facts to the fullest extent possible, this detailed history of the Velasco area has been here assembled for public access. It focuses on the several forts built at Velasco as the “spine” of the story, while trying to place these details within the context of the better-known history of the times. It could also be called a literature survey. The work product consists of an illustrated narrative or “concept” report (as this MS-Word document) and also an image-heavy “executive summary” (as a MS-Powerpoint document). The latter is suitable as an audio-visual presentation to interested groups. A [web site](#) has also been built.

Readers are welcome, indeed eagerly requested, to provide corrections or additional information, especially from documented sources or for the first Fort Velasco. All statements in this document are the responsibility of the author only, and do not necessarily represent the position of any of the groups to which he is a member. Thus, amendments should be requested directly of the author.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study of early efforts to research and to build a replica Fort Velasco was greatly helped by reviewing the papers of the late George Kramig, which his two daughters graciously loaned to the author for an extended period. Additionally, Michael Bailey of the Brazoria County Historical Museum (BCHM) was most helpful in locating documents in their electronic and vertical files. Johnney Pollan, James Smith, Sue Gross, Clint Lacy and other members of the Brazosport Archaeological Society (BAS) provided invaluable assistance with old maps, records and knowledge of past archaeological efforts. The Blueline Print Shop in Freeport TX graciously provided professional copying and digitizing work for old documents at no or reduced costs. James Glover and Jennifer Parsley of the Brazoria County Parks Department reviewed the research and this document, making helpful suggestions. The staff of the [Dolph Briscoe Center For American History](#) (CAH), the [Texas State Library And Archives](#), the [Texas General Land Office](#) (all in Austin TX), and the [Galveston & Texas History Center](#) (Rosenberg Library, Galveston TX) were also most helpful in locating old documents in their collections. 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. Jeff Durst of the [Texas Historical Commission](#) has helped with counsel about this site for years. Tiffany Osburn (of THC) and Doug Boyd (of Prewitt & Associates) have recently provided advice on use of remote-sensing techniques and contractors. George Nelson has provided historical context, in relation to other Spanish colonial sites. A key but underutilized resource has been the B exar Archives, and their Calendar is a useful finding aid, although the Calendar is no longer maintained by the Briscoe Center ([use Wayback machine instead](#)).

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 of Mexican Texas, largely through the colony established by [Stephen Fuller Austin](#) known as Austin's Colony, with his original settlers known as the [Old Three Hundred](#). By 1835, it has been estimated that 25,000 settlers had arrived through the mouth of the Brazos [Texas 1969, Weir 1976]. However, the only towns of note were [San Felipe de Austin](#), [Brazoria](#), [Matagorda](#) and [Harrisburg](#), each only a few years old, as shown in the 1830 version of a map created and commissioned by the empresario himself (Figure 1 below). Please note that, aside from a road from Brazoria down the right bank, no development is shown at the mouth of the Brazos River.

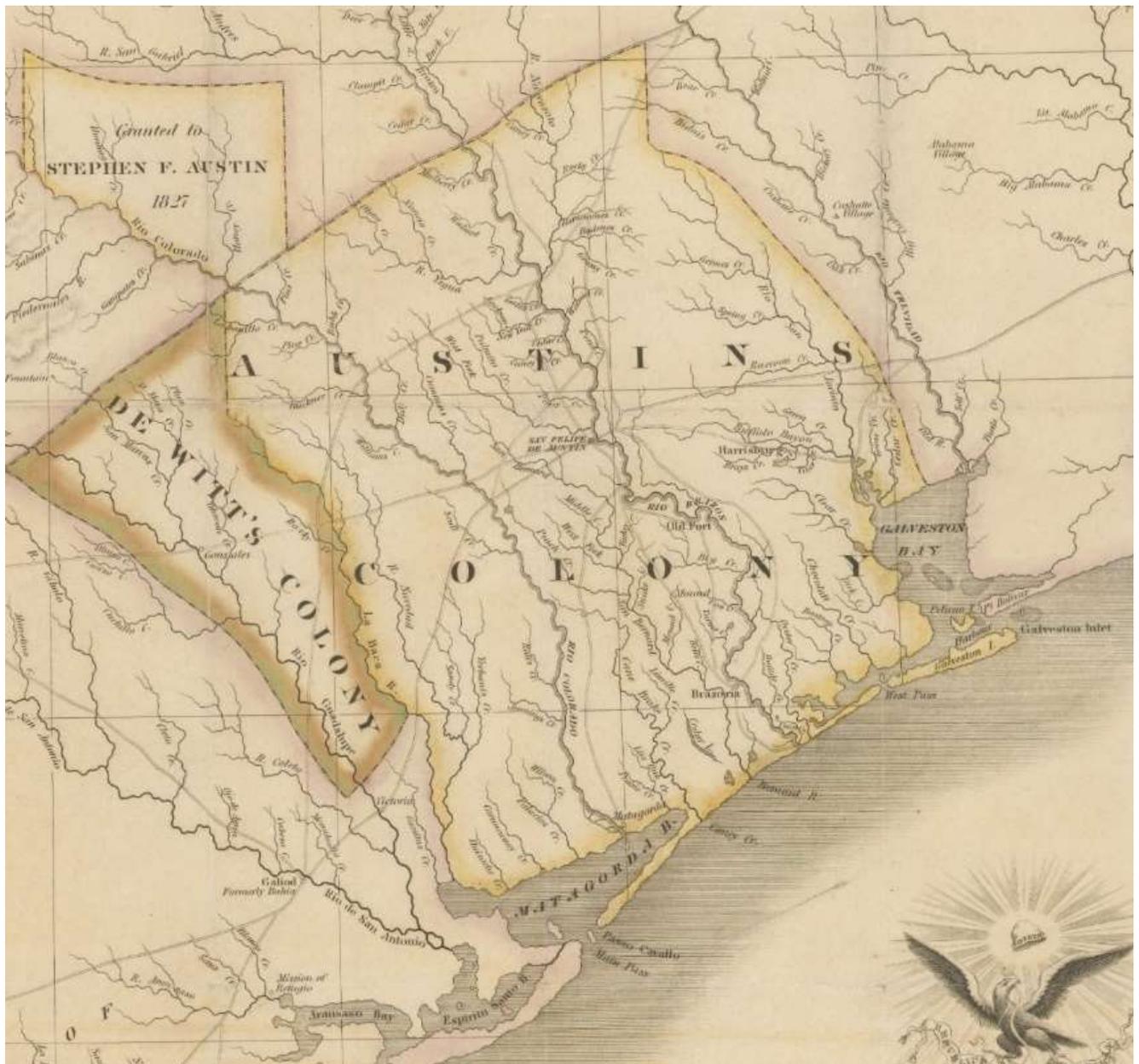


Figure 1: Portion of 1830 version of Austin and Terán map published by H. S. Tanner

Although some unimproved roads existed, much of the transportation and commerce occurred via waterways, such as shallow-draft schooners in the Gulf of Mexico, bays and lower portions of major rivers; as well as sloops, packet boats and small steamers in the inland rivers and canals [Francaviglia 1998, Meed 2006 p. 6]. Since developed harbors or port towns had yet to be created, the mouth of the Brazos became a chief port of entry, in part since it was navigable for some distance inland. In the period of 1823-1824, a landing was established by [Josiah H. Bell](#) known as Bell's Landing (later known as Marion and then [East Columbia](#)), where the smaller ships of the era could dock. Brazoria was laid out later (circa 1828), also to receive ships. To assist commerce, the colonists had been granted a reprieve from customs duties for a period of seven years by a decree from the Mexican Congress on 29-Sep-1823 [Supremo Gobierno 1825], stating "*The Mexican Sovereign Congress, taking into consideration the pitiful and deplorable state to which the hostilities of the barbarians have reduced the province of Texas, and in part to the misery of its civilized inhabitants, has come to direct and decree. - That all the effects of any kind, national or foreign that are introduced in the province of Texas for the consumption of its inhabitants, be free of duties; This exemption lasts for seven years counted from its publication in that capital*". Consequently, no attempt was made to establish customs posts for Austin's Colony until near the expiration date in 1830 [Morton 1945 p. 508]. So, free trade practices became the norm for these colonists, unlike other portions of Mexico.

Although the mouth of the Brazos River was a key port of entry for Austin's Colony, the adjacent low "salt flats" were mostly barren of fresh water, timber and game, vulnerable to tides and storms, and only a few settlers chose to eke out an existence there. One of the few was [Asa Mitchell](#) (see Figure 2), who had settled there in the early 1820's, obtained a land grant in 1824 in the unnamed area on the left bank or east side, and established a salt works in about 1826 [Mitchell 1826, Mauermann 1950].



Figure 2: Portrait of Asa Mitchell

An early description of the area was made by Stephen F. Austin while visiting in late 1825 for a fishing trip, perhaps at the Mitchell homestead. He wrote *"This river mouths into the wild ocean without any bay, and the breakers are roaring within Eighty yards of me – there is a good two story frame house and some cabins here, and there is at this time 8 feet water over the bar. Salt water is produced here by digging 10 feet so strong that 5 gallons of it will make one of salt, ..."* [Austin Dec-1825]. By 1830, it was estimated that two vessels per month arrived at the Brazos from New Orleans over the prior ten months, with a combined capacity of 1200 tons [Fisher 21-Jul-1830a, Barker 1926 p. 183, Letts 1928 p. 46], usually tacking upriver to Brazoria to dock. However, despite these modest beginnings, major developments in the history of Texas would occur at the mouth, primarily due to its strategic location for transportation, military and commercial purposes.

Alarmed by Austin's success at colonization, and skeptical of his colonists' assimilation of Mexican customs/laws/religion/language, the Mexican national government chose to establish a customs post at the location, soon joined by a small military fort initially named as *"Fortaleza de Velasco"*, which later gave its name to the area. Soon after its construction in 1832, this fort was the site of a skirmish called the [Battle of Velasco](#), sometimes memorialized as the *"first battle of the Texas Revolution"* or its version of the *"Boston Tea Party"* or *"Lexington and Concord"*, after which the rustic fort was largely abandoned. Although many accounts have been published about the Battle of Velasco, very few details (size or dimensions) were mentioned about the 1832 fort's actual construction. Due to the strategic location of the mouth of the Brazos, other later forts were also built during the Texas Revolution and the Civil War at almost but not the same location. Since the history of the several "Forts Velasco" can be very confusing, this report is intended to sort and align all of the chronological and archaeological facts to describe the several military emplacements and posts on the left bank of the Brazos River at its original mouth, now the entrance to Freeport Harbor near Surfside Beach. Thus, this history of the site can inform and enable any historical interpretation or archaeological projects in coming years.

BACKGROUND

Lest we think that old Velasco was the first attempt to establish a port on the upper Texas coast, our story needs to start a little earlier, so as to get some inkling of prior efforts at and near the mouth of the Brazos. Before Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, the King of Spain authorized Bahía de San Bernardo (a broad area, currently known as Matagorda, Lavaca and perhaps Espiritu Santo and San Antonio Bays) 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. Interestingly, the original name for Goliad was [La Bahía](#), taken from the name of the presidio which moved there in 1749, [Presidio Nuestra Señora de Loreto de la Bahía](#). The term "La Bahía" ("The Bay" in English) harkens back to the original location for this presidio on Garcitas Creek just above Bahía de San Bernardo (Lavaca Bay) in the period of 1721-1726. So, this area had been explored and known for some time. Some indication of the state of geographical knowledge of the time can be seen in an 1807 map, drawn by a Franciscan friar at Nacogdoches, Fray

José Maria Puelles. Figure 3 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 was never publicly released by Spanish authorities.



Figure 3: Stephen F. Austin's copy of the Puelles 1807 map (from [The Portal to Texas History](#)); other versions are labeled "Mapa Geografica de las Provincias Septentrionales de Esta Nueva Espana"

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. On these maps, the series of bays known today as Matagorda and Lavaca Bays is 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. 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, and then turn northeast to travel some distance up the bay to the mouth. However, at the time, the "raft" prevented further navigation up the

Colorado River itself much past the modern location of the town of Matagorda [Clay 1949], so this river never developed the early commerce that the Brazos River did.

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 4), 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 1982, Reinhartz 2015]. The coastal areas are not much improved from the Puelles, Humboldt or Pike maps.



Figure 4: 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 during 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 5 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 5: "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. Although the background and history of Austin’s Colony is beyond the scope of this document, Stephen F. Austin wrote a concise summary of his efforts up to 1829 [Austin 1829], and the eminent Austin-era historian and professor, [Eugene Campbell Barker](#), wrote an excellent synopsis [Barker Jun-1918]. Another brief but excellent review can be found in Gambrell’s biography of Anson Jones [Gambrell 1948], the chapter entitled “Mr. Austin’s Texas”. 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, and 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], which was also published as a circular [Pedraza 1825]. This decree anticipated creation of a customs house (*aduana marítima*), but did not specify the location of the port - please see Figure 6. Thus, “*el puerto de Galvezton*” became the second authorized port on the Texas coast.

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 1982 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, and 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 1826]. However, later dispatches reveal they were delivered to “*Sabino*” or “*destacamento de la Balandra*” on 24-July-1826, and were to be used from a newly-staffed satellite post of La Bahia called “Matagorda”

[Manchola 1826] – probably on the shore of Lavaca or Matagorda Bay, near the location later known as Port O’Connor.

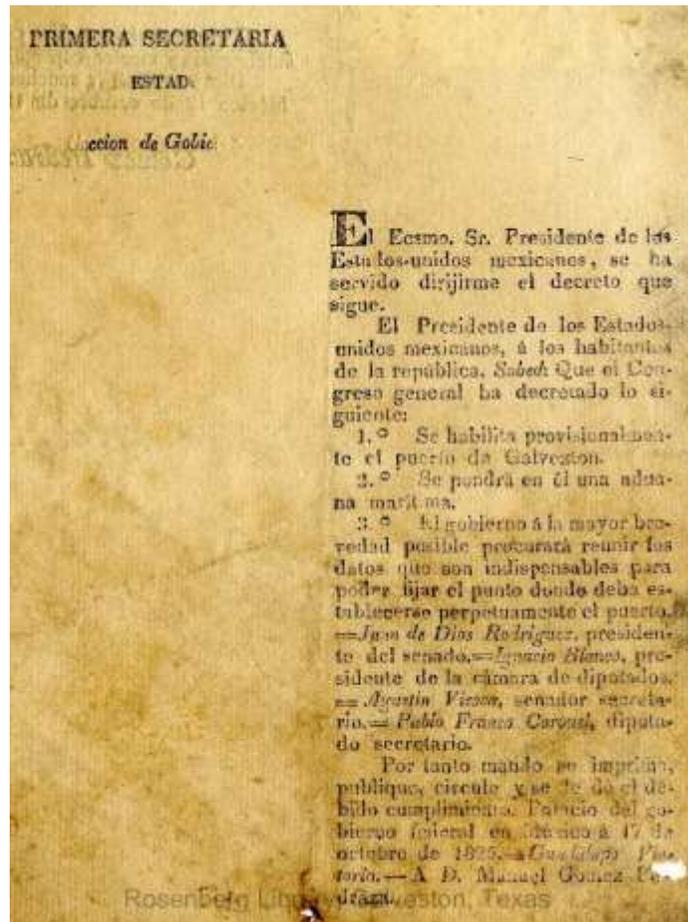


Figure 6: Decree of Mexican federal legislature authorizing “el puerto de Galvezton” [Pedraza 1825]

No significant port or town was established on Galveston Island in this period, and the Brazos continued to be used instead, under the authority of “*puerto de Galvezton*”. [Mary Wightman Helm](#), widow of [Elias R. Wightman](#) who was surveyor for Stephen F. Austin and founder of Matagorda, wrote later of her first arrival at Matagorda in 1829 that “... *All immigrants heretofore having landed at the mouth of the Brazos.*” [Helm 1884 p. 45]. Although not completely true, it probably indicates that the majority of settlers were indeed entering at the Brazos River.

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 (Comisión de Límites), 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 Bahía to Matamoros [Morton 1945, 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]. A detailed on-line biography of Terán can be found at [The Sons of DeWitt Colony](#). 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.

Based on Terán’s report, [Lucas Alamán](#) (Mexican minister of foreign relations) and others created the infamous [Law of 6-Apr-1830](#), in some cases exceeding Terán’s advice. An excellent and still-authoritative review of the precursors and complex formation process for this law, especially Terán’s plan for Texas, was written in 1913 by a graduate student at the University of Texas, Alleine Howren (1883-1952) born at George, Madison Co., Texas [Howren 1913]. One provision of the new law called for the military occupation of Texas using, in part, convicts as soldiers and 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 latter article 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]. 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 the first efforts at a military site at the mouth of the Brazos River, to enforce its customs and immigration provisions.

Accompanying Terán’s expedition 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 to [Cópano](#) (northwest end of Copano Bay) from which they departed on 11-Mar-1829 by sea through Aransas Pass for New Orleans, returning on 13-May-1829 the same way [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 7, 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. Obviously, however, local sailors knew well how to use the adjacent bays, and these must have been considered part of Bahía de San Bernardo.

records of the Texas General Land Office as Map #145 (see Figure 8 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.

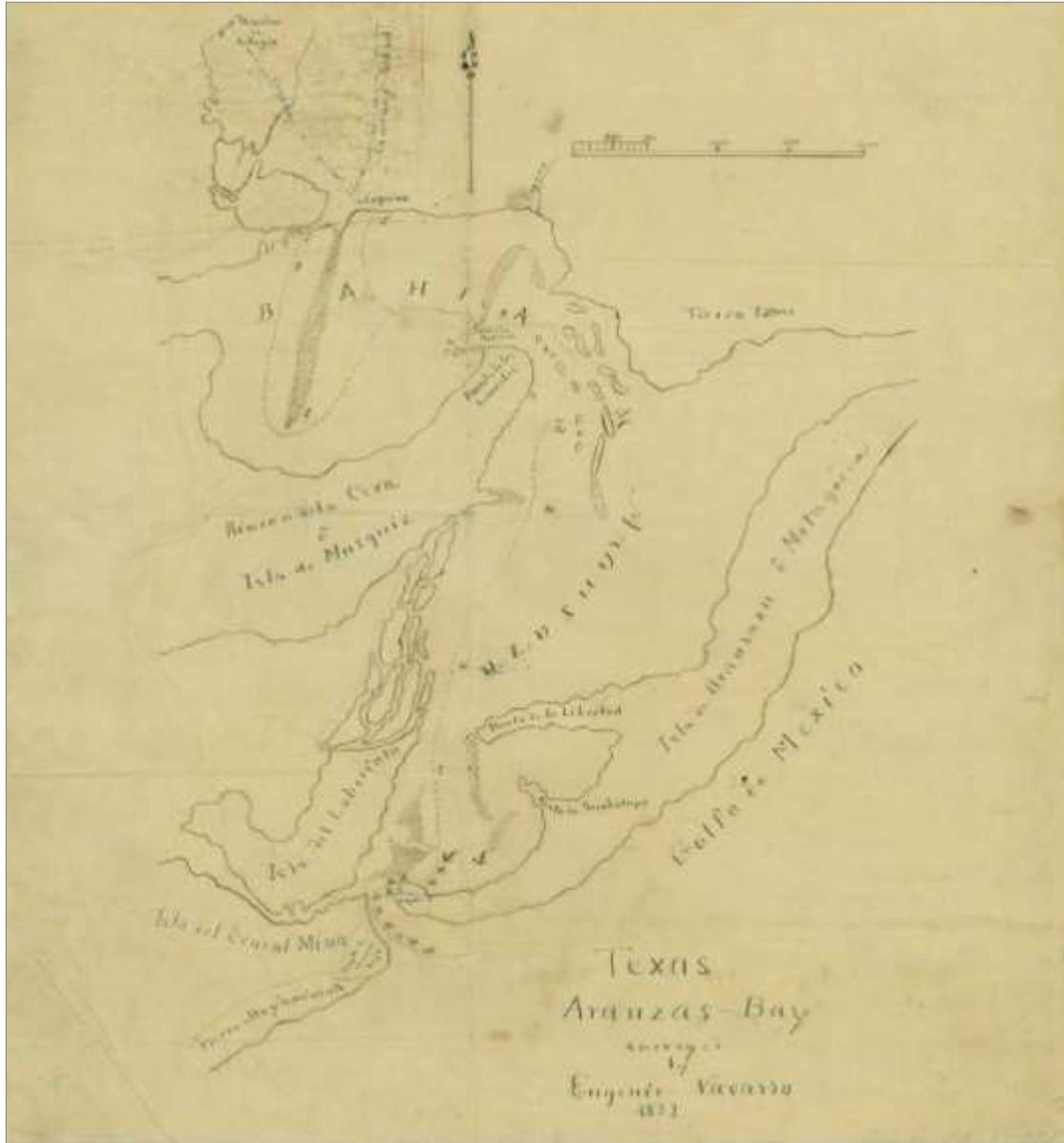


Figure 8 – Sketch of Aransas Bay surveyed by Eugenio Navarro, 1832

HISTORY OF THE FORTS

Mexican Republic (1830-1835) ... or Fort Velasco #1

The first public development at the mouth of the Brazos involved creation of a customs house; however, it was a very strange beginning due to the appearance of a talented, officious, self-promoting adventurer and schemer named [George “Jorge” Fisher](#). The year 1830, and a few years afterwards, would involve a very unusual interlude in Austin’s Colony with this man. Perhaps the authoritative work on Fisher’s time in Texas is a biographical Master’s Thesis from 1928 written by Bessie Lucille Letts from Marlin, Falls Co., Texas (later Mrs. Clark Wright, 1901-1996), a student at the University of Texas under Professor Eugene C. Barker [Letts 1928]. The document is extremely rare, with the only known copies existing at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History in Austin, another copy in storage in the University of Texas Library system and a photostat copy in the Margaret Swett Henson Papers at the Rosenberg Library in Galveston.

Fisher arrived in [San Felipe de Austin](#) in early May-1830, being announced in a small notice in the hometown weekly [Texas Gazette](#) newspaper as “*Col. Fisher, Administrador, for the port of Galveston, arrived in our town a few days since, from New Orleans – and will enter on the duties of his office in a short time.*” [Cotten 8-May-1830, Barker 1926 p. 327]. On May 18th, Fisher wrote a letter (in Spanish) to Stephen F. Austin declaring that he had assumed his duties that day as Collector for the Galveston Maritime Customs [Fisher 18-May-1830a]. The letter was subsequently published (in both English and Spanish) in the local newspaper [Cotton 22-May-1830] – see Figure 9 below for the English version. Fisher stated that he would establish a provisional customs house at the mouth of the Brazos River on the left bank, and post a deputy collector at “*Punto de Culebra*”, the northeast end of “*Isla de San Luis*” (Galveston Island). Fisher also sent a letter on May 18th to the local militia commander (also Austin) requesting support for his new role [Fisher 18-May-1831b] – already revealing Fisher’s officious manner. Perhaps prompted by Fisher, the Alcalde of San Felipe de Austin ([Thomas Barnett](#)) also published a letter to Austin (as a circular) the same day [Barnett May-1830]. The next day, Austin sent formal responses to Fisher, Barnett, and a “*Battalion Order*” to the militia to accept Fisher in his new role [Austin May-1830]. In the response to Fisher, Austin used his best diplomatic and loquacious manner, but one gets the feeling Austin had sized up the man, and was cagily “putting Fisher in his place” by warning him about “*foreign adventurers*”, and also pridefully citing the significant work already done to create the colony and its value to the Mexican nation. The Battalion Order was also published in the local newspaper [Cotton 22-May-1830]. So, in a significant way, Fisher was recognizing the Brazos as the main port, representing the “*port of Galvezton*”; Fisher himself defined it to include “*... an extensive coast, from the Sabine River to Matagorda Bay ...*” [Fisher 5-Jun-1830]. Although Fisher was presuming much in claiming this position, the local authorities originally accepted his word without question. In one letter to Terán, though, Stephen F. Austin wrote that Fisher did possess a “*despacho*” from Lorenzo de Zavala granting his assignment [Austin 13-Jul-1830], and this point was sufficiently important that Terán forwarded this portion of Austin’s letter on to the Secretary of Relations in Mexico City, while clarifying the date of Austin’s letter as 13-Jul-1830 [Terán Aug-1830].

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TEXAS GAZETTE.
Maritime Custom House of Galveston.
 This day I entered on the discharge of my duties, as Collector of the Maritime Custom House that is to be established in the Port of Galveston, and the Supreme Government of the nation not having definitively resolved upon the point where the Custom House of said Port is to be permanently erected; and the commerce of this coast requiring the vigilance of the Supreme Government at different points, I have thought proper to establish the office of said Custom House, provisionally, and until the dispositions of the Supreme Government shall be communicated to me, on the left bank of the river Brazos, at its entrance into the sea, and to have a Deputy on the Island of San Luis, (Galveston) in front of the entrance of the Bay of Galveston, called *Punto de Culcra*, at both of which places, so soon as convenient, lights will be placed for the guidance of the navigators on this coast, and where the manifests and other documents will be exacted from the captains of vessels, as well as the passports from the passengers, according to the existing laws on the subject.

All of which I communicate to you that you may be pleased to insert in your paper for the information of Commerce, and of others interested in the navigation of this coast.

• *God and Liberty.*
 GEORGE FISHER.
 Austin, 18th May, 1830

Figure 9: Notice in [Texas Gazette](#) issues of 22-May-1830 (p. 2 col. 2)

Fisher had apparently been appointed by the Federalist government of [Vicente Guerrero](#) in Mexico City in 1829 by [Lorenzo de Zavala](#) (then Secretary of the Treasury and head of the cabinet) [Fisher 10-Feb-1830a, Parmenter et al 1959], perhaps anticipating cessation of the customs exemption and/or legislative actions arising from Terán's report. But the Guerrero government was overthrown in the period of Dec-1829 to Jan-1830, and Fisher never obtained official credentials, instructions or funds from either the old or new governments. Suddenly being a part of the "out-of-power party", he judiciously left Mexico in self-exile for New Orleans, staying there and visiting his abandoned family in Mississippi for some months, before traveling overland through Nacogdoches to San Felipe.

Soon after his arrival in New Orleans in early Feb-1830, Fisher had written two letters back to Mexico City, one to Anastasio Zerecero and another to Lorenzo de Zavala [Fisher 10-Feb-1830a & b]. Both express similar sentiments, including referring to North American emigrants to Texas as numerous and "... like locusts", and that they used the many river systems as unauthorized seaports. He also seemed to be verifying his intent to become administrator for the Galveston customs house, as if repeating it in these letters would help make it so, and by "dropping names" of other important Mexican officials. To Zavala, he also seemed to volunteer to be his agent for Zavala's land grant in east Texas, and his trip through Nacogdoches was to include checking on his own grant of 20 sitios (over 85,000 acres) within Zavala's grant. Readers can readily sense Fisher's motives and state-of-mind, before even reaching Texas, as he was already plotting, apparently based on information he had picked up in Mexico and New Orleans, to establish for himself a position of power, influence, land and wealth by "getting in early" on the rising population and development of eastern Texas.

After reaching San Felipe, Fisher soon departed for the mouth of the Brazos. However, hearing of Fisher's activities in Texas (probably by receiving an issue of the *Texas Gazette* by mail), Terán wrote an open letter to him from Matamoros on 24-May-1830 that establishment of a customs house was premature, agreed to by Stephen F. Austin, so this plan was postponed [Terán May-1830, Morton 1945 p. 509]. A copy of this letter was sent to Erasmo Seguin at Béxar, which he forwarded on to Samuel May Williams on 24-Jun-1830. At the same time, Stephen F. Austin wrote "*The custom house at Galveston is suspended by order of Govt. and the reason given is that the exemptions from duties in favor of the colonists of Texas has rendered it unnecessary to establish any custom houses here for the present ...*" [Austin Jul-1830], although Terán was also probably concerned that Fisher had been dispatched by now-deposed civil authorities (so, then his political opponents) in Mexico City, into his jurisdiction. Terán was apparently referring to Article 12 of the Law of 6-Apr-1830, which opened coastal trade for a period of four years [Howren 1913 p. 416].

However, even in this short interval, Fisher had already initiated many plans, apparently of his own invention, including several newspaper announcements and many actions and letters. He was especially keen to enforce the outright prohibition on importation of tobacco, passed by the legislature of Coahuila and Texas on 2-Nov-1827 as Decree No. 28 [White 1839 p. 501]. One of Fisher's notices involved instructions to ship owners and captains, as shown in Figure 10 below, which was published twice. It was dated 27-May-1830 at "*Bar of Brazos*", indicating that Fisher was there by that time.

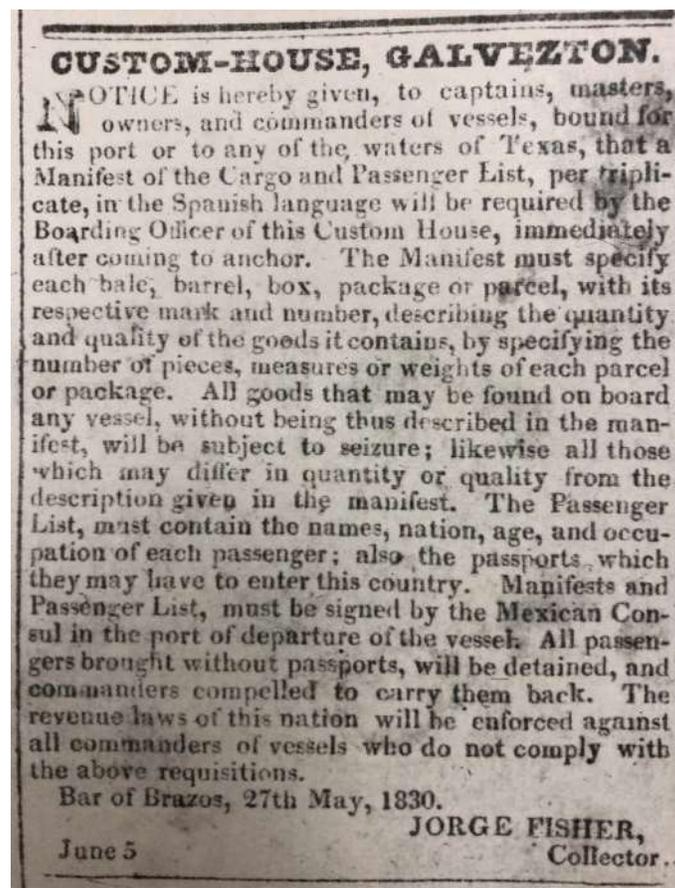


Figure 10: Notice in [Texas Gazette](#) issues of 5-Jun-1830 (p. 3 col. 2) and 12-Jun-1830 (p. 4 col. 2)

Fisher also advertised for “*SEALED PROPOSALS*” to build a brick customs house at the mouth of the Brazos, and a “*Light-House at Brazos Bar and one on Galveston Island*” [Cotten 5-Jun-1830, Ward 1962 pp. 214-215], as shown in Figure 11 below. It was published in five consecutive issues in the *Texas Gazette*.

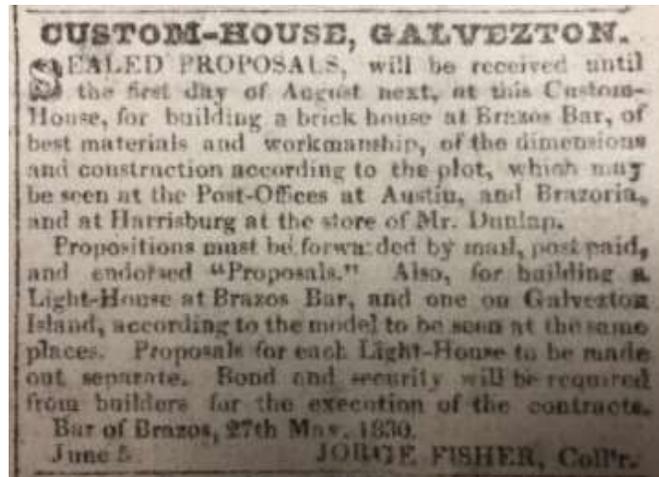


Figure 11: Notice published in [Texas Gazette](#) issues of 5-Jun (p. 3, col. 2), 12-Jun (p. 4, col. 2), 19-Jun (p. 4, col. 2), 26-Jun (p. 4, col. 3) and 3-Jul-1830 (p. 4, col. 3)

A little later (dated 1-Jun-1830 at Bar of Brazos), he added a notice about pilot instructions over the Brazos Bar, shown in Figure 12 below, which was published three times. The “*pilot*” mentioned may have been [Asa Mitchell](#).

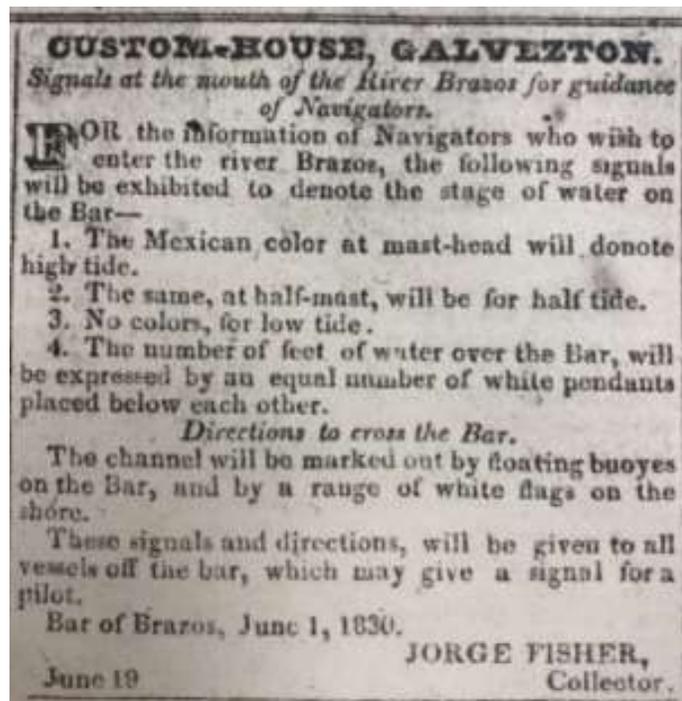


Figure 12: Notice to Navigators in [Texas Gazette](#) issues of 19-Jun-1830 (p. 3, col. 3), 26-June-1830 (p. 4, col. 2) and 3-Jul-1830 (p. 4, col. 2)

Fisher led the seizure of the schooner **Cañon** at the Brazos bar in the late evening of 1-Jun-1830 [Fisher 2-Jun-1830], which was found to be importing a cargo of contraband tobacco (162 bales of high-quality and 45 bales of low-quality, each bale weighing about a *quintal* - a *quintal* was an approximate term equivalent to a *hundredweight*, or one hundred pounds), which was unloaded upon seizure into a thrice-locked warehouse at Brazoria [Fisher 2-Jun-1830, Barnett & Fisher 1830]. This ship (also listed as the **Cannon**) had left New Orleans on or about 25-May-1830, being certified for commerce to Mexico by James W. Breedlove, the Vice-Consul at the Mexican Consulate of New Orleans [Breedlove 1830]. The fine imposed by Decree No. 28 was twenty-five dollars per *arroba* for high-quality tobacco (an *arroba* was one-fourth of a *quintal*, or about 25 pounds) [Terán May-1831, White 1839 p. 501], for a total cost of about \$16,000 [McKinstry 1832], which was enough money at the time to purchase an entirely new schooner! Fisher wrote letters reporting the seizure to [Samuel May Williams](#) on the 5th and [Thomas Barnett](#) on the 7th [Fisher 5-Jun-1830]. On 12-Jun-1830, a small news item was published in the [Texas Gazette](#) “... *that some smuggled tobacco has been seized on the coast by the Collector of Galvezton – this is as it should be!*” [Cotten 12-Jun-1830 p. 3 col. 1]. Fisher sought help from the local authorities such as [Samuel May Williams](#), [Thomas Barnett](#) and [George McKinstry](#) to adjudicate the seizure and impose the fine, but their response was slow.

Local authorities did provide a few militiamen to help guard the **Cañon** lying at Brazoria, who Fisher described as “... *bad armed, worse disciplined y pesimamente subordinados (terrible subordinates) ...*”, where he also stood guard every few hours and where he got ill with a fever [Williams 12-Jul-1830, Fisher 21-Jul-1830b, Letts p. 35]. Indeed, notice of his suspension only reached Fisher on 1-Jul-1830 while aboard the embargoed schooner, still awaiting a final decision about it by local authorities. Apparently, Fisher never received Téran’s original letter of suspension, but found out when Samuel May Williams forwarded a copy of the Erasmo Seguin copy to Fisher on 30-Jun-1830 [Williams 12- & 27-Jul-1830, Letts 1928 p. 36]. Afterwards, Fisher notified Williams by letter that he was reluctantly suspending operations, and wanted to see Williams and Stephen F. Austin to settle the **Cañon** affair [Fisher 6-Jul-1830]. He followed up with a second letter on the 15th, mentioning as well he would travel to San Felipe de Austin to await further instructions [Williams 27-Jul-1830]. Once there, Fisher received messages from George McKinstry (at Brazoria) and W. D. Dunlap (at Harrisburg) about ship arrivals; they were apparently working in his stead as deputy collectors in the period after Fisher’s dismissal [Fisher 27-Jul-1830, McKinstry 1832]. The political chief at Béxar, [Ramón Músquiz](#), perhaps aware of Fisher’s suspension, apparently tried to organize these deputy collectors to coordinate their gathering of tonnage duties through officials at San Felipe [Músquiz 20-Jun-1830]. At some point, the **Cañon** was sailed to Matagorda Bay, loaded there with corn and other products, headed to Tampico and Veracruz, saying the “... *schooner was seized to partially assure the solvency of the fine that should be imposed on the smuggler...*” [Fisher Apr-1831]. Eventually, the matter was turned over to [Samuel May Williams](#), who became *de- facto* administrator of the port. Later, in 1832, the **Cañon** was apparently lost at the entrance to Matagorda Bay [Cosío 30-May-1832].

Fisher had also commissioned [Asa Mitchell](#) as a “*boarding officer*” or pilot for the Brazos, as indicated in letters of unmentioned date from Fisher to Mitchell which were examined in a meeting of the San Felipe ayuntamiento (district committee) on 2-Nov-1830 [Barker 1919 p. 69]. A good possibility for such letters may be documents found in the Samuel May Williams Papers, in which Fisher asks Mitchell whether the grounded schooner **True Blue** was illegally importing tobacco consigned to [John Austin](#) – the Alcalde of

Brazoria! Mitchell's response indicates that John Austin and others sold some of the salvaged cargo from the ship that had stranded at the Brazos Bar on 18-Sep-1830, and his belief the ship had deliberately been stranded to collect the insurance [Fisher Sep-1830]. A notice of the stranding did appear in the [Texas Gazette](#) issue of 9-Oct-1830 (see Figure 13 below):

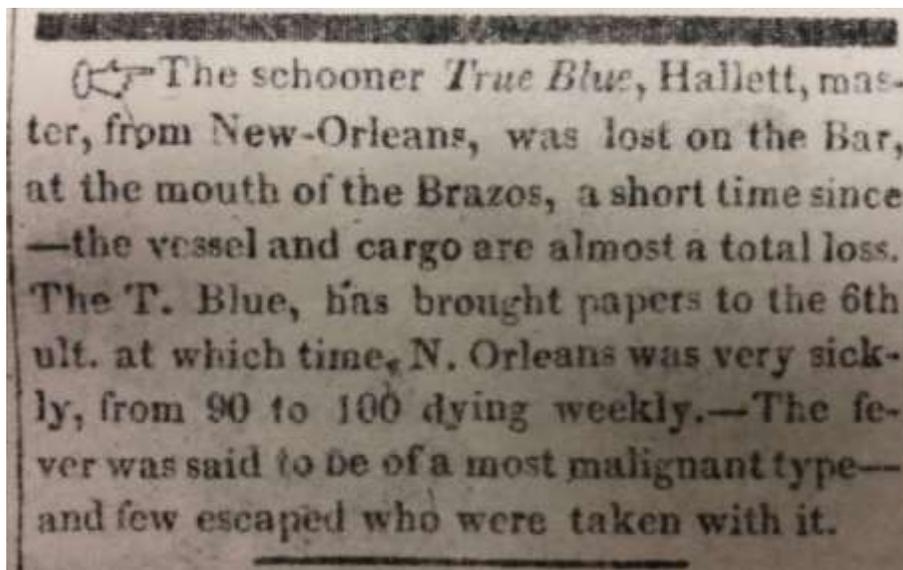


Figure 13: article found in [Texas Gazette](#) issue of 9-Oct-1830, Page 2, Column 2

Despite all of these plans and activities, no permanent customs facilities are known to have been constructed at this time. Fisher found himself in an embarrassing position, believing the suspension must be an error in judgement and thinking there was still a need to interdict contraband such as then-illegal tobacco and also to control immigration. He lingered in Austin's Colony, expecting some kind of counter order. He wrote from San Felipe to Terán and others in an attempt to maintain the customs house [Fisher 21-Jul-1830a & b, Fisher 27-Jul-1830, McKinstry 1830, Letts 1928 pp. 37-50] by mentioning that smuggling of contraband (usually tobacco) occurs in Texas, but without success. The letter to Terán (27-Jul-1830) was lengthy, and mostly consisted of a defense against claims in Mexican newspapers that Fisher was working with Lorenzo de Zavala to sell off pieces of Texas, but also included a plea that the customs house should be maintained, while also asking that the letters be shared with other Mexican federal officials. Eventually, Fisher was rebuked by Terán in a letter on 22-Oct- 1830 saying "... I say to You, that for no reason do you elude any of my orders, under pretext of giving account to other authorities. I expect, without any excuse, that my said note of 21st August, will be complied with; and consequently, you deliver the object of contraband of the schooner **Cañon**, in the state in which it was, to the Comisario of (San Felipe de) Austin, citizen Samuel Williams ..." [Terán Oct- 1830]. One can imagine how all of these activities did not endear him to the Texian colonists used to unfettered trade, and which was technically before expiration of their seven-year exemption. Terán's suspension of Fisher's activities probably saved him much personal distress, and wider dissatisfaction among the colonists. But, in the end, all of Fisher's activities to that point were for naught. And, it is notable that the "Port of Galvezton" was first established at the mouth of the Brazos several years before "Punto de Culebra" was developed as such!

Ironically, due to their need for bilingual skills, the San Felipe ayuntamiento then hired Fisher as

secretary, perhaps as early as 27-Jul-1830 [League 1830], and the ayuntamiento's notices were published over Fisher's name in the [Texas Gazette](#) issues on 6-Sep, 25-Sep and 2-Oct-1830. He was soon suspected of spying for Mexican government officials, and was found to be hiding both originals and copies of the municipality's correspondence, so he was dismissed at the meeting of the ayuntamiento on 5-Oct-1830, which was reported fully in the local newspaper [Cotten 23-Oct-1830]. Five days later, Fisher wrote from San Felipe to Terán about the **True Blue** affair, claiming also that John Austin threatened him, telling him to leave the Austin Colony, and also accused James W. Breedlove of complicity in the smuggling [Fisher Oct-1830]. So, Fisher continued to earn the enmity of the Texians, and left quickly for Mexico in a cloud of distrust. As they said at the time, he "... *took French leave*" [McKinstry 1832], showing up at Matamoros on or before 1-Nov-1830. Later that month, the thrice-locked warehouse containing the tobacco seized from the **Cañon** was reported by John Austin as "*broken into*", since its door remained locked and the keys had been taken away by George Fisher [John Austin 1830].

The usually affable Stephen F. Austin had meanwhile developed an especially dim view of Fisher, writing in the very first words of a long letter to Lucas Alamán, "*We have had the misfortune to receive a visit here from one of those miserable and shameless adventurers who have neither country nor principles of honesty – George Fisher*" [Austin Oct-1830 p. 512]. Austin goes on to give a detailed account of Fisher's duplicity with and termination from the San Felipe ayuntamiento. Later, Austin wrote to [Samuel May Williams](#) (about the Law of 6-Apr-1830) that "... *you and I know that emigration to the colony could have been stopped, and that all the ports could have been closed, or a [George Fisher](#) with a guard put at each.*" [Austin Feb-1831, Bacarisse 1952, Parmenter et al 1959]. In the years following, the ever-practical Austin was officially asked, and often took the public stance, to accept Fisher into later assignments [Terán Oct & Nov-1831, Austin 29-Jul-1832], but his personal animus for the man remained, shared only as necessary [Fisher 1833 enclosure#2].

After his return to Mexico, Fisher began vigorous attempts to rehabilitate his reputation, especially in the eyes of Terán. On 11-Nov-1830, Terán himself wrote to ask for any documents on the seizure of the **Cañon** [Seguin 1830]. Fisher wrote a brief rebuttal to the *Texas Gazette's* issue of 23-Oct-1830, in a letter to its editor [Fisher Nov-1830], indicating "... *a full detail of the transactions in question shall appear in due course of time*" and also "*This detailed account, is now ready for the press, and will be published as soon as circumstances will permit.*" Although any such follow-up document has not been found, Fisher did write a letter to the governor of Coahuila y Tejas on 14-Feb-1831, claiming he'd been falsely accused by the *Texas Gazette* and the Ayuntamiento, as he was only trying to document illegal behavior in Austin's Colony. He claimed retaliation, and seemed to blame everyone in Texas except himself, asking that the governor order the return of documents seized from him by the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin, to bolster his defense [Fisher Feb-1831]. This effort was seconded by Terán himself in a follow-up letter to the same governor and also the federal secretary of interior and exterior relations [Terán Feb-1831]. Fisher did eventually succeed in publishing a certificate (see Figure 14 below) from Terán indicating retroactive approval of Fisher's actions in regards to seizure of the **Cañon**, and also indicating this was not the reason for his suspension as administrator of the customs house [Terán May-1831]. All of this created a flurry of document gathering and copying, many of which were sent to Samuel May Williams, and they have come down to us in his personal papers (now known as the Samuel May Williams Collection at the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, Texas). In the aftermath of this

period, Stephen F. Austin continued to fear that Fisher would harm him or the Austin Colony by publishing Fisher's "detailed account", by exaggerating or generalizing unlawful but uncommon occurrences [Austin Sep-1830, Jan, Mar & Apr-1831].

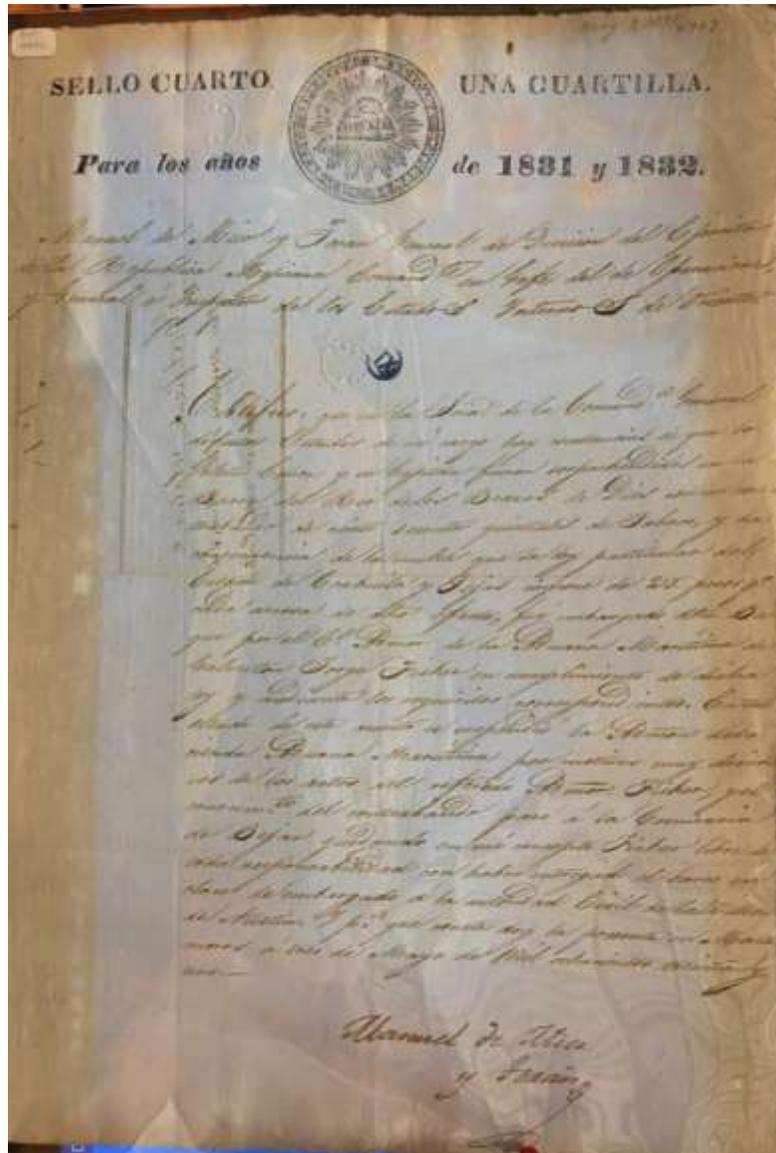


Figure 14

Original certificate by Terán about George Fisher's lawful seizure of Cañon, Texas State Library

At the same time as Fisher's activities occurred on the Brazos in the summer of 1830, Terán was also busy commanding forces to establish new forts on the upper Brazos (Tenoxtitlán) and the lower Lavaca River (Barranco Colorado). And, as the episode with Fisher at the Brazos seemed to close in the fall of 1830, a third "Terán fort" was also being started over in Galveston Bay, and this one did portend future activities with "Colonel" [George Fisher](#). His unsuccessful efforts at the Brazos, though, coming on the heels of Terán's prior visit to Texas, further convinced Terán that military forces were also needed at the Brazos to enforce the customs and immigration provisions of the Law of 6-Apr-1830.

Unlike Fisher's efforts, this more-successful step in implementation of the new law was the creation of a fort near [Perry's Point](#) (an elevated prominence atop a bluff at the northeast corner of Galveston Bay, at the mouth of the Trinity River), which came to be known as [Fort Anahuac](#). Colonel [Juan Davis Bradburn](#), three lieutenants (Ignacio Domínguez, Juan María Pacho and José Rincón) and about forty soldiers were the first to arrive for this purpose on the shallow-draft sloop *Alabama Packet* from Matamoros to Galveston Bay on 26-Oct-1830, relying on Bradburn's previous knowledge of the area to select a good location [Bradburn 1830, Henson 1982 p.52]. The site of Anahuac can be seen in Figure 15 below, which is from an inset in the lower left corner on David H. Burr's 1833 map of "Texas", and which was based on soundings made by [Alexander Thompson](#) of the Mexican Navy in 1828.



Figure 15: Galveston Bay inset from David H. Burr 1833 Map of "Texas"
(digitized copy made from a map in the author's collection)

The location was chosen to exert control over the somewhat-lawless Trinity River valley and border area [Morton 1945 p. 503], including many illegal settlers from across the Sabine River, and which was not part of Stephen F. Austin's well-managed colony to the west [Barker Jan-1918]. The adjacent town of [Anahuac](#) was laid out and established by Mar-1831, and a [permanent brick fort](#) was completed over the next year. The garrison grew to as many as 285 soldiers, although typically less at most times. In total, six new forts were to be constructed to enforce the new law, including also [Fort Terán](#), [Fort Tenoxtitlán](#), [Fort Lipantitlán](#), and at the mouths of the Lavaca and Brazos Rivers, adding to existing garrisons at [San Antonio de Béxar](#), [Presidio La Bahía](#), and [Nacogdoches](#), (as illustrated in Figure 16), 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 very temporary camp but also some were more substantial (for example, customs houses on Galveston Island and the mouth of the Brazos as early adjuncts to Fort Anahuac). The first of these new forts to be established was Fort Tenoxtitlán beginning in Apr-1830, followed quickly by the fort near the mouth of the Lavaca River (known as "Barranco Colorado"). Fort Velasco was to be the last.

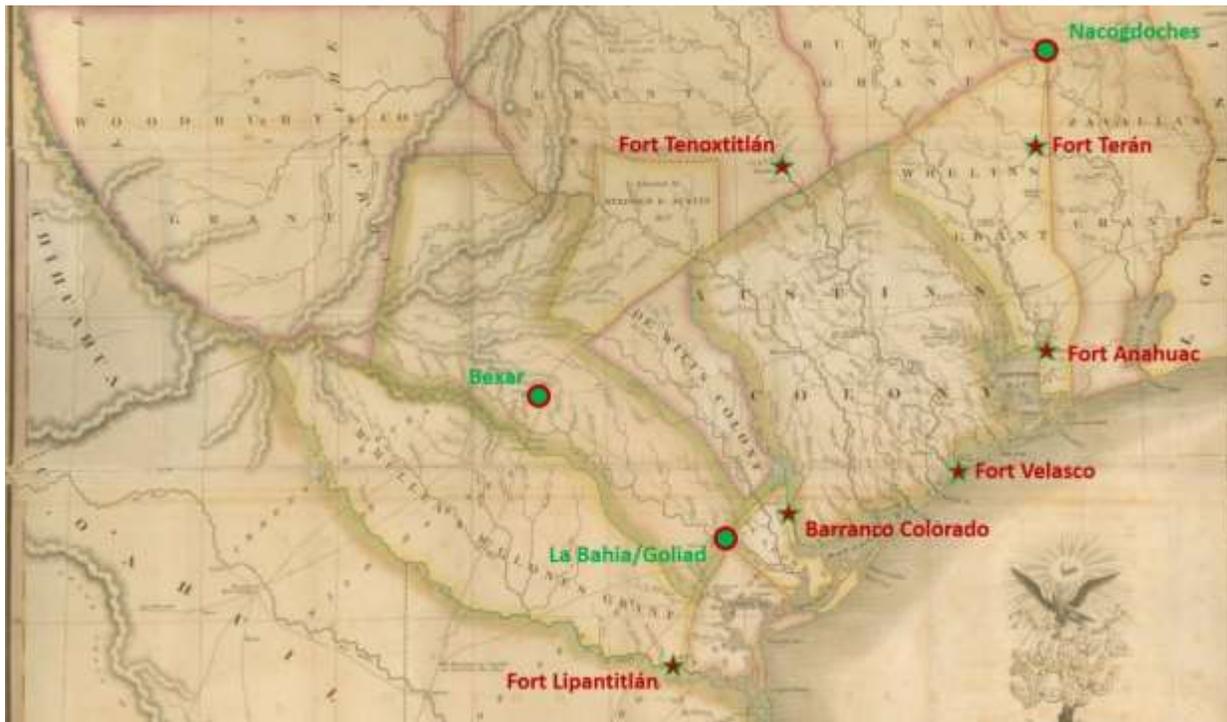


Figure 16: Mexican Forts in Texas 1830-1832 (drawn atop 1836 version of Austin/Tanner map)

Anahuac was otherwise an odd choice due to the presence of shallows and oyster reefs (originally called Barra de las Pescador Encarnador, later as La Barra del Pescado Colorado, Barra Pescado, or Redfish Bar or Reef) stretching across the bay between (what is now called) Eagle Point and Smith Point (this bar or reef can easily be seen in Figure 15). A visitor in 1831 described its depth as *"On that bar, at low tides there is but three or four feet, and at the highest tides not more than five feet eight inches"* [Fiske 1836 p. 97]. Another visitor who traveled in a small rowboat from Galveston Island to New Washington on 24-Mar-1837 wrote *"At sundown we reached Redfish Bar, composed almost entirely of shells which extend*

from bank to bank the distance of several miles and appear to be formed by the confluence of the tide and the waters of the San Jacinto and Trinity, which unite a short distance above. The water upon the bar does not exceed three or four feet in depth but at some seasons of the year is found as much as six. This point is undoubtedly the head of navigation for vessels of heavy burden" [Muir 1958 p. 12].

Charles Hooton arrived at Galveston in March 1841, and described the bay "... *may in certain places be waded across in safety.*" [Hooton 1847 p. 6]. Other stories exist about cattle or horses being driven across the bay on this reef, in the days before mining of oyster shell destroyed much of it [Glass 1986]. Indeed, later troubles with the residents of [Austin's Colony](#) and other Texians were, in no small measure, due to the difficulty in reaching this location, as only ships of very shallow draft could reach the place by sea, and land routes were lengthy and often impassable due to lack of roads and wet conditions.

As an outpost of Fort Anahuac, a customs-house was soon established on the northeast end of Isla de San Luis (Galveston Island), which involved a few soldiers living in a crude dwelling [Hayes 1879 1:130, Henson 1982 p.56]. George Willich, an immigrant and visitor to the island in the summer of 1834 described the building as "... *A house made out of raw cedar logs laid one over the other, the spaces between stuffed with pretty, pleasant smelling tree moss, several yards long; the roof out of crudely split pine shingles nailed one over the other; in every corner of the single communal room a pure cotton mattress beside an overhang of coarse net or curtain for protection against mosquitos; a few iron pots and tin or earthen bowls and plates; a tea kettle, and a coffee mill screwed to the wall for grinding coffee and wheat specifically for bread; a number of gourds for funnels; dippers for milk, water, brandy, fats and fish oils; and around on the walls a quantity of hides of buffalo, oxen, horses, calves, deer, panthers, tiger cats, wolves, racoons, and other; a good stock of kiln-dried cow and deer meat strung up by strings; rifles, muskets, snake-sticks, axes, hoes and shovels. That was the furnishment and decor of the house in which also in the corner under a chimney of mud and wooden blocks laid one over the other, a big fire was blazing. Outside in from the door slowly smoldered another fire of green wood against the mosquitos and around which a number of hogs were nibbling at rinds of watermelon and mushmelons which had just eaten, as well as a heap of half eaten fish, etc. Also some hens, ducks, geese, and pigeons were running around, each left completely to his own resources. Beside the fences corn field, planted with a kind of military precision, grazed a number of oxen, cows and calves, all mixed together, ass as pretty and slender as deer but as fat as the eel; also a dozen mustangs or captured wild horses of which two or three had been broken to the saddle ..." [Willich 1834, Epperson 1986]. Mirabeau Lamar made notes indicating that this first customs-house at Galveston lasted through about 1836 when it "... *has subsequently been consumed as fuel for the [Yellow-Stone](#)*" [Gulick et al 1968 V:352], which operated in Galveston Bay during the period of the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836.*

Plans for a similar establishment at the Brazos followed quickly, also using Anahuac as a staging point. Although no specific description has been found, it was probably similar to Willich's description of the Galveston Island post, since it was built and manned about the same time and by the same people. The Brazos post was then manned or built up in stages over a period from early 1831 to Jun-1832 by an ever-increasing garrison of Mexican soldiers (ultimately under the command of Lt. Colonel [Domingo de Ugartechea](#) (beginning in Apr 1832).

[Bradburn](#), acting in his role as commander of Fort Anahuac, reported that at some point in early 1831 he

*"... sent Captain James Lindsay with a sergeant and 10 soldiers (to the Brazos)... Señor Lindsay remained as Captain Of The Port and Don [Juan Austin](#) as administrator In September, Lieutenant (Ignacio) Domínguez went to take Lindsay's place until Señor [George Fisher](#) should arrive" [Bradburn Memorial 1832 pp. 132-133]. Presumably, Lindsay took over the customs duties from [Asa Mitchell](#) and [Samuel May Williams](#). Although Bradburn does not specify a date, this posting was probably before mid-Mar 1831, when a visitor "from the Northern States" aboard the sloop **Majesty** (out of New Orleans) landed at the beach near the Brazos by rowboat and, after overturning in the surf, reported "... we soon reached the house of Captain Cotton ([Godwin Brown M. Cotten](#)), where a flag was flying. It stands on the bank of the Brazos river, and is an inn, for the accommodation of passengers landing here, though a mere log house. The owner was formerly the editor of a Mexican gazette. ... There were ten or twelve puny, dark-complexioned men, at Captain Cotton's in uniform, who I learnt were Mexican soldiers, stationed there to enforce the revenue laws." [Fiske 1836 pp. 3-5]. Cotten was formerly editor of the [Texas Gazette](#), from Sep-1829 to Jan-1831, published at [San Felipe de Austin](#) [Bacarisse 1952], indeed the publisher of Fisher's earlier notices. Terán also reported that he had ordered a detachment to the "punto de Brazoria" in a letter to [Ramón Músquiz](#) to stop the clandestine trade in settlers and slaves [Terán 26-Mar-1831].*

As of 2-Mar-1831, [William Dobie](#) (under alias of W. D. Dunlap, formerly of Harrisburg) was employed by Bradburn as a customs collector instead at Brazoria, and he notified Samuel May Williams to confirm his support and obtained clarification that tonnage duties were to be collected on all ships [Williams 10-Mar-1831]. Interestingly, this man was the great-grandfather of [J. Frank Dobie](#). Later that summer, Williams made formal report indicating that 74 pesos and 4 reales had been collected to date as tonnage duties at Brazoria, among other ports, with a 5% surcharge for the collector [Williams 30-Jun-1831]. Ramón Músquiz then wrote to the Governor, asking for guidance that resulted in a series of letters clarifying that tonnage duties were to be centralized through Goliad and San Felipe, and that the revenue employees could keep a percentage to be determined by the legislature [Músquiz 31-Jul-1831].

A record from this period has been preserved in the Samuel May Williams Collection which shows the ships that entered the Brazos River between 1-Mar- and 20-Aug-1831 [Bradburn Aug-1831], perhaps indicating that the post began operations at this point (see Figure 17 below). A total of 9 ships (7 schooners, 2 sloops) were listed during this period of almost 6 months, carrying a total of 399 tons of cargo, earning 99 pesos and 6 reales in duties (rate = 2 reales per ton). The same documents include a similar report from Anahuac for Galveston Bay arrivals, listing 195 pesos of tonnage duties, for a total of 294 pesos and 6 reales.

Demarcacion de Galveston

Relacion de la Buques que han entrado al rio de Brazoria,
con expresion de lo que han dejado de toneladas, y con-
ponde al Estado de Coahuila y Texas. Pres. No. 2.

En 1. ^o de Marzo causó la Esleta Moya 35 - Toneladas _____	8. 6. "
En 5. de Marzo causó la Esleta Nelson 41 Toneladas _____	10. 2. "
En 12. de Abril causó la Esleta General Doran 45. Toneladas _____	11. 2. "
En 7. de Abril, causó la Esleta Spina 60 Toneladas _____	15. " "
En 22 de Abril causó la Esleta Nelson 41 Toneladas _____	10. 2. "
En 23. de Mayo causó la Esleta Nelson 41 Toneladas _____	10. 2. "
En 1. ^o de Junio causó la Esleta Splendi 75 Toneladas _____	8. 6. "
En 3. de Julio causó la Esleta Nelson 41. Toneladas _____	10. 2. "
En 8. Agosto causó la Esleta Spina 60. Toneladas _____	15. " "
<u>Suma</u>	<u>99. 6. "</u>

Atestado Agosto 20 de 1831.

Figure 17: List by Bradburn of ships entering "el rio de Brazoria" between 1-Mar and 20-Aug-1831 (Courtesy of Rosenberg Library, Galveston TX)

Another document from the Béxar Archives, dated about the same time (1-Sep-1831) and presumably composed by Bradburn, is a census or count of military personnel in the "Detachment of Anahuac" (see Figure 18 below). One line is of interest here as it says "Detachment in Brazoria" listing 1 Sub-Lieutenant and 13 soldiers [Bradburn Sep-1831], highlighted with a red oval, showing these personnel were probably posted at the mouth of the Brazos.

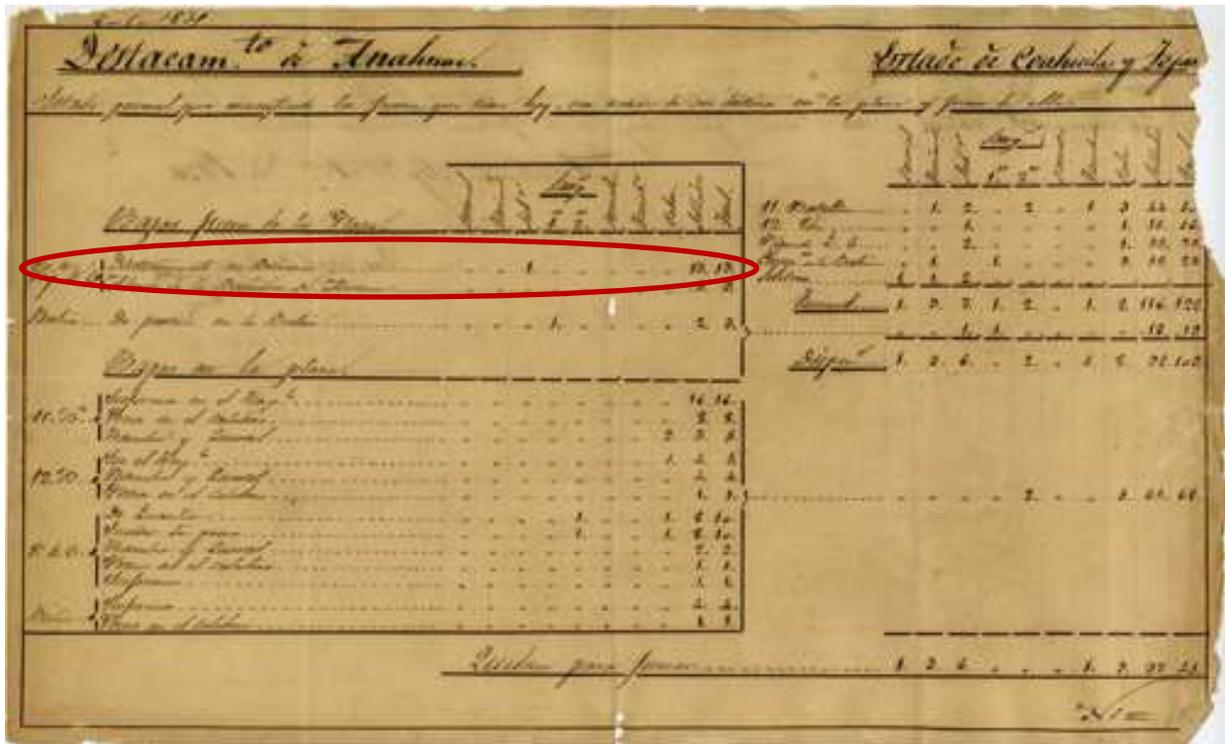


Figure 18: Digital Image di_04538, Digital Collections, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

[Mary Austin Holley](#) described the post on 22-Oct-1831 when she entered the mouth of the Brazos aboard the ship *Spica*: "... Here there is a Mexican garrison, and the tri-colored flag is hoisted, the first signal of our approach to a foreign land On our right, in front of their palmetto-roofed, and windowless barracks, the lazy sentinels were 'walking their lonely rounds,' without excessive martial parade; nor did the unturretted quarters of the commanding officer, show forth much of the blazonry of a Spanish Don." After a while, she further writes "We came to, before the door of the pilot's house, which fronts the stream. The officer of the garrison boarded us, to examine our passports; a ceremony, the Mexicans are very tenacious of, from their known jealousy of foreigners. He was a young man, dark and rather handsome, in a neat Mexican uniform, probably his dress suit; for occasions of so much company, are not of every day occurrence, on this station" [Holley 1833 p. 24-25, 29]. This may have been Lt. Ignacio Domínguez.

[George Fisher](#)'s efforts in Matamoros at his rehabilitation were apparently successful, as Terán reinstated him on 27-Sep-1831 as the civilian customs collector for the Galveston area, but under his control, and also named Lt. Juan Pacho (Bradburn's paymaster at Anahuac) to become his assistant, and Juan Landavaco as head of the military guard [Terán Sep-1831]. Fisher then named Francisco Duclor to be his assistant and customs collector for the Brazos [Henson 1982 p.73]. Terán wrote to Stephen F. Austin on 3-Oct-1831, notifying him of this development, and asked Austin to forget past difficulties with Fisher [Terán Oct-1831, Fisher Oct-1831]. Similar sentiments were repeated in a second letter [Terán 20-Nov-1831], in which Terán also staunchly defended Fisher. The October letters specifically mention the "Aduana Marítima de Galvezton" was to be partnered with the "Receptoría Subalterna á ella de Brazoria" (Subordinate Reception to it at Brazoria), clearly indicating their intention to establish the

main customs house on Galveston Bay at Anahuac, and there would be a secondary receiving office for the Brazos. Thus, as of late 1831, management of “el puerto de Galveston” switched over to Anahuac.

Terán and Fisher later went by sea to Anahuac on the brig **Constante**, arriving there on 9-Nov-1831, but without Duclor who had to finish his job at the Matamoros customs house till the end of 1831 [Henson 1982 pp. 73-74]. Terán approved Fisher’s plan to have customs houses built at Bolivar Point and the Brazos Bar made of lumber “... with the greatest diligence and at least cost” [Terán 19-Nov-1831], and twenty soldiers were added to the few soldiers already at the Brazos post [Ugartechea 1835, Letts p. 84. Morton 1945 p. 513, Boddie 1978 p. 10, Gulick et al 1968 V:352-354], in the absence of a dedicated civilian collector. Funds already collected at Anahuac and the Brazos were to be turned over to Fisher [Terán 22-Nov-1831].

Upon attempting to return with Terán to Matamoros on 24-Nov-1831, the **Constante** became lost in fog, grounded on Redfish Reef, and ultimately had to be abandoned [Lamar 1836, Henson 1982 pp. 78-79]. Terán and crew were rescued by Fisher on the port’s schooner, but Terán then commissioned Capt. Nicholas Rider and his American schooner **Topaz** (late of Harrisburg) to carry him back to Matamoros in early Dec-1831. The cannons from the **Constante** were recovered in early 1832 and mounted at Anahuac. Upon reaching Matamoros, the **Topaz** was to return to Anahuac with Ugartechea and approximately 100 soldiers and supplies, acting as a base to create a true military fort at the mouth of the Brazos [Henson 1982 p. 91]. Fisher issued an order (also on 24-Nov-1831- the same day that Terán originally left) to the newly-reinforced Brazos post “to require all masters of vessels arriving at this port to go to Anahuac to enter and clear their vessels and merchants to visit that place to Bond their goods” [McKinstry 1832], apparently for Fisher’s personal convenience, effectively closing the area’s main port (the Brazos) and others to open commerce, and this was met with great disagreement by the settlers of [Austin’s Colony](#).

Unusually, the original or complete decree by Fisher on 24-Nov-1831 has apparently not survived, especially given Fisher’s penchant for keeping copies of correspondence, although some hints about it can be found in a letter from Stephen F. Austin to Horatio Chriesman [Austin 19-Jul-1832 pp. 785-786] suggesting it was not just a brief or casual note. Austin writes “... the appointment of Fisher ... was obnoxious and unpopular - it must have been known that his order or decree of 24 Novr. last relative to the commerce of the Brazos River was highly vexatious – one fixing the custom house at Anahuac, instead of Galveston where the law really placed it – also the 20th article of that decree which subjected all vessells then in the river to its vexatious restrictions was retroactive and illegal from the face of it – a vessell may have been six months in the river, with cargo all distributed over the country and sold six months before the custom house was established, and still by that article it could not have gone to sea until the master owners etc. went to Anahuac and presented manifests, and paid the duties which were not due nor collectable when the vessel came in and discharged.”

It remains unclear why customs duties were now being implemented (as shown in Figure 17, and as intended by Terán and Fisher at Anahuac), in light of Terán’s earlier suspension of Fisher under the claim that the Law of 6-Apr-1830 had extended duty-free privileges to the Texians until 1834. As Eugene C. Barker wrote “The early history of Mexico’s fiscal administration has been neglected by writers of its political history, so that it is very difficult for foreign students to obtain an intelligent conception of it.”

[Barker 1926 p. 179]. It would seem that “tonnage duties” were still being collected, while duties on the monetary value of imported goods were in abeyance until 1834.

On the Brazos, and disgruntled with the new requirement to travel overland to Anahuac for customs clearance, owners [Edwin Waller](#) and [William H. Wharton](#) attempted to sail their schooners **Sabine** (captained by [Jeremiah Brown](#)) and **Nelson** past the customs post on or about 15-Dec-1831. The ships were fired upon by the Mexican commander (Lt. Ignacio Domínguez) and his few troops (with muskets, as no artillery is mentioned) wounding Capt. Fuller on the **Nelson**, and a passenger ([Spencer Jack](#)) returned the fire, injuring one Mexican soldier - arguably the very first anti-government bloodshed in a series of events that led to the [Texas Revolution](#). Waller and Wharton were arrested and imprisoned at the “fort” (probably then a group of crude buildings) but soon released [Peareson 1900 p. 35, Henson 1982 p. 82]. The ship **William A. Tyson, Spica** and others had also passed without customs clearance [Rowe 1903 p. 275, Morton 1945 p. 513, Henson 1982 p. 82 and 134]. Stephen F. Austin wrote on 30-Dec-1831 that “*The Officer at the mouth of the River has done his duty, so far as it was possible.*” [Austin Dec-1831]. After entreaties to [Bradburn](#) at Anahuac, the Brazos port was reopened by posting an authorizing customs collector there, Lt. Juan Pacho (till then, Fisher’s assistant at Anahuac). Pacho established his office at Brazoria on 22-Jan-1832, as Stephen F. Austin and others had been suggesting, since Velasco lacked wharves and warehouses, but found immediately that he was not welcomed by some colonists [Rowe 1903 pp. 276-277]. Duclor had been further delayed by contrary winds which took his ship to Tampico instead of Texas [Terán Jan-1832]. Stephen F. Austin had written to Terán complaining about Fisher’s original edict [Austin Jan & Feb-1832]. Austin’s letter of 5-Feb-1832 was written immediately following a visit to Anahuac, and in which he boldly suggested Fisher’s removal. Terán replied sternly that he had already granted many favors to the Austin Colony, but agreed that a collector should also exist at the Brazos [Terán Jan-1832, Perez y Calleja 1834 #5]. During the recriminations, Fisher claimed he had issued the decree of 24-Nov-1831 under Terán’s direct order [McKinstry 1832, Austin 28-Jul-1832], but Terán himself denied this later and scolded Fisher in a letter on 9-Feb-1832 [Perez y Calleja 1834 #4]. Apparently, perhaps due to friction between colonists and Pacho or Fisher, Samuel May Williams was again solicited to act as collector of duties, but declined due to the distances to Anahuac and Brazoria [Williams 7-Feb-1832].

Bradburn and Fisher did not let the matter drop, though. In letters to the Mexican Consul at New Orleans, who passed them onto the Mexican Charge d’Affaires in Washington DC and the Mexican Secretary of Relations in Mexico City, they tended to exaggerate the incident to some degree, even claiming that the **Tyson** and **Sabine** returned to the Brazos from New Orleans heavily armed with cannon, so as to continue violating the custom laws, asking the Consul to investigate. The Consul recommended to the Secretary of Relations that the Brazos be fortified, saying “*I believe it my duty to add that if the mouth of said river is not well garrisoned, the foreigners will continue to carry out the scandalous clandestine traffic ...*” [Martinez 1832]. One such trip of the **Sabine** from New Orleans to Velasco in about Apr-1832 was later mentioned in the reminiscences of a young Englishwoman, Ann Raney. She, with her mother and sister, then traveled on to Brazoria and Bailey’s Prairie to join the father where he was teacher for the family of Britt Bailey. She describes being courted and almost marrying the captain, Jeremiah Brown [Coleman 1971].

Edna Rowe cited the troubles surrounding the **Sabine/Nelson** incident as a reason for Ugartechea’s

posting to the mouth of the Brazos, apparently based on reading “*Memorias para la historia de la guerra de Tejas*” by [Vicente Filisola](#). She writes it was Terán’s reaction to the **Sabine/Nelson** incident (presumably after Terán returned to Matamoros) that caused him to order Ugartechea to create and command a Brazos fort under Bradburn’s overall command [Rowe 1903 p. 277]. However, in the same book, Filisola makes clear that some type of fort had been a part of Terán’s overall plan for some time [Filisola 1848]. In light of the fact that the Brazos was probably the single busiest port on the upper Texas coast, it is also tempting to conclude that Terán recognized the issue with Anahuac’s location (and that the Brazos was just its subordinate outpost), and decided to rectify the problem by belatedly establishing a full military fortification at Velasco. This may explain why the 1832 Fort Velasco was established last, almost two years after he began with Fort Tenoxtitlán and Barranco Colorado.

From his base at Anahuac, Fisher implemented Terán’s instructions about outposts at Galveston Island (apparently deciding against the location at Bolivar Point) and also the Brazos, as indicated in a letter from Fisher to [William P. Harris](#) and [Robert Wilson](#), owners of a steam-operated sawmill at Harrisburg, who were hired to build customs-houses, warehouses and ferry boats for both locations in Jan-1832 [Fisher 1832]. The building on Galveston Island was later described by [Amasa Turner](#) after his arrival at Galveston with his family on 7-Feb-1837, to assume his duties as commander of Post Galveston, as: “*The old custom-house was an excellent frame building of cypress timber. Its sides and roof were covered. There was no joist or floor above or below – no windows or doors; but with the lumber I had brought I soon made it into a comfortable, if not elegant, residence. The house was about twenty-five by thirty-five feet, one story and a half high, and stood on the highest ground on the bay-shore of the island.*” [Hayes 1879 1:275]. As with the first customs-house at Galveston Island, this description may also provide some clues to any building erected at the Brazos by Harris and Wilson.

During the return leg to Anahuac, bringing Ugartechea and his troops from Matamoros, the **Topaz** was the site of some turmoil which might have ended this first attempt to create a military fort on the Brazos - a mutiny in mid Feb-1832 offshore of Galveston to steal the ship’s cash box, resulting in the death of Captain Rider and a Mexican sentry at the hands of the crew, with the soldiers locked below decks and doomed to drowning if the ship was scuttled. But, hearing the cries of their officers being attacked, the Mexican soldiers broke out and ultimately defeated the few mutinous crew. The surviving mutineers were imprisoned at Anahuac, and Bradburn took possession of the ship [Bryant 1832, Filisola 1848 I pp. 73-74, Henson 1982 p. 91-92, Epperson 1995], no doubt to transport Ugartechea on to the Brazos. Ugartechea reported that he had successfully disembarked at Anahuac on or about 6-Mar-1832 “... *with 86 men and two pieces of 18 at the disposition of ... Bradburn*” [Ugartechea 13-Mar-1832]. [Mirabeau Lamar](#) also writes “*The Vessel reached Anahuac in safety, landed the soldiers; and then filling her with pickets to build a fort at Velasco, she sailed with Col. Ugartechea aboard to the mouth of the Brazos, where she was wrecked and lost.*” [Gulick et al 1968 V:352-354, Bradburn Memorial 1832 p. 138-139]. The letter by Ugartechea also states that he was “... *getting myself ready for marching, within eight days, with one cannon of 6 (un cañón á 6.) and 100 infantrymen, carrying at the same time aboard, all of the utensils for fortifying myself at the mouth of the Brazos River, carrying with me the receiver named by the government for that point, Don Francisco Duclor...*”.

However, Ugartechea was still at Anahuac on 26-Mar-1832, when he wrote another letter from there to [José de las Piedras](#), commander at Nacogdoches, stating slightly different facts (arrival on the 5th,

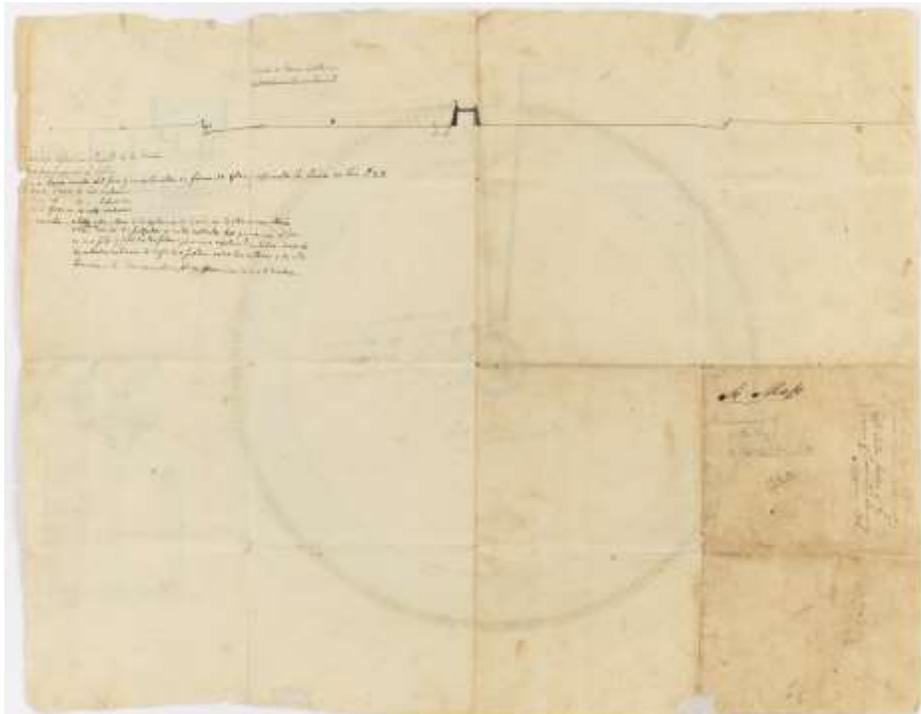
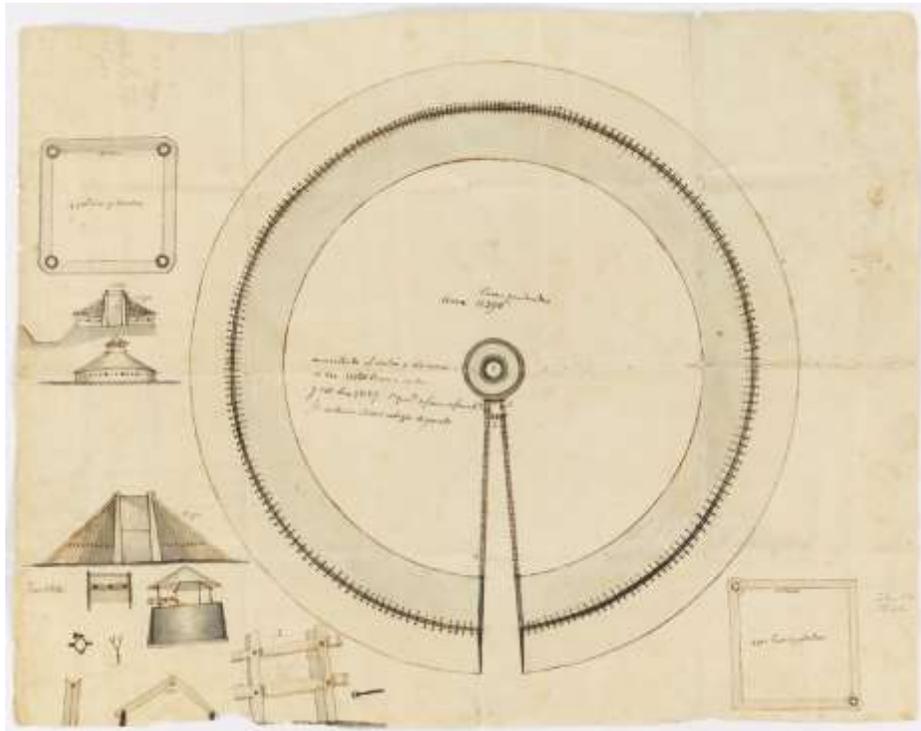
carrying “*dos piezas de á 16*” for Anahuac, and twice mentions his own “*cañón de á 8/ocho*”). Further, he writes he had no gunpowder cartridges for his “cannon of eight” that he had brought, but he will make 100 cartridges from Anahuac’s supply of gunpowder, and asks Piedras to replace it, and also that he needs some sergeants and corporals [Ugartechea 26-Mar-1832]. José de las Piedras responded that he had sent 8 arrobas (about 200 pounds) of gunpowder but could not provide any officers or sergeants [De Las Piedras May-1832]. Thus, it seems likely the cannon did not come from the **Constante** but was purposely brought by Ugartechea from Mexico on the **Topaz**, and that some staging and preparations were obviously being done first at Anahuac. The plans are further detailed in a letter from Bradburn on 4-Apr-1832 which mentions that Ugartechea was planning to leave with 100 infantrymen, 17 artillerymen and a cannon to establish a fort at the Brazos to be named “Fortaleza de Velasco” (Fortress of Velasco) [Bradburn 4-Apr-1832, Rowe 1903 p. 277]. This is the first known mention of the site as Velasco, perhaps named after [José María Cervantes y Velasco](#), a Mexican army officer and signer of the Act of Independence of the Empire of Mexico, and thus was probably known to Terán, Bradburn or Ugartechea. Terán’s wife also came from a family whose paternal surname was Velasco. A railroad engineer and author, [James Llewellyn Allhands](#), that built the original St Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway (aka the “Brownsville Line” or “Brownie”) through Brazoria County in 1905-1906, published a book in 1931 that states that Velasco was “... named after Louis de Velasco, a Spanish viceroy in Mexico” [Allhands 1931 p. 224], but cites no primary source. He apparently collected quite a bit of local history, as this line was extended from Bay City to Sweeny, Brazoria, Angleton, Algoa and eventually Houston in the period of 1905-1906, and which later joined the Missouri-Pacific rail network. [J. P. Bryan](#) surmised later that it was Terán who chose the name and also favored the possibility it was after [Luis de Velasco](#), an early viceroy of New Spain [Holley 1965 p. 73].

The letter from George Fisher to William P. Harris was written on 20-Mar-1832, indicating that Harris was late in providing the buildings and ferry boats, and this was a problem especially at the Brazos since Ugartechea was planning to arrive soon, so Fisher urged him to finish by writing “*In few day a vessel goes from here to the mouth of the river Brazos with 100 men and a 8 pounder, under command of Leut. Colonel Domingo Ugartechea, with all the necessaries for a fortification at the entrance of said River, accompanied by two other officers and two customhouse officers; in consequence of these preparations, it is necessary that you should with possible despach place said buildings and the ferry boat, also sufficient lumber to make the sheds to the warehouse, and in case of need, to put some repairs to Mitchells house. The officers of the **Constante** accompany the expedition, on board the **Topaz**. The hull of the **Constante** is for sale, at \$200 for the whole, with the copper on it. Should you wish to buy it let me know it.*” [Fisher 1832]. So, apparently, the construction of the 1832 fort may have involved workers of Harris and Wilson working to build buildings at the site, alongside the Mexican soldiers building the fort itself.

Significant developments would now occur at the mouth of the Brazos over the next few months; however, before relating these, it is notable that Stephen F. Austin (and his peacekeeping counsel) would be absent from Texas in this critical period, attending the legislature in Saltillo. He left San Felipe for Béxar in mid-March 1832, meeting there with their ayuntamiento to secure their approval of a *Memorial* to the legislature, asking for some revisions in laws [Austin Mar-1832], reaching Saltillo by 9-Apr-1832. Austin’s intention was to travel to meet with Terán during a summer break of the legislature, but return to Saltillo in time for its short session starting in late August, before returning to Texas. But, as they say, things happen – and events at Anahuac and the Brazos that same summer of 1832 would alter both Austin’s schedule and that of Texas history.

The actual date of Ugartechea's departure from Anahuac to the Brazos was further delayed by bad weather but was about 12-Apr-1832 [Bradburn 12-Apr-1832]; ([Filisola 1848 p. 81] reports it as 2-Apr). Another letter from [Ugartechea](#) on 15-May-1832 (now at the mouth of the Brazos) mentions that he had disembarked there on 19-Apr-1832 and began work on the fort, that the cannon was mounted nine days after arrival, and that the fort was mostly complete [Ugartechea 15-May-1832a]. Apparently, the men, artillery and other supplies were successfully removed from the grounded **Topaz**, and the fort was built quickly with pickets scavenged from the wreck and perhaps also available drift logs, in a short period between 19-Apr and 15-May-1832. It is also possible, given that the **Topaz** was available, that it made more than one trip ferrying men and supplies to the site, before its final demise. The available labor force could have been up to about 150 men - or probably less as there was trouble with many desertions [Ugartechea 15-May-1832b & 7-Jun-1832b] and only 100 men were reported present by early June [Ugartechea 7-Jun-1832c]. One of Ugartechea's dispatches mentioned 17 desertions on the date of the fort's completion [Ugartechea 15-May-1832b] to the military commander of the Mexican state of Coahuila and Texas, Col. [José Antonio Elosúa](#) (also spelled Elozúa) based at San Antonio de Béxar, and Elosúa responded to other nearby commanders with a directive to arrest these deserters [Elosúa 5-Jun-1832].

Given the short time period and limited manpower, and based on a remarkable similarity to later descriptions of it, the 1832 fort was probably a modest version and similar to a circular fort design of 60-vara radius (about 330 feet diameter), found in the papers of Stephen F. Austin [Austin 1822] shown in Figure 19 below. The few precise details of the as-built 1832 fort mentioned in various references are reproduced and summarized in Appendix 1. This design was a significant departure from typical Spanish forts (presidios) of the era, which were usually rectangular structures with corner bastions (as found at Anahuac). The two-sided Austin 1822 diagram was suggested for connection to Fort Velasco and Ugartechea in 1982, when found by James E. "Jake" Ivey (co-author of [Fox et al 1981]) in the Stephen F. Austin Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin at the Barker Center for American History, but was apparently known locally earlier [Fox 1991]. But it is NOT labeled as to location or author, and has substantial Spanish hand-written descriptions. The Briscoe card catalog does describe that it might be for Velasco, which may derive from this 1982 rediscovery. A note in the hand of Stephen F. Austin indicates it was from Mexico in 1822. The drawing is mentioned in a 1961 article simply as "A Fort, 1822" without any mention of Fort Velasco [Sharp 1961 p. 388]. Our conclusion is that this document was created much earlier than 1832 for other purposes, but somehow was given or sent to Stephen F. Austin for some reason. Copies (in the form of photographic negatives) were provided to the [Brazoria County Historical Museum](#) (BCHM) in late 1982. High-resolution photo duplicates of the original document in Austin were made in Sep-2019, in an attempt to decipher any and all writing on the document, revealing some faintly written words, to better understand its origin. However, finding no labeling connecting it to Fort Velasco, along with the facts that it involves an excavated perimeter, with stakes ("tala" in Spanish) pointing inward (perhaps to contain cattle), suggests it cannot really be a direct design for the fort at the mouth of the Brazos. The words on the new photo-duplicate have been transcribed and (when in Spanish) translated, and are shown in Appendix 2. In 1982, when this diagram was made known in Brazoria County, the story was that it was drawn by Ugartechea himself in 1822, thus making it more likely to be connected to Fort Velasco [Barnett 1982]. However, the 2019 high-resolution photos show no such name or signature. Our hypothesis is that someone might have mistakenly "saw" his name in the Spanish writing on the document.



**Figure 19: Two-sided diagram from Stephen F. Austin Map Collection, circa 1822
(courtesy: Dolph Briscoe Center for American History)**

Difficulties continued to fester between Fisher and the colonists at Anahuac, and rumors reached the Political Chief of Texas (Ramón Músquiz, stationed at Béxar) that Brazos River merchants were

continuing to resist Fisher, so Músquiz wrote a letter to the new Alcalde at San Felipe (Horatio Chriesman) on 24-Apr-1832 inquiring about conditions [Músquiz Apr-1832]. Chriesman requested that Samuel May Williams travel to Brazoria and the mouth of the river to investigate, meeting with Ugartechea and the merchants. They responded that Fisher was the problem, and the merchants were otherwise agreeable to paying the lawful customs duties, and even had built a customs warehouse on their own at Brazoria [Chriesman May-1832].

During this period, Fisher also quarreled with Bradburn, so he moved to the outpost on Galveston Island on 22-Apr-1832 [Lamar 1836, Letts p. 99], so we might assume the new customs house there was completed by then. He eventually failed in his intended role as administrator of customs in the Galveston Bay region. Terán ordered him to turn over his duties [Perez y Calleja 1834 #'s 6, 8 & 9] and he returned to Matamoros by 6-Jun-1832 [Perez y Calleja 1834 #6], just ahead of impending trouble at Anahuac and the Brazos, in events for which Fisher had had a role in creating some of the antecedents for these conflicts.

These [disagreements over customs and other matters](#) with the officious Fisher and the autocratic Bradburn had been developing in early 1832, known to history as the [Anahuac Disturbances](#), which came to a head when Bradburn imprisoned five civilians, one of which was the hot-headed [William Barret Travis](#). Ugartechea became aware of the Brazoria colonists' involvement in the Anahuac dispute while visiting Brazoria and, perhaps anticipating trouble on the Brazos too, had written from there seeking extra reinforcements especially cavalry [Ugartechea 7-Jun-1832a & b] and also reported the situation to Bradburn and the regional commander, [Antonio Elosúa](#) [Ugartechea 7-Jun-1832c]. The commander of Barranco Colorado on the lower Lavaca River (Capt. Aniceto Arteaga), though, initially declined to endanger his troops in the "Caney Swamp" [Linn 1986 p. 21-22], who had suffered for months without proper provisions (see many letters in Béxar Archives).

Ugartechea further indicated that he had met with [John Austin](#) (Alcalde of Brazoria) and tactfully proffered for Austin to travel to Anahuac to act as civilian judge to defuse the issue, but also said that he could only spare up to 60 of his 100 troops (and apparently, himself) to reinforce Bradburn [Ugartechea 7-Jun-1832c]. A response from Elosúa on 18-Jun-1832 complimented his diplomatic approach but also ordered him to assist Bradburn "*... in everything that may be in your means and authorities in shielding him from any insult that with such scandal is to be feared ...*" [Elosúa 18-Jun-1832a]. Elosúa wrote other letters the same day, to Ramón Músquiz (at Béxar) and José de las Piedras (at Nacogdoches), summoning aid for the Anahuac Disturbances, also notifying Ugartechea and Bradburn of these orders [Elosúa 18-Jun-1832b]. After a dispatch was received in Béxar from the Alcalde of San Felipe on or about the 19th which confirmed the "*unfortunate occurrences that were to be feared in the military post of Anahuac*", [Ramón Músquiz](#) wrote to announce his new plans. The next day, Elosúa wrote again to de las Piedras, Bradburn and Ugartechea, stating that Músquiz proposed to travel over to San Felipe "*to restore order*" and that Piedras and Ugartechea were to assist Bradburn [Elosúa 20-Jun-1832]. Músquiz arrived at San Felipe on 24-Jun-1832 [Músquiz 26-Jun-1832]. The dispatches to and from Músquiz on the 19th are not apparently found in the Béxar Archives, but are quoted in Elosúa's letters of the 20th although his drafts (in the Béxar Archives) do not copy anything but the first half sentence of Músquiz's message.

Before the Battle of Velasco, apparently in response to the Anahuac Disturbances, José Mariano Guerra (substituting for Terán) issued orders from Matamoros to Elosúa for Tenoxtitlán, 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 Aniceto Arteaga to stand 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]. The commander at Goliad had sent a troop of 37 infantry and 10 cavalry, which arrived at Barranco Colorado on July 1st on their way to Velasco [Arteaga 1-Jul-1832] – and the combined force left in that direction, but this would turn out to be too late. 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].

No settlement was reached at Anahuac, primarily because of Bradburn's reneging on a tentative agreement to release the prisoners. [John Austin](#) returned to Brazoria, and prepared by gathering militia and some artillery to forcibly reclaim the prisoners from Fort Anahuac. A more-substantial reprise of the **Sabine/Nelson** incident then occurred involving the forced passage of the schooner [Brazoria](#) (under [William J. Russell](#)) to take two cannon and militia from Brazoria to Anahuac for this dispute, made problematic now by the existence of a heavily armed Fort Velasco, guarding and blocking the mouth of the river. The **Brazoria** had sailed from New Orleans to Brazoria with a load of sundries under Capt. John G. Rowland, arriving there on 14-Jun-1832, and was commandeered by John Austin on the 21st to carry cannon and militia to Anahuac [Rowland et al 1832]. Curiously, the two cannon put aboard the [Brazoria](#) had arrived in the period of Aug-1830 from the Rio Grande on the steamboat [Ariel](#) but had been left at the town of Brazoria so the ship (after taking on wood) could pass the Brazos Bar. Bradburn had apparently sought to purchase the cannons, and Stephen F. Austin also suggested they be might be delivered to the customs officer at Brazoria [Letona 1832, Austin Mar-1832, Chriesman Mar-1832]. Ugartechea's refusal to allow passage of the [Brazoria](#) (in compliance with his orders) led to the [Battle Of Velasco](#) over several days in late Jun 1832; the battle itself occurring mostly in the overnight period of 26-27 June 1832. Several first-hand or contemporaneous accounts of the battle are available [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832, Smith 1836, Brown 1892, Russell 1872, Peareson 1900] along with many re-tellings [Fry 1832, Newell 1838 pp. 26-28, Foote 1841, Kennedy 1841, Willson 1847, Yoakum 1855, Thrall 1883, Bancroft 1889, Rowe 1903 pp. 289-292, Hill 1937 pp. 14-17, Gambrell 1948 pp. 32-33, House 1960, Dow 1961, Ward 1962 pp. 272-308, Cotton 1968, Brazosport 1970, Freeport 1971, Creighton 1975 pp. 58-72, Boddie 1978, Henson 1982 pp. 107-108, Linn 1986 pp. 17-23, Meed 2001 pp. 11-16, Jordan 2006 pp. 4-5] and even an entire historical novel [Hicks & Parkinson 1980]. The Newell account [Newell 1838 p. 28] seems to be the origin of the story that Domingo de Ugartechea, once his artillerymen had been depleted by Texian rifle fire, had bravely manned the cannon bastion himself to great acclaim even from the opposing forces; however, this seems to have later been embellished to the fact that he actually fired the cannon by himself [House 1960 p. 94] and to Texian applause [Hicks & Parkinson 1980 p. 228-9]. As reported by Ugartechea, the Texians taunted his forces by shouting "*Long Live Santa Anna!*", to which they replied "*Long Live the Mexican Republic, Its Constitution and Laws, and Long Live the Supreme Government*" [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832]. Newell had spent a year interviewing participants in the Texas Revolution in the year following the contest, his book being published in 1838, so his book was virtually contemporaneous and the first authoritative account of Texas independence to reach print. His exact words about Ugartechea were "... *Those who manned the cannon were repeatedly shot away till, at length, Ugartechea, having in vain endeavored to force his men to ascend the bastion, heroically set the example himself, and directed the gun. Upon this the Texans, though they might have shot an eye out of his head, respecting Ugartechea as a man and admiring his courage as a soldier, generously ceased their fire.*" [Newell p. 28].

Another re-telling closed by saying “*While the battle of Velasco has not received much of a place in Texas history there is no denying this was the same funnel-shaped war cloud that a few years hence was to sweep over the swamps of San Jacinto.*” [Allhands 1931 p. 227]. The battle was heard down the coast at Matagorda, where Mary Wightman Helm recollected that “... *in June, 1832, we distinctly heard the sound of cannons for six or eight hours, we living 25 miles west, at the head of Matagorda Bay.*” [Helm 1884 p. 49].

On the day after the overnight battle, [Britt Bailey](#) had written to [David Shelby](#) of Austin County for reinforcements, anticipating a further siege, but this proved unnecessary as the Mexicans surrendered later that day since they’d exhausted their ammunition. A copy of his letter [Bailey 1832, Creighton 1975 p. 67] soon found its way to Arteaga which he forwarded on to the regional commander. Accounts vary, but the Texian casualties have been given as 2 to 23 killed and 2 to 40 wounded, with Mexican casualties of 7 to 42 killed and 7 to 70 wounded. Edna Rowe evaluated several accounts, but felt a reliable number was 7 killed and 27 wounded for the Texians, and 35 killed and 15 wounded for the Mexicans [Rowe 1903 p. 292]. However, it was also reported that two additional Texians died from their wounds later, and a mate was killed aboard the [Brazoria](#). An extensive discussion of the casualties can be found in [Ward 1962] and [Boddie 1978]. History does not record all of the individual names of the Texian dead, but they are thought to include [Aylett C. “Strap” Buckner](#), Antonio “Jose” Buckner (Strap Buckner’s Mexican foster child), Andrew Castleman, Mathew Thomas Hinds, mate of schooner, Edward Robertson, William C. Smith, Leancer Woods and Isaac Jamieson [Boddie 1975 p. 26], with most of these names recorded on the [Brazoria Fallen Heroes Memorial](#). A capitulation agreement was signed on 29-Jun-1832, one copy of which can be found in the Béxar Archives [Ugartechea 29-Jun-1832], also published in the local Brazoria newspaper [Cotten 1832] and in Mary Austin Holley’s 1833 book [Holley 1833 pp. 157-158].

However, by the time the battle was over, the prisoner issue at Anahuac had been resolved by the arrival from Nacogdoches of Bradburn’s superior ([José de las Piedras](#)) who negotiated with the locals, released the prisoners, and then later relieved Bradburn of command on 2-Jul-1832. Bradburn left Anahuac on the evening of 13-Jul-1832 by a land route, narrowly escaping pursuit by eight men while losing his horse and swimming the Sabine River, then heading to New Orleans [Morse 1832, Rowe 1903 p. 297], where he took ship back to Mexico. Bradburn then lived on his ranch in what is now Hidalgo County, Texas, serving sporadically in the military, but died in Matamoros in 1842 and was buried on his ranch.

Interestingly, Ugartechea identified the ordnance used during the Battle of Velasco as 4600 musket rounds (with 400 remaining), 96 rounds (with 14 or 15 remaining) for the “*canon de a ocho*” (usually interpreted as 8-pound cannon) and as 76 rounds (with none remaining) using the “*cañonsito (or pedrero) de cuatro onzas*” (often misinterpreted as 4-pound cannon, but more likely a large flintlock smoothbore for four-ounce cast-iron shot of 1.231” diameter, mounted on a swivel) [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832]. The Lamar Papers include a report by the Brazoria Militia on 22-Jun-1832 of their preparations, including that they had made 4’ x 20’ barricades of 2-inch thick pine boards [Gulick et al 1968 I:116], so it was these parapets that were penetrated by the swivel gun and caused many of the Texian casualties, among [John Austin](#)’s division outside the north wall. Secondary references, though, give conflicting

(probably less correct) details about the barricades: 2" cypress planks supplied by Wharton, 10-12' long and 4' high [Smith 1836 p. 39, Brown 1970 p. 184, Boddie 1978 p. 20], or 6" x 10" oak planks 20' long obtained at Wharton's [Eagle Island Plantation](#) [Hicks & Parkinson 1980 p. 207]. Ann Raney also recalled that she had helped mold bullets and make patches for the battle, carrying them 15 miles on horseback (from Bailey's Prairie?) to drop them at the Bertrand place upstream of Velasco, being chased by two Mexican spies [Coleman 1971].

As news of the battle reached San Felipe, [Ramón Músqiz](#) wrote to Arteaga, suggesting that he send troops to relieve Ugartechea [Músqiz 30-Jun & 2-Jul-1832], with help also coming from Goliad and Lavaca [Arteaga 9-Jul-1832]. Troops were even dispatched from Matamoros by order of José Mariano Guerra [Guerra 7-Jul-1832]. Eventually, as news of Ugartechea's abandonment Fort Velasco became known, these troops were recalled [Arteaga 10-Jul-1832, Elosúa 13-Jul-1832].

After the Battle of Velasco, the Mexican and (at least some of the) Texian dead were buried in the vicinity of the fort [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832, Holley 1965 p. 54]. [The Arkansas Advocate](#) newspaper on 6-Feb-1833 published some proceedings of a meeting at San Felipe de Austin in late 1832, under the headline ""Monument – (to be erected at the mouth of the River Brazos.)", shown in Figure 20 below. The article has commemorative words and specific details for the monument [Bertrand 1833]. Although it says the monument was to be immediately obtained, no evidence of its actual placement at Velasco is known. Given that the area was devastated by a cholera epidemic in 1833 (for example, that killed John Austin), the area became heavily involved in the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836, and the 1837 hurricane called [Racer's Storm](#) hit the area, the concept was probably forgotten, among a local population then struggling to just survive.

The monument is also briefly mentioned in an issue of the [Texas Republican](#) newspaper during the beginning of the Texas Revolution in late 1835, which repeated some of the exact words intended for inscription "... We will remind Santa Ana of the lines designed for the monument at Velasco -- Here fought, here fell, in freedom's cause – the Brave. Tyrants beware! Man will not be a slave." [Gray 10-Oct-1835 p. 3].

In 1838, Mary Austin Holley wrote in her diary "*We crossed over to Velasco. Went shopping (they have one store), visited the Archer House, a fine hotel. Large 2 story with gallery painted, white, looks well. Had a commanding view. Met with Gen. Green ([Thomas Jefferson Green](#)) the master spirit here who attended us in our walk – pointed to the graves of those who fell in the first battle for Independence – looked at the old fort – the work of the Mexicans – Velasco looks like quite a place.*" [Holley 1965 p. 54].

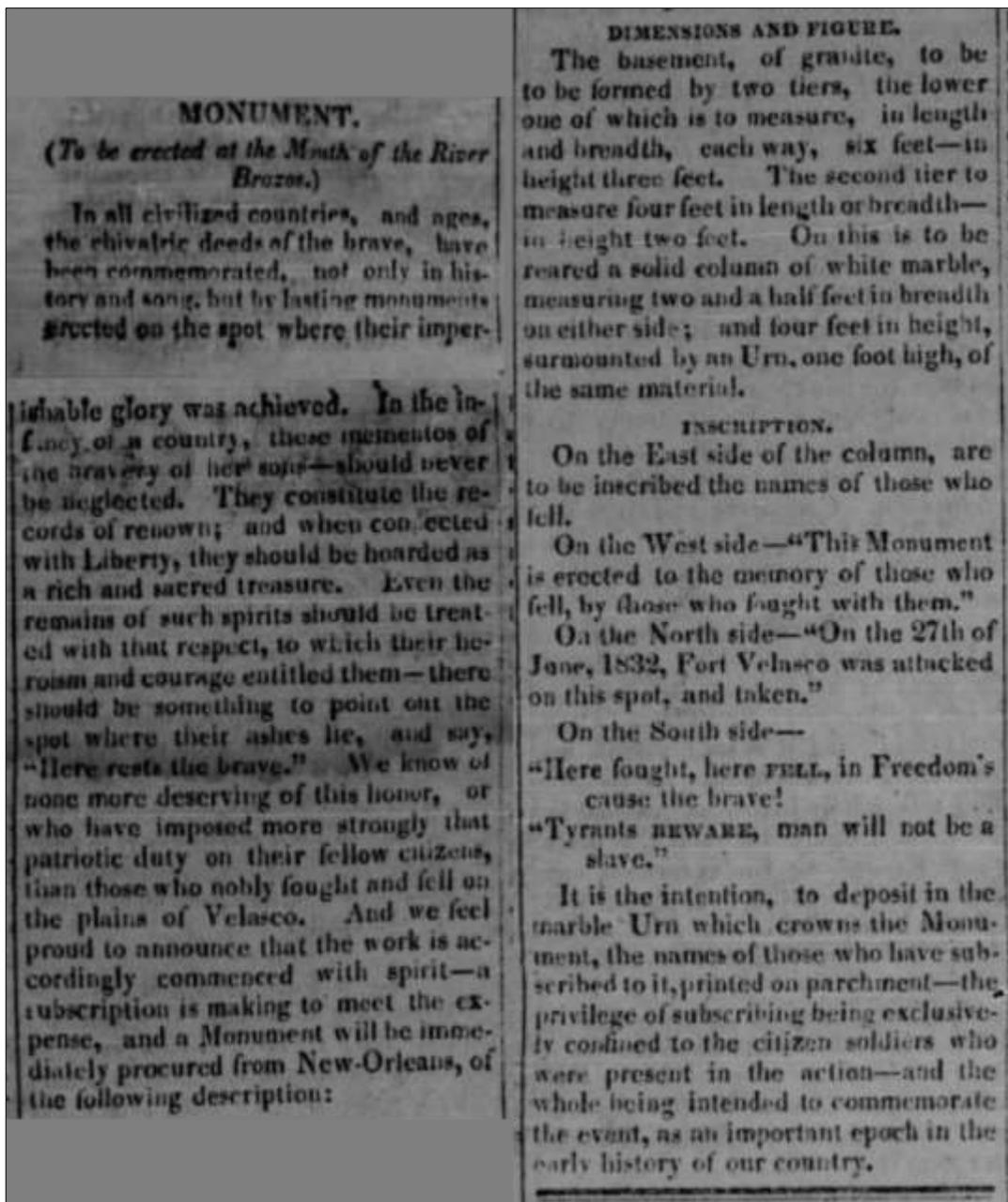


Figure 20 – Monument article spliced from Arkansas Advocate, 6-Feb-1833, page 2, columns 1 & 2

The surviving Mexican soldiers were paroled back to Matamoros, and the fort was apparently occupied by the victorious Texians for a short period, as [William H. Wharton](#) wrote a defiant [letter on 4-Jul-1832](#) from the fort, in which he mentions having “... kept 80 rounds of powder for the 9 pounder and all the shots and slugs” [Wharton 1832]. Although the surrender terms [Cotten 1832, Holley 1833 p. 158-159] indicated that Ugartechea and troops would be carried back to Matamoros by sea, the [Brazoria](#) was so damaged in the battle that it was not seaworthy; the owners abandoned her to the underwriters, who eventually billed the Mexican government \$7215 [Rowland et al 1832]. But, it was aboard the schooner that Ugartechea wrote a lengthy “after action report” and explanation to the regional commander [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832], which mentions many details about the fort and battle.

During these same few weeks, Terán had been involved in a rebellion in Mexico fighting against the forces of [Antonio López de Santa Anna](#), having to move his command afield to Hacienda de Buena Vista del Cojo and then to Croix (now Casas) further south in Tamaulipas, leaving José Mariano Guerra in charge of the command at Matamoros. During the summer break in the legislature, Stephen F. Austin left Saltillo on 12-May-1832 to make a hot arduous journey through Monterrey, Pilon (current Montemorelos), Linares, Victoria (current Ciudad Victoria) to meet briefly with Terán at Buena Vista on 30-May-1832 [Morton 1945 p. 536, Barker 1926 p. 336] – probably only the second (and last) time they met in person (after Terán’s 1828 visits to San Felipe). For reasons yet unclear, Austin then continued north to Matamoros in the summer heat, arriving there by mid-June, with plans to still return to Saltillo. But, after writing some letters back to Texas, he learns on or about June 20th of the Anahuac Disturbances, and his plans change. Terán also hears of the trouble at Anahuac, and issues orders to have Ugartechea replace Bradburn at Anahuac, for Juan Cortina to take over the Galveston customs office, and for Francisco Duclor to move the Brazos customs office to Brazoria [Terán 29-Jun-1832] – apparently not yet aware of the Battle of Velasco. Austin, still at Matamoros, is informed by Terán of these orders in a letter of the 27th, and he mentions it in additional letters back to Texas [Austin 29-Jun-1832, 1-Jul-1832] – all too late as the Battle of Velasco had already occurred. This was one of Terán’s last official acts, as he 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. Terán was replaced by Ignacio de Mora and then [Vicente Filisola](#), who later wrote in his memoirs that he believed Terán had instead been assassinated by agents of Santa Anna. In Matamoros, Austin learned about the Battle of Velasco, and had also observed the arrival of [José Antonio Mexía](#) and troops from Tampico (in what has been termed [Mexía’s Expedition](#)). The news from Texas prompted a truce with José Mariano Guerra of the Matamoros garrison, and all agreed that Austin should then travel with Mexía and his troops by sea to Texas to help restore order [Barker 1926 p. 344].

Not yet having received Terán’s now-obsolete orders, [Ugartechea](#) and his surviving troops seem to have detoured quickly to [San Felipe de Austin](#), as he was reported to have arrived there on 8-Jul-1832 [Castaneda 1832], and he wrote letters from there on 8- and 10-Jul-1832, prior to their return overland to Matamoros [Ugartechea 8- & 10-Jul-1832a]. [Moses Austin Bryan](#) wrote about his uncle, Stephen F. Austin, being in San Felipe as well, and “... *the soldiers captured at Velasco being present, Austin embraced the officers and all sat down to a banquet of barbecued meat and had a joyous time ...*” [Bryan 1897 p. 105]. Since Austin has been reported to have only arrived back in Texas with Mexía on 16-Jul-1832 at the Brazos, Austin’s presence in San Felipe would only be possible some days later, so perhaps Ugartechea and his troops lingered for some time at San Felipe, and were part of the welcome-back celebrations for Austin and general support for Mexican troops that had also declared for Santa Anna. Indeed, Lt. Juan Moret, an officer from Velasco that was directly mentioned several times by Ugartechea in his “after action report”, was reported as toasting “*May the Supreme Being preserve the life of Colonel Austin to the citizens of Texas for twenty years and longer, so that they may have the benefit of his exertions to separate Texas from Coahuila, and form it into a state of the great Mexican Confederation, as the only means of securing its prosperity, and the true interests of the Mexican Republic.*” [Anthony 1832]. Austin apparently had reached San Felipe by 22-Jul-1832, as he wrote a letter from there asking [Samuel May Williams](#) to provide wagons and money to Ugartechea for travel on to La Bahía (Goliad) [Austin 22-Jul-1832], and this plan was followed a week later [Williams Jul-1832, McQueen 1832]. Land

fees from the Austin Colony were used to finance the trip [Chriesman Oct-1832]. John J. Linn recollected the wounded troops passing through Guadalupe Victoria, apparently traveling south, writing *"I saw the Mexican soldiers as they passed through Victoria on the retreat to Matamoras. Many of them had received gun-shot wounds in the wrist, which were inflicted by the Americans while they were loading the cannon, which was mounted on a parapet above the walls of the fort. Colonel Ugartechea discovered after daylight that every one of his men that appeared exposed above the fort was instantly shot dead. He therefore ordered his gunners to cease firing, and in a short time made an overture of capitulation, which was accepted."* [Linn 1986 p. 18].

[Antonio Elosúa](#) and [José de las Piedras](#) apparently had other ideas, perhaps even trying to follow Terán's last orders, as they had sent dispatches, respectively, on 7- and 16-Jul-1832 ordering Ugartechea to Anahuac to assume command after Bradburn's ignominious departure, and even mentions that Fort Velasco might be restored [Elosúa 7-Jul- 1832, De las Piedras Jul-1832]. Terán's immediate successor, Ignacio de Mora, also wrote to support Ugartechea as replacement for Bradburn [de Mora 21-Jul-1832]. But, after receiving the letter of 7-Jul-1832 from Elosúa, Ugartechea argues from San Felipe in his letter of the 10th that he and his troops should return to Matamoras [Ugartechea 10-Jul-1832]. Elosúa agreed that troops were needed back in Mexico to fight the rebellious forces of the Federalists from Veracruz and Tampico (i.e., Santa Anna) [Elosúa 17-Jul-1832].

After fighting rebels in Mexico, Ugartechea returned later to Texas by 1835 as military commander at [San Antonio de Béxar presidio](#) (replacing Elosúa) and was involved in the [Texas Revolution](#). For example, it was under his orders that a cavalry unit from San Antonio de Béxar was sent to Gonzales to reclaim a [small cannon](#) in Oct-1835, resulting in the [Battle Of Gonzales](#) and the *"Come and Take It"* slogan, which has previously been considered the "first shot" of the [Texas Revolution](#). He was also directly involved in the [Battle Of Concepcion](#) and the [Siege Of Béxar](#), but had rear-line assignments during the remainder of the Texas Revolution. After again returning to Mexico, he was killed in action at Saltillo in 1839 during a federalist uprising.

The 1832 fort itself with arms, supplies and also the wounded were enumerated after the attack listing a brass 8-pound cannon and an "iron swivel" gun [Cotten 1832, Holley 1833 pp. 157-158], with a slightly-different version listing a brass long nine pounder on a carriage, and an iron swivel (gun) on a block [Breedlove 1832]. The items were returned to General [Jose Antonio Mexía](#) who arrived with five ships and 400 men (and Stephen F. Austin) at the mouth of the Brazos on 16-Jul-1832. The Texians received Mexía warmly, and convinced him that they were not rebels against Mexico, but (like Mexía) were supporters of [Santa Anna](#) and the Mexican Constitution [Cotten 1832, Holley 1833]. Indeed, one part of the effort to convince Mexía was an evening "public dinner and ball" held at Brazoria in honor of Santa Anna (not present) on 22-Jul-1832, which has been revived in recent years as an annual costume ball and fund-raising program for the [Brazoria Heritage Foundation](#) called the [Santa Anna Ball](#) (the name of which has not been without controversy since Santa Anna became such an archenemy of Texans in the years after 1832). Indeed, the ever-faithful federalist Mexía fought against Santa Anna in 1834-1835 in Mexico once the latter assumed dictatorial power, ending in what is known as the unsuccessful [Tampico Expedition](#), retreating by sea to the mouth of the Brazos in Dec-1835 and then to New Orleans for a few years. He returned to Mexico, suffering further military defeat, and was executed by Santa Anna near Puebla in 1839. The town of [Mexia](#) (in east Texas) was named in 1871 in honor of the Mexía family, at

the site of their 1833 land grant.

Stephen F. Austin's sister ([Emily Austin Bryan Perry](#)) and her second husband ([James F. Perry](#)) had emigrated from Missouri to Texas in 1831, and James mentioned in one of his letters dated 6-Sep-1832 that "... *the withdrawing of all the troops from our frontiers by the Santa Anna party has deprived us of another source for money but that change we are very willing to put up with as we were never very anxious to have troops quartered among us*" [Perry 1832]. A biographical Masters Thesis of James F. Perry was written in 1934 by another graduate student at the University of Texas, from Frio County, Lela Ethel McKinley (1905-1978), entitled "Life of James F. Perry" [McKinley 1934].

The civilian customs collector (Francisco Duclor) remained until 27-Sep-1832, transferring his office from Velasco to Brazoria soon after the battle [Duclor Jun-1832] where, like Pacho, he was made to feel unwelcome. Duclor had originally indicated his desire to return to Matamoros soon after the battle, asking Samuel May Williams to yet again assume the responsibility for collection of customs duties, which Williams (again) declined since he lived and worked at San Felipe [Duclor Jul-1832]. Duclor was ordered to stay at his post at Brazoria by José Antonio Mexía on the day after the "Santa Anna Ball", using Sub-Lieutenant Ignacio Domínguez as an assistant [Mexía 1832]. Duclor and Domínguez ultimately departed by sea to Tampico, though, frustrated in their efforts to continue collection of customs duties [Filisola 1848 I p. 126, Duclor Sep-1832]. Duclor must have traveled by way of New Orleans, as we find him writing from there in mid-November to Santa Anna, claiming that the "*Brazorianos*" (Texas colonists) were seeking full independence and prevented him from his customs duties, and he asks for further orders [Duclor Nov-1832]. Later, Stephen F. Austin thought Duclor's departure had been a bad move, as he said "*It would take a sheet or two of paper to tell you the extent of the injury that was done to all Texas by the departure of Duclor from Brazoria. He was a Santa Anna officer*" [Austin 1833].

Later, in Dec-1832, a feud developed between [John Austin](#) and [William H. Wharton](#) over Wharton's claim that he "*planned the whole attack at Velasco*" and Austin's counter-claim that Wharton wasn't even present for much of the engagement, when they competed against each other in an election for Brigadier General of the militia [John Austin 1832, Streeter 1955]. Although Austin won the election, he died the following year on 11-Aug-1833 during a serious cholera epidemic which struck the area.

There does not appear to be any direct evidence that the 1832 fort was ever used again, and it was probably robbed gradually of its wood and other materials as the town of [Velasco](#) grew up around the location beginning in the period of the Texas Revolution. It is believed that the site of the fort was set aside as an open block called Monument Square (commemorating either the fort and the battle, OR the Texian graves there), adjacent to [Fort Street](#), as shown in two early plat maps of Velasco, shown in Figures 31 and 32 [Mesier 1837, Hunt 1838]. The former hypothesis can perhaps be understood by a broadside by the Velasco Association for a ball and oration on the first anniversary of the victory, published in ***The Constitutional Advocate And Texas Public Advertiser*** newspaper on 15-Jun-1833, reproduced below in Figure 21.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL
ADVOCATE
AND TEXAS PUBLIC ADVERTISER.

VOL. I. NO. 36. BRAZORIA, SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 1833.

VELASCO ASSOCIATION
BALL.

[In commemoration of the capture of Fort Velasco.]

A *Splendid Anniversary Ball* will be given by the Proprietors, on the **EVENING OF THE 27TH JUNE NEXT**, in the Town of Velasco—to the participation of which, the friends of the Association, and the public generally, are respectfully invited.

By order of the Association,
L. C. MANSON, Sec.

March 9, 1823—25tf

ORATION AT VELASCO.

An Oration will be delivered by B. T. Archer Esqr. on the 27th of June, the anniversary of the victory gained at Velasco, by the constitutional forces, in 1832.

Figure 21: Broadside published on first anniversary of Battle of Velasco (courtesy: BCHM)

Some credence to the latter hypothesis (about Monument Square being instead the site of Texian graves) is to be had from the previously-mentioned article in *The Arkansas Advocate* newspaper, since it also mentioned the creation of a granite and marble Monument at the mouth of the Brazos to the men that perished at the Battle of Velasco [Bertrand 1833].

[Jeremiah Brown](#) apparently continued to captain the schooner *Sabine*, as he is reported to have used this vessel to rescue people from a Brazos flood above Columbia in 1832. One family included that of Isaac C. Hoskins living near Columbia and his wife Nancy Spragins, as well as her sixteen-year-old sister Francis Spragins. In a typescript manuscript dictated to her granddaughter in 1903, Francis recollected that Captain Brown rescued about 50 people from high water, anchoring to a large oak tree opposite

Columbia. Later, they were married in Fall 1832 by “Judge Smith” until a Catholic priest (Fr. Aguentimienta) could sanctify the marriage, as required by Mexican law. They lived in Brazoria until 1833 and then in Velasco until 1835. She described it: “Velasco was a small place with two hotels and three private houses.” Later, she described her husband as captain of the [Invincible](#), as well as evacuating Velasco aboard a sloop to New Orleans ahead of the Mexican army during 1836, and travel on to New York and Providence (home of the Brown family) before returning to Texas in Oct-1837. Here, Captain Brown resigned from the Texas Navy, and became collector for the Port of Velasco. She states “In 1839, Capt. Brown died and is buried in Texas, on the banks of the Brazos River.” – this is believed by the author to be the old Velasco Cemetery (later known as the Shannon Family Cemetery). She stayed in Texas, living with the Hoskins’s again until 1844 when she traveled back east, eventually marrying Mr. Charles Raine [Raine 1903].

Another episode of Jeremiah Brown as captain of the **Sabine** involved a voyage from New Orleans to Velasco in Apr-1833 carrying some notable passengers, [Alexander Somervell](#), [David Ayres](#) and [George Bernard Erath](#) [Erath 1923]. Erath, a native of Vienna and later a Texas surveyor, soldier and legislator, recollected that “Brazoria at this time was perhaps the most prominent shipping point in Texas. Galveston had no inhabitants. Harrisburg was a little town to which schooners and small craft brought goods from New Orleans. Neither Houston nor Galveston was laid off until after the battle of San Jacinto. Matagorda on the Colorado and Anahuac on the Trinity were smaller shipping points. The Brazos was deemed navigable to Bell’s Landing, ten miles above Brazoria. During the revolution of the year 1832 the Texans took sides with Santa Anna, and expelled the Mexican garrison at the mouth of the Brazos, as well as all others in Texas east of the San Antonio River. After this engagement in June, 1832, the town of Velasco was laid off near the site of the battle, and now it had about fifty inhabitants. The houses were mere shanties with one unfinished two-story building – its sides half open. The making of salt from water obtained from salt wells near the beach comprised its business, and this was conducted on a very small scale by the two brothers Porter.” The two-story building is likely to have become the hotel and tavern owned by brothers-in-law and partners [Jeremiah Brown](#) and Isaac C. Hoskins, later known as the American Hotel.

The man who would later serve the fourth and last term as President of the Republic of Texas, [Anson Jones](#), arrived in Texas at Velasco on 20-Oct-1833, traveling aboard yet-another trip of the **Sabine** from New Orleans under Jeremiah Brown [Jones 1859 p. 8-9 & 104, Gambrell 1948 p. 1]. Originally from New England and trained as a doctor, he had met Jeremiah Brown in New Orleans and had been persuaded to come to Texas, with the aim of opening an office in Brazoria. Initially, he did not take a favorable impression of the area and wished to return to New Orleans, but was convinced to stay a while, and ending up staying the rest of his life. He wrote in his Private Memoirs “... and finally abandoning myself to a fate which appeared I could not control or direct, I passively floated as it were upon a tide which bore me to Texas; and the sixteen following years have been to me comparatively prosperous and successful ones. ... I have succeeded in every thing I attempted, and accomplished every thing I undertook. ... In Texas, therefore, I commenced the world anew, profiting by my severe experience in its roughest ways. I have also had constantly before my eyes a conviction from which I have been unable to escape, that somehow or other the destiny of Texas was interwoven with my own, that they were indissoluble, and that the one materially depended on the other.”

[Vicente Filisola](#) was appointed as Commander General of the Eastern Internal Provinces, and was ordered to re-establish customs houses in 1833 with George Fisher as collector [Austin 1833, Pavón 1832, Perez y Calleja 1834 #'s 12-16, Parmenter et al 1959, Filisola 1848 I p. 134-136], but this appears to have never been implemented due to lack of resources (especially troops), and free-trade practices became the norm again until early 1835, when the Mexican government did make still another attempt to establish customs houses at Anahuac, Galveston and at the Brazos. The mystery about Fisher's missing "*detailed account*" of Texian misdeeds from 1830-1831 might be explained by a letter he wrote to Austin in this period of 1833, obviously bitter about his lack of success as administrator of customs, and estrangement from Texas. He accused Austin of leading efforts against him, and tried to blackmail Austin to stop maligning his reputation [Fisher 1833]. It almost seems Fisher really wanted to settle in Texas, so withheld doing maximum harm there, but seemed to threaten Austin at the same time. Fisher continued efforts, unsuccessfully, to become Administrator of Galveston customs into 1834 [Perez y Calleja 1834 #'s 17-19] while occupying a number of government posts and then publishing a newspaper in Matamoros [Fisher 1830's]. Based on Fisher's federalist sympathies, which were then out of favor with Santa Anna's government, he was eventually expelled from the Republic of Mexico in Sep-1835, leaving aboard the schooner *Henrique* [Cos 1835] to New Orleans, where he assisted his old supporter, Lorenzo de Zavala, in the [Tampico Expedition](#).

Amos A. Parker made a visit to Texas, passing down the Brazos in late 1834, and wrote "*A small town called Velasco is situated on the sandy beach, at the river's mouth—containing one public house, two stores, four or five dwelling houses, and the ruins of an old Spanish fort. The mouth of the Brazos, and a long distance on the seashore, is lined with large masses of trees; and from this source the inhabitants of Velasco obtain their fuel.*" [Parker 1836 pp. 220-222].

Another customs collector, José Gonzalez, was appointed by the government of Santa Anna as the new administrator for Galveston customs; he arrived from Tampico to New Orleans on 19-Nov-1834, and then took ship aboard the *San Felipe* for Brazoria [Martinez 1834]. He is reported to have arrived at Velasco in early 1835 [Filisola 1848 II p. 35] moving to Brazoria by Aug- 1835, but he was no more successful than Pacho, Duclor or Tenorio [Gray Aug-1835 p. 1, Barker Jan-1901 p. 194, Barker 1905].

[Mary Austin Holley](#) did visit Velasco again while coming and going on a May-Jun 1835 trip up the Brazos River [Holley 1965]. She had initially traveled from New Orleans aboard the schooner [San Felipe](#) under Capt. Fuller of Sandwich Massachusetts, arriving at Velasco in early May. In her diary entry of 10-May-1835, she wrote about how Velasco had changed since her last visit in 1831 "*Then it was a garrison with a few ragged looking Mexican troops, presenting little appearance of comfort. Now it has two good boarding houses for the accommodation of travellers with a domestic look & air of comfort – nothing military in the aspect - no one to demand passports. On the opposite point ... stands McKenney's ware house to increase the show of prosperity.*" [Holley 1965 p. 14]. Apparently, upon her return to the mouth of the Brazos on or about 10-Jun-1835, while awaiting favorable tides and winds aboard the same vessel, she drew a series of four sketches of Velasco and Quintana [Holley 1965 pp. 16-18, Earls et al 1996 pp. 302-307]. In the latter reference, the researchers concluded that three of the images could be combined into a panoramic view of Velasco and the river mouth, and indeed this composite image was used for the cover art of that report, and is shown in Figure 22 below. The researchers also surmised that the two left-most buildings were to the left of posts that might be the ruins of the 1832 fort, as

seen in the background (red ring).

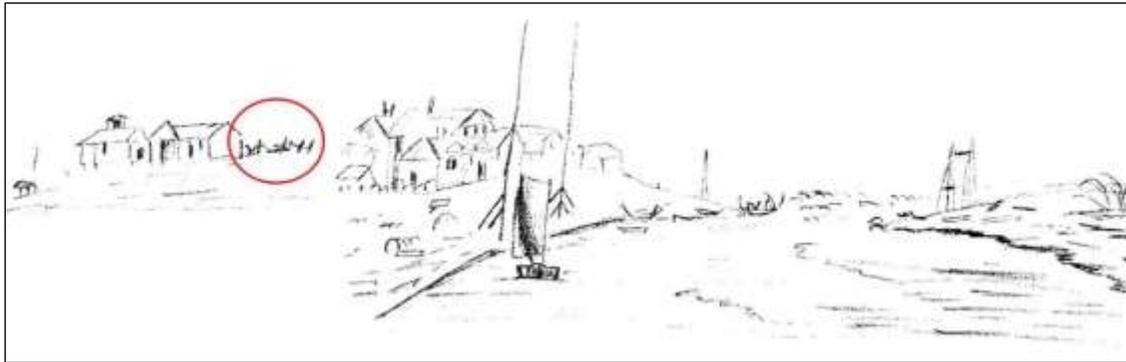


Figure 22: Panoramic compilation of Mary Austin Holley sketches (courtesy: Prewitt & Associates)

In 1845, the property involving the Archer house (Lots 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Block 13 and Lots 1 and 10 of Block 29 – see Figure 30 or 31 for lot numbers) was sold with the comment “..... all that certain parcel of property lying and situated in the Town of Velasco known as the ‘Archer House’ with the four lots immediately adjoining said ‘Archer House’ and not including the two lots near what was called the ‘Old Fort’.” [Brazoria 1845, Smith Sep-2014]. Since the Republic Of Texas battery was located in Block 61, this seemingly can only refer to the 1832 fort. Lots 4 and 7 were on the river side of the Archer house, so may have been the ones not sold, and may be nearest the “Old Fort”. Lots 8 and 9 of Block 13 were purchased by James Thompson Shannon (1818-1883) in 1856 [Smith Dec-2014], immediately adjacent to Lot 7. The “Archer House” was bought in 1855 by [John H. Herndon](#), and was known afterwards as the “Archer-Herndon House” or simply the “Herndon Beach Home” [Smith Sep-2014].

In 1898, [Adele B. Looscan](#) (1848-1935) published a seminal article entitled “The Old Mexican Fort at Velasco” [Looscan 1898], apparently after interviewing several life-long residents of the area. In this article, the second wife of James T. Shannon (Mrs. Ellen Adele Wilcox Shannon, m. 12-Jun-1862) claimed her residence (in Lots 8 and 9 of Velasco Block 13, fronting on the southeast side of Fort Street) as the site of the Mexican fort. To quote Mrs. Looscan “*The exact location of the old fort is attended with difficulty, on account of the changes wrought by winds and waves. In the course of sixty-six years accretions of land on the eastern shore of the river have been so marked, that a certain locality known to old residents as the site of the old fort, and which was quite near the river bank and gulf shore, is now several hundred feet from the former, while the gulf shore line extends a full quarter of a mile or more beyond its original boundary. These changes were effected chiefly by the destructive storms of 1875 and 1886, which submerged nearly all of this low lying coast section. ... Mrs. Ellen A. Shannon, who was born at Velasco in 1841, her parents, Henry C. and Pamela Wilcox, having moved there in 1837, gives a reliable account of the old fort, which, she says, is now marked by her own residence. She lived continuously at Velasco until August, 1863, when she and her husband, James T. Shannon, moved away, not returning until June, 1867. Before their departure, her husband had often called her attention to one of the posts or upright logs of the old fort, with muskets stuck in it.*” Mr. Alexander Glass Follett, Sr. (1822-1906) agreed, and also added that Mrs. Shannon’s house was newly-built in 1887, after the previous structure was damaged in the 1886 hurricane. In 1852 (when Ellen Wilcox was 11 years old), the U. S. Coast Survey (USCS) charted the upper Texas coast, producing a series of drawings, one of which was known as T-Sheet or Chart# T00375 for the area from San Luis Pass southwest to a watch

station called Jupiter (today's Bryan Beach). A detail of Velasco from this map is shown below in Figure 23, with the location highlighted (red oval) of the house that James T. Shannon would buy in 1855 – please notice the unusual circle next to the structure (perhaps a remnant of the central mound and cannon bastion? – or that upright log?).



Figure 23: Detail from 1852 USCS Chart T00375

Texas Revolution and Republic Period (1835-1845) ... or Fort Velasco #2

In the period after Terán's "six fort plan" had failed, and Mexican troops had abandoned eastern and southeastern Texas, immigration and trade with the United States continued and even increased, as is mentioned in an article in the *Arkansas Advocate*, reprinted from a New Orleans newspaper about a meeting at San Felipe, citing both overland routes and arrivals on the schooner *Sabine* at Velasco [Bertrand 1833], see Figure 24 below.

EMIGRATION. — The tide of emigration, is still rapidly, and with increasing fullness, pouring into our country. The roads from the Attakapas and Red river country, are reported to be literally covered with wagons, part of which are daily arriving at San Felipe, with numerous families.

The schooner Sabine, which arrived at this port last week, brought 55 passengers, consisting of 40 men and 25 women and children. Two other vessels are daily expected, freighted with emigrants. So cheering and promising a state of things could hardly have been anticipated by the most sanguine and bold friends of Texas. The population of the country, now our leading wish, and the object which should constitute our foremost subject of domestic policy, is going on with a grand march; and the future emigration must proceed at a very advanced ratio, for the means are daily multiplying, of making known the boundless resources, and the many attractions of interest present in this country. Each new settler is an instrument to inform his friends and neighborhood of the almost unimaginable advantages with which nature has endowed and blessed this region, concealed, by a strange ignorance of the country, until this late day.

Figure 24 – Emigration article in *Arkansas Advocate*, 6-Apr-1833, page 2, column 1

The mouth of the Brazos continued to be the major port of Texas, as revealed in a comment made by Samuel May Williams on 31-Mar-1835 to Stephen F. Austin “*In Jany and Feby 2000 persons arrived in at the mouth of the Brazos. Emigration has been tremendous this year, and still continues.*” [Williams 1835, Cantrell 1999 p. 299]. This was largely ignored by the Mexican federal government, as Santa Anna was preoccupied with uprisings in various Mexican provinces against his increasingly centralist rule. However, as these rebellions were put down, Santa Anna decided it was time to return his attention to the unruly northern province of Texas.

Captain [Antonio Tenorio](#) arrived with two officers and thirty-four soldiers at Anahuac on or about 23-Jan-1835, although these efforts were not very successful due to increasing opposition from the Texas colonists [Filisola 1848 II pp. 34-36, Barker Jan-1901, Dienst 1909 pp. 1-2], causing a second round of the

[Anahuac Disturbances](#), in which a group of about 30 Texians commanded by William Barret Travis ejected Tenorio from Anahuac on or about 20-Jun-1835.

The Mexican naval presence along the Texas coast was also increased, including the lightly-armed sloop **Correo Mexicano** and the schooner **Montezuma** (later renamed **Bravo**), with orders to enforce immigration and customs provisions which had been laxly enforced for several years [Powers 2006 p. 18]. Mexico was also in the process of acquiring and deploying even larger vessels within the next year or two [Thompson 2020], such as the **Veracruzana**. The **Montezuma** captured an American merchant ship arriving near Galveston Bay, the **Martha** (on 7-May-1835) and the McKinney & Williams schooner **Columbia** at anchor off Velasco ten days later, taking passengers as prisoners and seizing their personal property [Lamar 1836, Wells 1998] – a step that had not before been practiced. Another version has the **Correo** capturing the **Columbia** off Quintana [Powers 2006 p. 18]. The new customs collector at the Brazos (Gonzalez) is reported to have come aboard the **Montezuma** to accompany the captured ships when they were taken south to Veracruz or Matamoros [Lamar 1836]. In reaction (especially to Americans being taken prisoner), the U.S. revenue cutter [Ingham](#) was dispatched from New Orleans, found **Montezuma** near Brazos Santiago in Jun-1835, and exchanged fire in what is known as the [Ingham Incident](#). **Ingham** was later to be sold to Texas interests and rechristened [Independence](#). After the ejection of Tenorio, the Mexican ships were additionally ordered to blockade the Texas coast by General [Martín Perfecto de Cos](#), who then landed at Copano at the head of 300 troops, marching them to La Bahía and then San Antonio de Béxar, to put down any resistance in Texas.

These newly-harsh conditions helped shift public opinion in Texas to believe, first in rebellion against Santa Anna to reclaim their rights under the Mexican Constitution of 1824 [Hancock 2020] but, as Santa Anna's "scorched earth" practices became clear in early 1836, this struggle blossomed into a blood fight for full independence. An excellent summary of these political developments in (what would become) Brazoria County was written by Forrest Elmer Ward [Ward 1960, Ward 1962]. He describes that this area was originally part of Austin's Colony, later organized by the [Mexican Government Of Texas](#) in 1834 as the Department of the Brazos, and played an important role in the change of attitudes leading to the Texas Revolution. The origin of the "Lone Star" in the emerging Texas flags has even been ascribed to the fact that Texas was, at this point, the sole remaining Mexican state fighting for federalism [Hancock 2020].

In this period, one Francis J. Haskins advertised as a harbor pilot for the mouth of the Brazos, as indicated in a notice dated 9-May-1835 (Figure 25 below) in the [Texas Republican](#) newspaper, and later as a shipwright at Velasco. The notice was published in many issues including those of 9-May-1835 (p. 3), 6-Jun-1835 (p. 1), 20-Jun-1835 (p. 1), 27-Jun-1835 (p. 1), 4-Jul-1835 (p. 1), 18-Jul-1835 (p. 1), 25-Jul-1835 (p. 4), 8-Aug-1835 (p. 3), 22-Aug-1835 (p. 3), 19-Sep-1835 (p. 4), 26-Sep-1835 (p. 4), 3-Oct-1835 (p. 4), 10-Oct-1835 (p. 4), 17-Oct-1835 (p. 4), 24-Oct-1835 (p. 1), 31-Oct-1835 (p. 4), 14-Nov-1835 (p. 3) and probably others.

**PILOTAGE
of Brazos.**

THE undersigned being appointed Pilot by the Illustrious Ayuntamiento of the Jurisdiction of Columbia for the Bar of the Brazos, takes this opportunity of informing all, whom it may concern, that he shall strictly adopt the following rules:—In all cases when vessels approach the Bar, if prudent, they will be boarded, if not, observe the following signals: The Mexican Flag will be hoisted to the Top of the Staff at high water; & in crossing the Bar bringing two white Flags with a red Ball in each in a range; should it not be possible to board a Vessel, and not prudent for a Vessel to attempt to cross the Bar, the Mexican Flag will be hoisted half mast, and under no circumstances will the signals be exhibited.

**F. J. HASKINS, Branch Pilot.
Velasco, May 9th 1835.**

P. S. The undersigned has provided two substantial Boats & a full crew, and is determined to use every exertion in the discharge of his duties.

F. J. HASKINS.

Figure 25: Notice in Texas Republican issue of 25-Jul-1835 (page 4, column 1)

At the same time, Jeremiah Brown had apparently settled down at Velasco, no longer the captain of commercial schooners, and was also acting as pilot for the mouth of the Brazos, as indicated in a notice dated 23-May-1835 (Figure 26) also in the [Texas Republican](#) newspaper issues of 20-Jun-1835 (p. 4), 27-Jun-1835 (p. 4), 4-Jul-1835 (p. 2), 25-Jul-1835 (p. 3). Circumstances are not clear, but he may have been working with or in competition with Francis J. Haskins. In a few cases, these Haskins and Brown notices appeared (separately) in the same issue of the newspaper. As we shall see, though, Jeremiah Brown was soon destined to go back to sea, in a heavily-armed vessel.

NOTICE

TO SHIP-MEN.

THE undersigned asks this method of informing the public that another flag-staff has been erected at the mouth of the Rio Brazos and as the bar is very often too rough for boats to board vessels, they might be deceived by seeing both flags flying and in range together; therefore the following signals will be exhibited:

At high water will be hoisted at the flag-staff a white flag with a *Mexican Eagle*, in black in the middle. If it is half tide or low water the same will be hoisted at half mast only—should she not be boarded and there be plenty of water on the Bar the following rules may be observed:

When the vessel is near down to the bar the flag on the flag-staff will be hauled down and two smaller flags erected at a suitable distance from each other these flags will be a black Ball on a white ground—and are the ranges for crossing the Bar without a *Pilot*. In running down should it be too rough for boats to come out you should lay off and on, taking care not to get to the Westward of the Bar as there is generally a strong current setting in that direction, and unless your vessel sails well it will be almost impossible to come in. Vessels with good ground tackle need not be afraid to anchor off the Bar taking care to anchor in 4 1-2 fathoms water in rough weather, and in fine weather they can anchor in safety in 3 1-2 fathoms. When vessels are off the Bar in bad weather, a fire will be made on the Beach every night. I shall still continue to conduct the Pilotage as usual and so do my duty at the hazard of my life.

J. BROWN, Pilot.
 Mouth of Rio Brazos, May 23rd 1835.

Figure 26: Notice in Texas Republican issue of 27-Jun-1835 (page 4, column 3)

As mentioned previously, the [Battle of Gonzales](#) is often presented as the first significant event or “First Shot” of the [Texas Revolution](#), yet more-serious happenings at Velasco presaged even this event. The leading sentence of the book “[Thunder on the Gulf](#)” leads off with “*The merchant schooner [San Felipe](#) under full sail and with a fair wind behind, was beating in for Velasco, the Texas trading port at the mouth of the Brazos River.*” [Douglas 1936]. The ship was carrying trade goods, munitions and two important passengers, [Stephen F. Austin](#) (returning from twenty months of imprisonment in Mexico City via Veracruz and New Orleans) and [Lorenzo de Zavala](#) (former minister for Santa Anna, now a political refugee). Captain [William A. Hurd](#) had armed the ship in New Orleans with two six-pound waist guns and small arms for the crew, and armored it with bales of cotton. Waiting at anchor off Velasco was the blockading sloop-of-war *Correo Mexicano*, captained by the notorious [Thomas M. “Mexico” Thompson](#), who had just captured the American brig *Tremont* earlier in the day without apparent justification [Hayes 1879 1:133 & 2:818-819, Bryan 1897 pp. 107-108, Dienst 1909 pp. 2-4, Underwood 1927 p. 24, Francaviglia 1998 pp. 108-109]. Although the *San Felipe* appeared to have slipped past the Mexican warship into the Brazos bar on 1-Sep-1835, the owner [Thomas F. McKinney](#) observed the situation from land (seeing the *San Felipe* was the *Correo*’s next target), and then loaded some armed volunteers aboard his steamer [Laura](#) to challenge the *Correo*. First swapping out the passengers for the volunteers, the *San Felipe* assisted by the *Laura* went after the becalmed *Correo* and captured her after a cannon duel and overnight sea chase, eventually sending its officers (in irons) and the ship to New Orleans to be charged with piracy [Gray 19-Sep-1835, p.2, 17-Oct-1835 pp. 1-2 & 24-Oct-1835 p. 4, Parker 1836 pp. 330-331, Dienst 1909, Hill 1987 pp. 26-29, Cantrell 1999 pp. 308-310, Meed 2001 pp. 32-35, Jordan 2006 pp. 10-18, Thompson 2020 pp. 49-53, 218-223]. Perhaps the most thorough version of this episode, including the complex series of preceding and causative events, is given by John Powers in his recent

book **"The First Texas Navy"** [Powers 2006 pp. 28-33].

Among the "munitions" in the hold of the **San Felipe** were one or two 18-pound cannon, one of which was soon unloaded at Velasco, intended for mounting in a shore battery there [Johnson 2015 pp. 340-348] – more on that later. It was no wonder that Thomas McKinney did not want the **San Felipe** captured by any of the Mexican blockading vessels.

The episode has been described as the [San Felipe Incident](#), and was the last step in convincing [Stephen F. Austin](#) in favor of Texas rebellion [Humphries 1932, Binkley 1952 p. 63]. As Austin's nephew recollected "... he walked the beach until late at night, hoping to hear or see something of the vessels. Next day the **Laura** returned with the intelligence of the capture of the **Correo**. Austin saw in this the beginning of trouble." [Bryan 1897 p. 108]. Gregg Cantrell wrote in his biography of Austin "But in his own mind he had already reached the most critical conclusion: Texas must be free from Mexico The question was no longer one of ends, but of means." [Cantrell 1999 p. 309]. It was also written that "... Within days of the episode Stephen F. Austin ... called publicly at Brazoria for a general consultation of the people to decide what course Texas should now pursue in the mounting political process. The convening of the [General Consultation](#) followed." [Powers 2006]. Writing of the incident some years later, Charles W. Hayes claimed the circumstances of the San Felipe Incident were known in advance by Thomas McKinney and Samuel May Williams, but wrote "This was the first naval triumph, and was one of the principal causes that led to the proclamation of war, and its success is justly due to the boldness and daring of Col. McKinney" [Hayes 1879 2:818-819]. Chester Newell described this period as "... the event which, more than anything else, operated to change the public sentiment of Texas, was the arrival of their respected commissioner, Stephen F. Austin, early in September, 1835." and he paraphrases Austin's entire address to the citizens of Brazoria on 8-Sep-1835 (perhaps from the Brazoria [Texas Republican](#) newspaper issue of 19-Sep-1835), followed by the comment "This advice of Austin worked like leaven; the people rapidly came over in sentiment to the rescue of their rights." [Newell 1838 pp. 45-48]. In the Brazoria newspaper ([Texas Republican](#)) issue of 26-Sep-1835, notices were published over the names of [Branch T. Archer](#) and Stephen F. Austin, clearing calling for revolution and war, as well as militia orders to assemble [Gray 26-Sep-1835 pp. 2-3]. Thus, this incident was important not only as a sign that the Texas Revolution was underway but, more profoundly, was also a major proximate cause of it, since it convinced "The Father Of Texas", perhaps the most influential man among the Texians, to rebel against the government of Santa Anna in Sep-1835, after which things moved rapidly to open revolt. No less an authority than the Texas State Library and Archives agrees, as their [web page for the San Felipe Incident](#) accurately describes it as the "**Opening Shot of the Texas Revolution**", which occurred about one month prior to the Battle of Gonzales.

An engraving (Figure 27) often cited as the **Laura** is captioned only as "Navigating Buffalo Bayou in Early Days" in a 1926 pamphlet [Farrar 1926], and appears to be specifically mentioned as the **Laura** in a 1951 newspaper supplement as "The actual history of Port Houston began late in 1836 or early 1837 when the first steamboat operated above Harrisburg. The **Laura**, fated to go down as the first steamboat into Houston, took four days to make the eight-mile trip from Harrisburg to Houston, because of sunken logs, overhanging trees and thick foliage. She had to stop for hours while overhanging trees and vines were cut down or log jams blown up. An old woodcut shows passengers passing the long hours of unforced delays by shooting alligators." [Citizen 1951].



Figure 27: Drawing of an early steamer on Buffalo Bayou, sometimes attributed as the *Laura*
From: <https://digitalprojects.rice.edu/wrc/waterways/exhibits/show/waterways/item/1317>

This connection may be why a model of great resemblance was created by Burton D. Reckles (included below as Figure 28) as the *Laura*, now found at the Houston Maritime Museum.

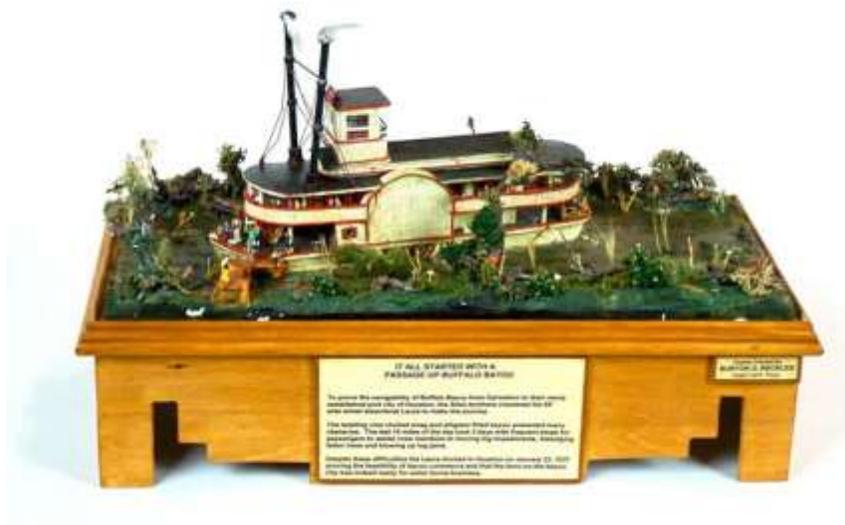


Figure 28: Model of steamboat *Laura* at the Houston Maritime Museum

[Thompson](#) had previously earned the ire of the Texians by threatening the citizens of Anahuac not to form a militia [Thompson 1835], apparently in response to Tenorio's surrender in June. In an 1847 book, based on a visit to Galveston in the early 1840's, Hooton wrote *"On inquiry, I found that Thompson (an Englishman, I believe by birth) had several years previously been a captain of a sloop-of-war in the Mexican service. During the latter end of the year 1835, he was ordered to Galveston Bay for the purpose, it was stated, of ascertaining the facts connected with certain troubles that had previously taken place at Anahuac between the Mexican Government and the people there. Thompson, however, improved upon these orders (if they were his orders), and at once attacked, captured, and carried off an American vessel, then engaged in the Texas trade, and which at the time chanced by ill luck to fall in his way. This act was regarded by the inhabitants as a virtual declaration of war on the part of Mexico, and the highest indignation was expressed toward the individual aggressor himself."* [Hooton 1847 p. 17]. Thompson also refused to grant a permit and then later seized a schooner bound for Velasco, and *"... declared the port of Brazos in a state of Blockade, and should take all vessels entering there as prizes ..."* and also *"... that all vessels and persons on board thereof, found sailing in the waters of Texas or on its coast without a permit from him or in his absence from the Captain of the port, when found, were liable to be seized and pressed into the Mexican service."* [Yates et al 1835]. John H. Brown described him as *"... the notorious scoundrel known as 'English Thompson' was on the coast as a naval officer in command of the Mexican war schooner **Correo**. He was both a ruffian and a tyrant, and had, as assumed commander of all the ports on the Texas coast, made him odious to the people."* [Brown 1887 p. 62]. Thompson eventually returned to Texas, even at one point becoming commander of the Texas Navy Yard at Galveston, but often was the center of controversy [Hayes 1879 1:392-393, Epperson 1991]. In 1841, he died in a drunken brawl in a Tampico bar when his pistol misfired, and instead he suffered a blast from a double-barreled shotgun [Hooton 1847 pp. 18-19, Jordan 2006 p. 114].

A visitor to Texas who would figure prominently in Republic of Texas politics, [Mirabeau B. Lamar](#), arrived in Velasco on 26-Sep-1835, after having traveled overland through Austin's Colony from Nacogdoches to Washington-on-the-Brazos to San Felipe to Velasco. He attempted to leave by sea to travel back to his Georgia home to settle his affairs. He had the intention to return and make Texas his home, but got ill and retreated to Brazoria, finding suitable lodgings at [Jane Long's tavern and boarding house](#), until he took ship in Nov-1835 to Mobile. But, in his journal, he left us a few choice words when he first arrived at Velasco – *"Tarried there at Brown's, Mrs. Brown a dam'd handsome woman, & sensible enough. Brown himself morose, selfish, & prone to dictatorial violence. I liked him not. Hawkins (really Hoskins), barkeeper who married an older sister of Mrs. Brown, I liked better. The female portion of the family treated me with much neglect. Kept damd nasty table & as scanty in variety & quantity as it was filthily prepared. A pretty woman to keep a dirty table! Oh! Hell! The lady did not like the boarders of 'low degree' tho' they paid their dollar a day, to eat too much of the stinking beef; as for butter and milk & such things, scarce as hen's teeth."* Lamar also stated *"After subscribing \$5.00 to erect a fort at Valascoe, left the place in the steamboat **Laura**, & arrived at Brazoria on Thursday 8th Octr"* [Parker 1981 pp. 323-325].

Thomas F. McKinney had established the trading firm of [McKinney, Williams and Company](#) in 1834 at Quintana, along with his personal residence. As the Texas Revolution began, one step was the creation of the Texas [Consultation](#). Election of delegates from the Columbia municipality included William H. Wharton, Henry Smith, Branch T. Archer, John A. Wharton, John Byrom and Warren D. C. Hall [Gray 10-

Oct-1835, p. 3] – all advocates for full Texas independence from Mexico. McKinney took exception to their election, as he felt that voters in the Velasco/Quintana area had been disenfranchised by shenanigans with the date of the election in late September and early October of 1835 [Gray 3-Oct-1835 pp. 2-3]. A rebuttal by William H. Wharton was published in the next issue [Gray 10-Oct-1835 p. 4], as was a reply by McKinney two weeks following [Gray 24-Oct-1835 p. 2] which included many witness accounts of a rigged ballot. As it turned out, delegates from other areas merely favored restoration of the 1824 Constitution, and the Consultation ultimately voted for this option.

The [Texas Republican](#) issue of 17-Oct-1835 also printed a letter from Gail Borden, R. R. Royal and Isaac Batterson (at San Felipe) to the Committee of Safety at Columbia, stating “... *we think it highly important that the cannon should be mounted, and Velasco put in a state of defence as speedily as possible, and should an enemy appear, every precaution should be used to prevent a landing A gentleman by the name of Poe, proposes to mount the cannon, &c.*” [Gray 17-Oct-1835 p. 1]. In the same issue is printed a report from Thomas McKinney dated 11-Oct-1835 at Quintana that the schooner **Lady Madison** arrived with seven pieces of cannon, ammunition, muskets, etc.

During this time, McKinney wrote on 24-Oct-1835 that “... *we have this evening completed the mounting on our fort at Velasco a most superior long 18 pounder besides some other smaller pieces ...*” and again on 29-Oct-1835 that “*The Mexican cruiser is off this place, has been seen yesterday & the day previous fired one shot at Velasco which fell short of the shore, four at her were fired from shore, none however took effect, it has made her less bold in her movements ... You would doubtless say by all means go and take her, so we say and so we will endeavor to do at all hazards.*” [McKinney 1835a & b]. The Mexican cruiser was probably the **Bravo** [Powers pp. 33-34]. Velasco’s cannon was that brought by the **San Felipe** in early September. Since no fortifications other than the 1832 fort are known to have existed yet at Velasco, it is entirely possible that McKinney mounted this cannon there. The letters also indicate that men and supplies were arriving on ships from New Orleans, and were being forwarded on to the camp of the [Texas Revolutionary Army](#). Indeed, the other 18-pounder mentioned above may have been sent on to the army, leaving the “smaller pieces” at Velasco [McKinney 1835c], and may have been the cannon used at the Battle of the Alamo [Johnson 2015 pp. 340-348]. So, significant revolutionary activity was well underway at Velasco in the period of Sep-Oct 1835.

After blockades by these “Mexican cruisers” offshore, [James F. Perry](#) and 11 other citizens of Brazoria wrote to the provisional Texas government in Nov-1835 that the sea coast was defenseless and unprotected, suggesting the building of forts at the east end of Galveston Island, at the mouth of the Brazos, and at the entrance to Matagorda Bay. They also suggested a naval force to drive away these cruisers [McKinley 1934]. Similar sentiments were also expressed by [Thomas F. McKinney](#) [McKinney 1835b] and the newly-named governor [Henry Smith](#) in a [letter on 15-Nov-1835](#) [Smith 1835]. At first, this took the form of the provisional Texian government authorizing privateers. But, on 25-Nov-1835, over three months before Texas actually declared its independence, the provisional Texian government adopted laws to create a navy at the [General Council of the Republic of Texas](#) at San Felipe. Such thoughts about a naval force were not unusual and soon acted upon to actually create the first [Republic Of Texas Navy](#), partly through the efforts of the Quintana merchants Thomas F. McKinney and Samuel May Williams of the trading firm of [McKinney, Williams and Company](#), who put up cash and personal credit required to obtain two of four existing topsail “Baltimore schooners” (also known as “Baltimore

clippers”). These included the [Liberty](#) (60-80 tons), [Independence](#) (112 tons), [Brutus](#) (125-127 tons) and [Invincible](#) (130 tons). These schooners were maneuverable and fast, fitted out and heavily armed, also notably having one (sometimes two) heavy guns mounted amidships on a rotating carriage modeled on the U.S. Navy schooners of 1820-1821 [Chapelle 1949], to fire in any direction and called “pivot guns”.

In chasing “Mexican cruisers” in Nov-1835, Thomas McKinney was aboard the ***San Felipe*** (still captained by William A. Hurd) when they arrived off Paso Cavallo but the vessel was driven ashore on Matagorda Peninsula. Finding their way to the town of Matagorda, they found at anchor the merchant schooner ***William Robbins***, which was sought by both the Matagorda Committee of Safety and McKinney (to continue chasing Mexican vessels), which was first used to recover the goods from the ***Hannah Elizabeth*** (recently grounded and captured at Paso Cavallo by the ***Bravo***) and the cannons from the ***San Felipe***. Ultimately, McKinney directly purchased the ***William Robbins***, sent her to Velasco where she was fitted out in Dec-1835 by [Jeremiah Brown](#) (formerly captain of the ***Sabine*** and a business owner in Velasco) who then sailed it to New Orleans carrying the new Commissioners to the United States (Stephen F. Austin, Branch T. Archer and William H. Wharton) and José Antonio Mexía [Powers 2006 pp. 34-39]. There, the vessel was converted to a war schooner, purchased by the Commissioners on the credit of McKinney & Williams, renamed ***Liberty***, and a crew was recruited by Jeremiah’s brother [William S. Brown](#). ***Liberty*** arrived back at Velasco on 25-Jan-1836 [Powers 2006 p. 56] to find the ***Invincible***, which had had been built in 1835 in Baltimore, and purchased there for McKinney & Williams by Henry W. Williams (Samuel May’s brother), arriving at Velasco on 2-Jan-1836 laden with arms and supplies [Powers pp. 56-57]. The merchant schooner ***Brutus*** was purchased in New Orleans by Augustus C. Allen, fitted out as a privateer in Dec-1835 with [William A. Hurd](#) as captain, and stopped at Velasco in mid-Jan 1836 with about 100 passengers ([Alabama Red Rovers](#)) on their way to [Dimitt’s Landing](#) where they disembarked. Upon return to New Orleans, Allen instead sold the vessel to the Provisional Government [Powers 46-47]. The schooner ***Independence*** (formerly the U. S. revenue cutter [Samuel D. Ingham](#)) was similarly purchased by the Provisional Government in New Orleans [Powers 47-48], both vessels arriving at Velasco about 5-Mar-1836, and then continuing on to Paso Cavallo [Powers p. 57].

These official vessels were also joined by several privately-owned ships, which are sometimes also considered to have been part of the First Texas Navy, such as the steamers [Laura](#), [Yellowstone](#) and [Ocean](#), and also the schooners [San Felipe](#) and [Flash](#). Together with the privateers, this hastily-assembled “fleet” helped defend the coast during the Texas Revolution and the dangerous months following the victory at San Jacinto [Thompson 2020]. In many cases, these vessels did not survive long. During this period, Quintana and Velasco served as a principal base of the First Texas Navy, due to their position at the mouth of the Brazos River and easy access to areas settled as part of Austin’s Colony [Andy Hall, personal communication]. One of the first written histories of the First Texas Navy (in the *Texas Almanac for 1860*) put it this way: “*For the purposes of facilitating the supply and control of the vessels, the Government commissioned Thomas F. McKinney, a Captain in the Navy, with authority similar to that vested in a Secretary of the Navy; he then resided at the mouth of the Brazos de Dios, the usual naval rendezvous, and most frequented port of entry for Texas.*” [Haugh 1960 pp. 572-573]. McKinney was originally suggested to captain the ***Invincible***, but appointed Jeremiah Brown instead, and his brother William S. Brown to take over the ***Liberty*** [Wharton 1836], so that McKinney could act as an agent for the cause.

It was also in this period that one company of the [New Orleans Greys](#) arrived by sea at Velasco aboard the schooner **Columbus**, where they organized themselves and elected officers, including [Robert C. Morris](#) as captain and [William Gordon Cooke](#) as first lieutenant - the first volunteer unit from the United States to arrive for the Texas Revolution. They stayed two days after their arrival on 22-Oct-1835 while being supported by Thomas McKinney, before being transported upriver to Brazoria aboard his steamboat [Laura](#), from which they marched onto San Antonio for the [Siege of Bexar](#) [Brown 1999] and their later fates, many of which would die at Goliad. Another company of the Greys had marched overland to Nacogdoches and then San Antonio, and included [Thomas S. Lubbock](#) and [Herman Ehrenberg](#) [Crisp 2022]. Lubbock would later travel afoot (in Jan-1836) back to the Brazos, where he would join [Thomas W. Grayson](#) (a family friend) aboard the steamboat [Yellowstone](#), being aboard when the vessel helped Sam Houston's army cross the Brazos, and then ran downstream past Santa Anna's army and Velasco, arriving at Galveston Bay on 24-Apr-1836. There, he observed President David G. Burnet "*camping on Galveston Island*", the announcement of the San Jacinto victory the next day, and the return trip of Burnet and "*part of his cabinet*" to the site of the battle [Lubbock 1900 pp. 30-32]. Both Lubbock and Ehrenberg would survive the revolution and return to Velasco afterwards - Lubbock would work briefly for McKinney & Williams, and Ehrenberg would escort the Mexican prisoner [Johann Josef Holzinger](#) to the government at Velasco in late May-1836 and there be discharged from the Texas Army on 2-Jun-1836, where he observed the imprisoned Santa Anna [Crisp 2022 pp. 253, 337n9, 515-520].

As the Texas Revolution began in earnest in late 1835, Velasco also became a staging and training area for about 250 volunteers under the command of Col. [James W. Fannin](#), known as the [Georgia Battalion Of Permanent Volunteers](#). It was this group that brought the [Troutman flag](#), and the flag was flown over the American Hotel on 8-Jan-1836, alongside [William S. Brown](#)'s [Independence flag](#). Their military training under their adjutant, Capt. [John Sowers Brooks](#), occurred in camps near Velasco named Camp Independence and Camp Fannin [Roller 1906]. Another group of volunteers included [John C. Duval](#) and his two brothers of the [Kentucky Mustangs](#) who arrived at Quintana in late Dec-1835. In a book published in 1892, Duval described his first view of the area "*The country in the immediate vicinity of Velasco is low, and back of it a dead level prairie extending as far as the eye could reach; consequently I must confess I was not much pleased with the first view of the 'promised land'. Velasco was a miserable little village consisting of two stores and a hotel, so called, and five or six grog shops, dignified with the name of 'saloons.'*" [Duval 1892 p. 20]. Duval was soon enrolled in the Texas Revolutionary Army, and for a short period was posted aboard the **Invincible** as "*a kind of marine corps*". In late Jan-1836, both groups had been ferried on the schooners **Columbus** and **Flora** down the coast to Copano [Fannin 1836, Helm 1884 p. 54], and then marched to Presidio La Bahía (at Goliad), which they called [Fort Defiance](#) [Roller 1906]. Fannin, Brooks and most of these men died in the [Goliad Massacre](#) on 27-Mar-1836, although Duval was among the few escapees. [Mary Austin Holley](#) had a more favorable view of Velasco, perhaps wishing to publicize her cousin's colony, mentioning it in her guidebook entitled "Texas" published in 1836, writing "*Excellent accommodations can always be obtained at boarding houses, which, among other attractions, are always furnished with supplies of oysters and fish of the first quality. Musquetoe bars are not often needed here, and, altogether, it is one of the most delightful places in the country. A Mexican garrison was formerly situated at Velasco; at present, it is a rendezvous of the patriot troops*" [Holley 1836].

The Texian battery of artillery at Velasco was apparently placed in a new more-substantial earthen embankment or fort at some point after Feb-1836, when an address was published by the Brazoria Committee Of Safety calling for aid in erecting a new fort at Velasco [Streeter 1955], and which has been called the Texan Fort Velasco, sometimes confused with the 1832 fort. A meeting was held on 6-Mar-1836 at Velasco of the “Committee for Vigilance and Safety”, where a resolution was passed for “... *purchase of ammunition, reconstruction of the battery, and the mounting of guns ...*” [Potter & Wells 1836] – please see Figure 29 below.

Proceedings of a meeting held at Velasco on the 6th of March 1836.

Intelligence having been received that the Mexican Squadron had left Vera Cruz on the 6th ultimo with the view of blockading the coast of Texas a meeting of the citizens of Velasco and Quintana was in consequence called on the date above mentioned to adopt measures for the defense of the Port. A number of citizens having in consequence assembled, R. M. Potter was elected chairman of the meeting and J. J. Wells secretary, and the meeting went into deliberation.

On motion of Genl J. J. Green it was **Resolved**, —

That a committee of five, to be called the Committee of Vigilance and Safety be appointed whose duty it shall be to take measures for the defense of the place and especially to collect funds by subscription for that object, and to appropriate the same to the purchase of ammunition, the reconstruction of the battery, and the mounting of guns, and that the said committee be authorized to correspond with the Secretary of war, to transmit to him a copy of the proceedings of this meeting and to solicit such aid as the Department may be authorized to give.

In pursuance of this resolution J. J. Green, Jeremiah Brown, J. B. Haskins, Robt. D. Moon and Joseph Ritchie were appointed members of the committee of Vigilance & Safety.

A subscription was then opened and the sum of three hundred and five dollars was subscribed by the Company present, after which the meeting adjourned, leaving the funds, and the subscription still open in the hands of the Committee.

R. M. Potter Chairman
 Velasco 6th March 1836. J. J. Wells Secy

Figure 29: Proceedings of a meeting held at Velasco on the 6th of March 1836 (Thomas Jefferson Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library)

Another document shows expenses from Francis J. Haskins for “... mounting two 6 pounders at Velasco” and “... servicing caissons & repairing carriages” on 19-Feb-1836, and also for “... Services rendered in getting on Shore & mounting one 9 pounder from the wreck of the Schooner **America**” and “... blocks & rigging for same” on 14-Mar-1836, for a total of \$90.00 [Haskins Mar-1836].

In early March, Capt. [George W. Poe](#) commanded troops at Velasco, consisting of [Amasa Turner](#)’s company of regulars and [Richard Roman](#)’s company of volunteers. Initially, Poe recommended that they

stay to defend the area, writing on 3-Mar-1836 that “*I have received letters from the Citizens beseeching me not to remove the troops from here ... they have offered to work with hands and oxen in the Construction of Batteries & mounting the Cannon – moreover there is a large supply of arms ammunition & Clothing here which without troops cannot be protected ...*” [Poe 1836]. These troops apparently left soon after to join the army under Sam Houston, as it retreated from Santa Anna’s advance after the defeats in revolutionary battles at the Alamo and Goliad. The civilian population also retreated, abandoning their settlements in what is known as the [Runaway Scrape](#), and Velasco was no different.

During this same time, [Edwin Morehouse](#) and his New York Battalion arrived at Velasco aboard the **Mattawamkeag**, escorted by **Independence** and **Brutus** (as stated previously about 5-Mar-1836) [Powers 2006 pp. 56-57] before continuing on to Paso Cavallo where this unit disembarked at Cox’s Point. This unit was initially assigned the duty of assisting civilians west of the Brazos to escape to safety during the [Runaway Scrape](#), serving at Matagorda, Columbia and Brazoria, before joining Houston’s army after San Jacinto. Afterwards, as part of the new [Army of the Republic of Texas](#) under [Thomas J. Rusk](#), this group followed the Mexican Army out of Texas and assisted in the burial of the burned remains from the [Goliad Massacre](#) in Jun-1836 [Morehouse 1836, Daniell 1892, Huson 1953 I:391].

At sea, the First Texas Navy had also become active. Velasco was often the place where seamen and provisions were boarded upon the vessels. As stated previously, the **Liberty** joined the newly-purchased **Invincible** at Velasco, with William S. Brown being appointed the captain of the former and Jeremiah Brown the latter [Powers 2006 p.59-61], after which **Invincible** helped transport Fannin’s troops to Copano. The **Liberty** departed Velasco on 13-Feb-1836, stopped at Galveston Bay before departing for Yucatan where she captured the Mexican schooner **Pelicano** on 5-Mar-1836 (including eight of its crew as prisoners). The **Liberty** returned her prize to Texas at the entrance to Matagorda Bay, encountering the **Mattawamkeag**, but where the **Pelicano** foundered although its supplies of flour and gunpowder were of use to the Texas Army [Powers 2006 pp. 67-71]. The eight prisoners were transferred to Velasco, where they stayed at the Brown-Hoskins hotel and tavern, before being allowed to travel on to New Orleans [Brown 19-Jun-1836]. In Apr-1836, the **Invincible** searched for, grounded and destroyed the heavier-armed **Bravo** near the mouth of the Rio Grande, after gaining supplies or personnel at Velasco [Hoskins 11-Jul-1836]. In the summer of 1836, the **Invincible** took on water at Marion (Columbia), and then traveled downriver to Velasco, joining the steamer **Ocean** and the privateer **Terrible** to travel down the coast. They found the heavily armed Mexican brig **Vencedor del Alamo** trapping the **Brutus** in Matagorda Bay, and chased her all the way to Veracruz. The **Invincible** returned to Velasco, where she discharged her marines and some sailors, before traveling to New York for repairs [Powers 2006 pp. 106-108]. Although it has been stated that [Velasco](#) became the “homeport” of the steamboat **Yellowstone** and the war schooners **Invincible** and **Independence** [Stahman 2008 p. 14], it was probably not in the full sense of that word.

After his victories at the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna apparently believed the revolution was defeated, and had scattered his forces (in part, to forage for supplies), before he came to understand that Sam Houston had gathered a large surviving force, and both maneuvered for a final fight. [Robert Potter](#), the appointed Secretary Of The Navy by the ad interim Texas government, instead moved to the coast to help organize defenses there, where Col. [Warren D. C. Hall](#) was ordered to defend Velasco and Galveston at some point after mid-March but, noticing Velasco was abandoned, he initially consolidated

his defense only at Galveston [Shearer 1951 pp. 67-69]. However, a group of volunteers under [Thomas B. Bell](#) arrived in late March and agreed to defend Velasco. Robert Potter wrote to Bell on 31-Mar-1836, saying *"The offer of service by yourself and friends to fortify and defend Velasco is accepted, and as soon as communication can be had with other members of the Government, a Captain's commission will be sent to you to authorise you to organize your friends into a company and be constituted a part of the army of the Republic of Texas. Genl. Hall will return to Velasco as soon as he is informed of the stand you have taken; but in the meantime you are requested and authorised to take command and proceed immediately to collect laborers, teams &c for constructing fortifications Col. Edwd. Harcourt an experienced and scientific engineer has been ordered to Velasco and Galveston to superintend the construction of fortifications at those respective points – in all matters therefore relating to that branch of the public service at Velasco, Col. Harcourt will have the command."* [Eduard Harkort](#) (sometimes Anglicized as Harcourt) was a German national and engineer recruited in New Orleans to the cause of Texas independence by Stephen F. Austin, and who Sam Houston appointed on 28-Mar-1836, writing *"I sent Colonel Harcourt, as principal engineer of the army, down to the coast, to erect fortifications at the most eligible point of defence. I placed at his disposal the resources of the lower country for its defence and protection."* [Houston 1836 pp. 384-386]. Bell responded on 12-Apr-1836, writing *"We are pressing forward, in the operation of the Fort ..."* [Potter 1836, Myers & Smith].

During this same period, one notable arrival from New Orleans was the schooner [Flash](#) under Capt. Luke A. Falvel (also spelled Falwell), which arrived at Velasco on 25-Mar-1836, and which had stopped a few days earlier at Galveston, learning the latest news of the Texas Revolution [Barber 2009]. [James Morgan](#) had ordered the vessel on to Velasco, to evacuate citizens fleeing from the Brazos valley. On board was the returning [Mirabeau B. Lamar](#), who then traveled north from Velasco to [Groce's Ferry](#) to join Sam Houston's army as a private (the army was there from 31- Mar to 14-Apr-1836). The day before the [Battle of San Jacinto](#), he was promoted to colonel of cavalry, and commanded the 61-member unit in the battle.

Upon leaving Velasco, and to avoid the advancing enemy, the **Flash** carried [Robert Potter](#) , [Eduard Harkort](#) (among others) and the ["Twin Sisters"](#) to New Washington (current Morgan's Point) [Dienst 1909 p. 30, Meed 2001 p. 52, Barber 2009 p. 22]. Many documents are found in the pension claim of Capt. Luke A. Falvel, but one is an affidavit by David G. Burnet (dated 23-May-1868 at Galveston) stating *"This is to certify that Luke A. Falvel held a Commission as Captain in the Navy of the Republic of Texas ..."*, and another is an "Oath of Identity" (dated 22-Oct-1870) which states *"... The said Schooner **Flash** being under his command when the celebrated ["Twin Sisters"](#) were transported on board of her, for service, in the Memorable battle of San Jacinto"* [Falvel 1870]. The "Twin Sisters" were a brace of field cannon donated by the citizens of Cincinnati, that had been transported down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, and then by sea aboard the schooner **Pennsylvania** to Brazoria in Mar-1836 [Winkler 1917]. But, the lack of oxen or horses to haul them, and the muddy roads, prevented further progress. [John M. Allen](#) reported from Brazoria on 31-Mar-1836 to Sam Houston *"I have been now three days at this place with forty men – two fine field pieces – and one Howitzer with 160 shells and 880 round shot ... Col'n Houston ([Almanzon Huston](#)??) ... informed me that he had orders from the Governm't to send back everything in the shape of arms and ammunition - and to proceed forthwith to Galveston Bay ... have therefore concluded to march my men onto the army and send everything else back to Velasco."* [Allen 1836]. In his new assignment, Eduard Harkort traveled through Bell's Landing and Brazoria,

organizing the building of breastworks there. He also initiated fortifications at Velasco the day (3-Apr-1836) he wrote to Sam Houston, also saying *"I found two complete field pieces with ammunition and a howitzer on board the **Pensilvania** which has order to take them down again and bring them over to Galveston. I would not oppose to this order, and have them unloaded here, because I think that in case you wish them with the army, I could easier find means to send them by Harrisburg than from Brazoria where even we could not find team for bringing up the provisions. Please to send me your orders by the war department of Harrisburg with respect to these canons which in the meanwhile I shall place at the entrance of the harbor of Galveston."* [Harkort 1836b]. The **Flash** delivered the cannon to New Washington on 6-Apr-1836, which were then carried to Harrisburg on the sloop **Ohio** and then overland to the Texas army at Groce's Ferry, reaching there on 11-Apr-1836 [Morgan 1836, Huston 1836, Winkler 1917 p. 22, Barber 2009 p.22]. The Morgan reference indicates that one mate and three soldiers were detached for three days *"... to go to Harrisburg"*, indicating they may have been needed on the **Ohio** to help carry the cannons there. Finally, the "Twin Sisters" returned with the army toward San Jacinto, where [this brace of field artillery](#) was the only heavy ordnance used by the Texians in the battle.

On the very same day as the battle, the **Independence** anchored offshore of Velasco, unable to enter the river due to a stiff offshore wind caused by a "norther". [Charles DeMorse](#), Lieutenant of Marines, along with the 2nd Mate and four gunners, were ordered to take a small boat to shore to gain intelligence about the revolution. Later, in DeMorse's pension claim of 1870, he wrote *"... we found at Velasco, Col." Thos. F. McKinney, and Captain Bell from Tennessee with 6 men, holding the little fort on which one gun was mounted."* [DeMorse 1870].

[James F. Perry](#) (while traveling to the mouth of the Brazos) wrote from Galveston Island on 15-Apr-1836 to wife Emily (then at [William Scott](#)'s plantation known as Point Pleasant with the family while escaping during the Runaway Scrape) that *"Mr. Grason (probably [Thomas Wigg Grayson](#), captain of the [Laura](#)) is here he left Velasco yesterday morning and says there is a fort there and one at Columbia"*. In a second letter to his wife, written on 26-Apr-1836 from aboard the [Laura](#) (then at Galveston Harbor), he mentioned being sent to Velasco for tools to build a fort (at Galveston?, since fort at Velasco was complete?) but that it had not been started yet [Perry 1836]. Francis J. Haskins wrote on 13-Jul-1836 to Col. [James Morgan](#), asking that his account and expenses for building the fort at Velasco be settled [Haskins Jul-1836], so one might conclude the Texan Fort Velasco was mostly completed by then. One draft to him for \$45.00 dated 6-Jul-1836 can be seen in [Bevill 2009 p. 138 Fig. 6.8].

A diagram labeled as "Fort Velasco" and indexed as "Plan of Fort Velasco", which may be a drawing of this battery or fort, is found in the [Nacogdoches Archives](#) (see Figure 30 below), perhaps a design by Harkort. This hypothesis is considered likely since these archives only extended through 1836, the labeling is in English, and the design is unlike the prior 1832 fort or the subsequent Civil War forts [Nacogdoches 1830's].

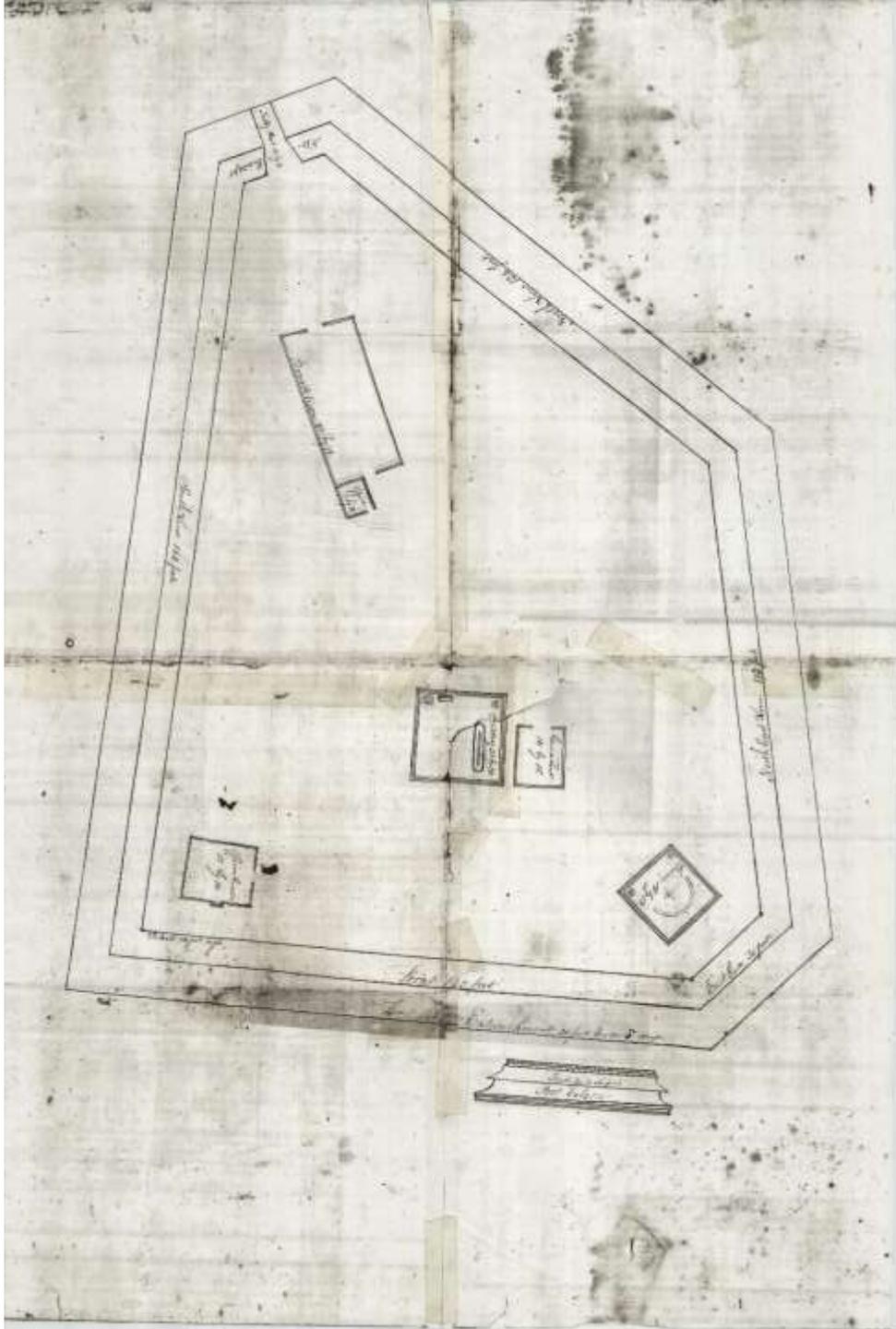


Figure 30: Map #6312 from Nacogdoches Archives – hypothesized to be Republic of Texas battery (courtesy of Texas State Library and Archives Commission)

The location for this fort/battery is shown on an 1837 plat map of Velasco [Mesier 1837] in Block 61, then on the extreme corner of the Brazos and the Gulf (please see Figure 31 below), an area now in the open water of the widened harbor channel. Please also note the location of Monument Square, the adjacent Block 13 (with Lots 1-10) and Fort Street between them.

A similar but less formal map, known as the [William H. Hunt](#) map, is thought to have been prepared by this early surveyor of Brazoria County, and was used as a basis for many later deed records. Although the original is thought lost, a later copy is known [Hunt 1838]. This map also shows the same location for the battery and Monument Square, and is reproduced in Figure 32 below.

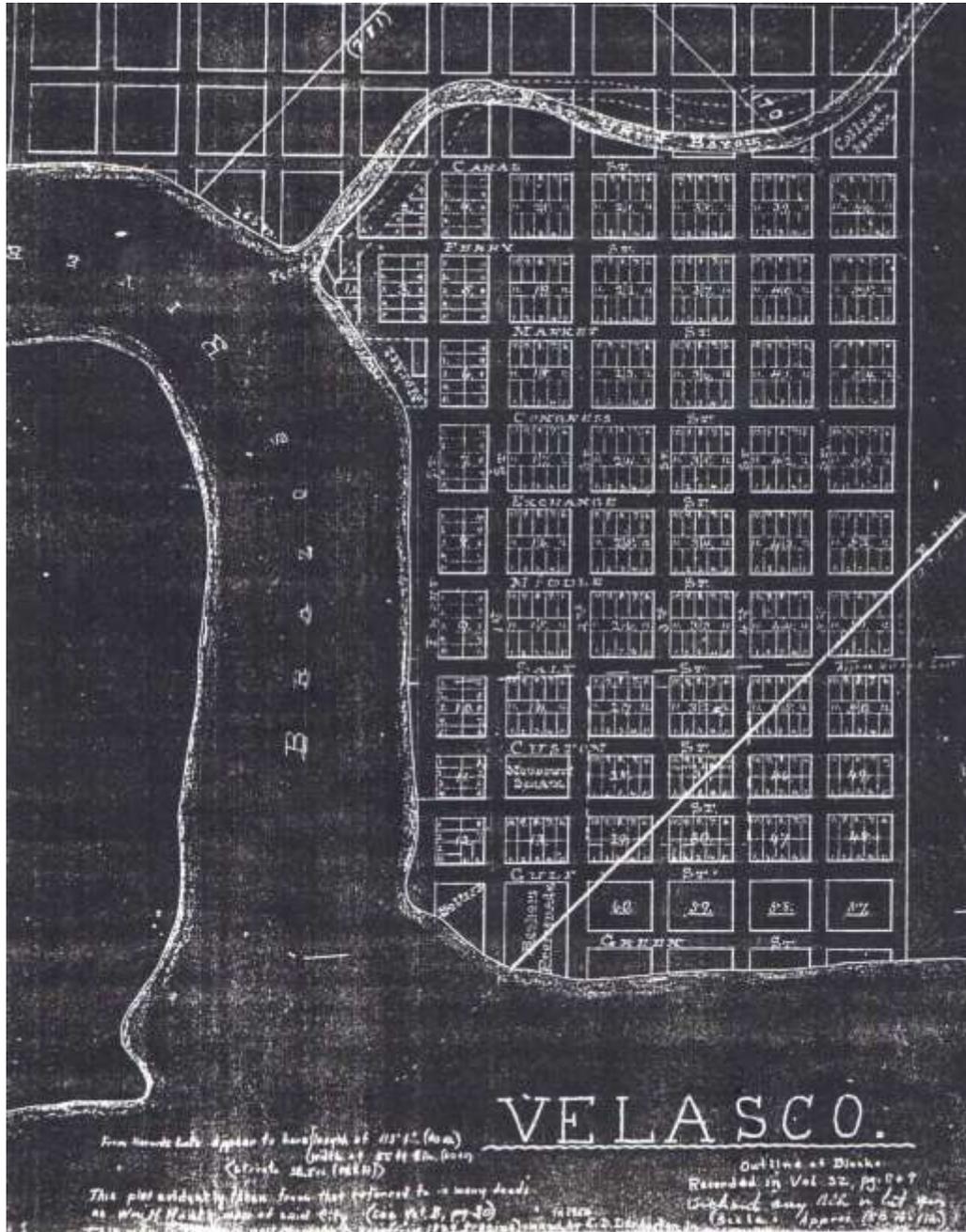


Figure 32: copy of William H. Hunt Map (courtesy: BCHM)

This battery was impermanent, but was known as the best coastal defense work in Texas in May-1836 [Pierce 1969]. Perhaps for this very reason, and the new robust [Texas Navy](#), the [Ad Interim government](#) of the Republic Of Texas first convened at Velasco after the [Battle Of San Jacinto](#) from May-Oct 1836.

One must also remember that many of the towns in Texas had been burned or destroyed in the Texas Revolution or Runaway Scrape, although Velasco escaped such a fate. Ad Interim President [David G. Burnet](#) and General [Sam Houston](#), along with [Santa Anna](#) and his officers, had been transported on the steamboat [Yellowstone](#) from Buffalo Bayou to Galveston Island on 5-May-1836. [Santa Anna](#) was then placed aboard the *Independence*, and on 8-May-1836 President Burnet and his Cabinet came aboard and made sail for Velasco [Dienst 1909 p. 58, Shearer 1951 pp. 75-79]. As Dienst wrote “*Velasco was the great seaport of the Republic at that time.*” A slightly-different account was given by Gabriel Nuñez Ortega, whose diary indicates it was on 7-May-1836 when they went to Galveston Island (soon to become Post Galveston), and on 10-May-1836 went to Velasco aboard the steamer *Laura* [Nuñez Ortega 1836]. The wounded [Sam Houston](#) was transported in the opposite direction to New Orleans for medical care aboard the schooner *Flora*, accompanied by the war schooner [Liberty](#).

The government’s records were kept at Velasco for a short period, and the fort was occupied with a small garrison [Winkler 1906, Dorchester & Wilson 1936, Pierce 1969 p.164, Guthrie 1993 p.107, Fox et al 1981 pp. 21-23, Earls et al 1996 p. 49]. Financial warrants, notes and pay certificates were issued by the government from Velasco [Bevill 2009]. Other types of financial documents known as audited drafts can be found in SMU’s [Rowe-Barr Collection Of Texas Currency issued at Velasco](#). And, it was here that [Santa Anna](#) signed the [Treaties Of Velasco](#) on 14-May-1836. It is known that Santa Anna was held prisoner during this period at Velasco, along with Ramón Martínez Caro (his secretary) and Colonels Juan Nepomuceno Almonte and Gabriel Nuñez Ortega [Henson 1990]. Caro wrote afterwards “... we were lodged in a small room surrounded by sentinels” [Caro 1837 p. 135]. It is very likely that “the government” actually met at existing and modest houses, such as the Brown-Hoskins hotel/tavern (American Hotel) or others. Indeed, “Santa Anna and suite” (Santa Anna and several of his officers) were provided board from this establishment (found in Velasco Block 11), as indicated in a receipt sent by the Republic Of Texas to Isaac C. Hoskins, in Figure 33 below [Hoskins 1836].

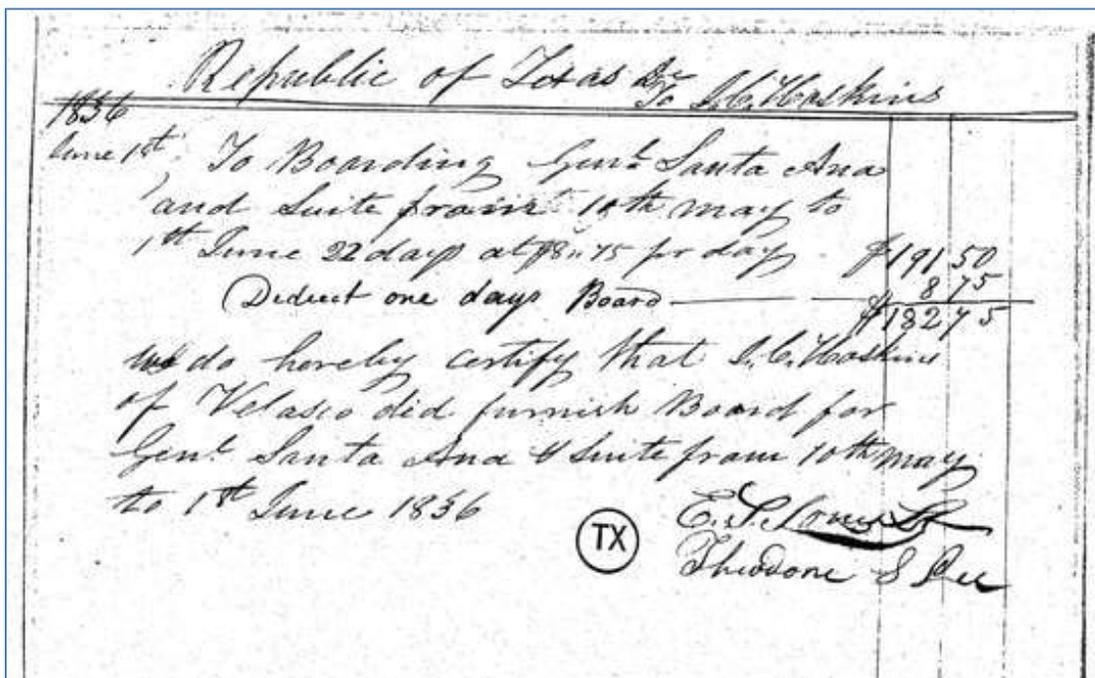


Figure 33: Receipt for board of Santa Anna and officers from 10-May to 1-Jun-1836

However, it seems that Santa Anna actually stayed in a building owned by Francis J. Haskins, as indicated in another receipt, shown below in Figure 34 [Haskins May-1836].

Republic of Texas.
 1836 To Francis J Haskins - Dr
 May 10th To Rent of house and Furniture at Velasco for the use of
 Genl Santa Anna, and other Prisoners from this date untill
 1st June being 22 days at \$5- Per day - - - \$110. 00
 To the Rent of Store for Soldiers provisions from May 10th
 untill 24th at \$2 Per day being 14 days - - - 28. 00
 \$ 138 00.
 Deduct one days Rent \$ 5. 00
 Perceive this above to be correct \$ 133. 00
 to the best of my knowledge
 Capt. W. Wharton (TX)

Figure 34: Receipt for rent of house for Santa Anna and officers from 10-May to 1-Jun-1836

Gabriel Nuñez Ortega made several entries in his diary during their stay in Velasco [Nuñez Ortega 1836 p. 4]:

May 10 - "... we were given a small house, very dirty and without hope of means of living. In the evening a hotel sent us a piece of fried fish, coffee and some terrible (ugly) bread".

May 11 - "In Velasco we did nothing else but kill and shoo away the many flies that were there."

May 12 - "They talked a bit about the negotiations for the Agreement. Our good friend Wharton arrived with milk, butter and some greens and he went away to bring us back other things."

May 13- "There were conferences with the Texas Cabinet and almost concerned the Agreement. Colonel Wharton assisted in the discussion. That night our trunk was robbed of \$125.00 while we slept."

May 14 - "The Agreement and Public was definitely agreed upon and reached agreement a published, both were put in clean (final) form for signatures with this date, although it must be verified tomorrow Sunday. Present were President Burnet, Hardyman, Collingsworth and Grayson. Mr. Lamar was not present because of occupation elsewhere. Mr. Porter because he was absent."

May 15 - "The agreements were signed in the evening and it was agreed to send them to the Mexican and Texas Generals tomorrow."

The capital at Velasco is described briefly in the article “Capitals of the Lone Star” in *National Republic* magazine [Crouch 1932]. In this article, a photograph is shown of a two-story building (reproduced below as Figure 35) which may be the Brown-Hoskins hotel/tavern, but photographed at a much later time (perhaps 1870’s). No date or source is given with the photo, and no provenance for it has been established.

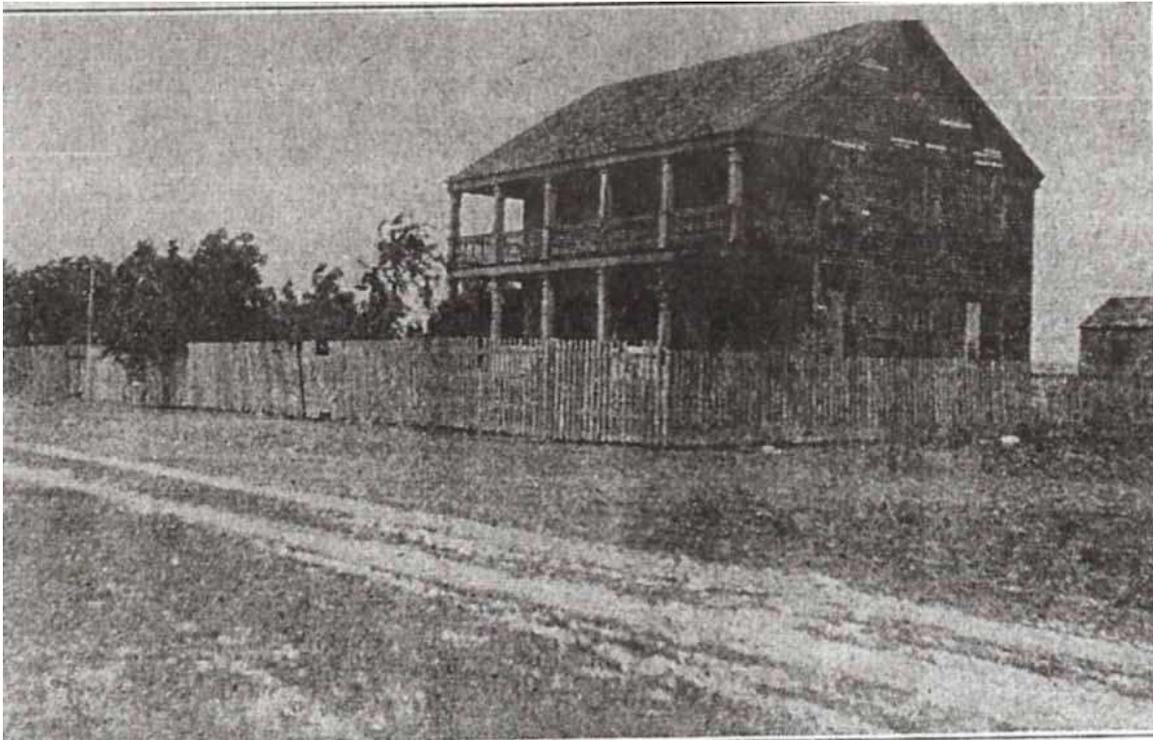


Figure 35: Former Capitol of Texas at Old Velasco [Crouch 1932]

In compliance with the treaties, Santa Anna was to be returned to Mexico, and indeed was put aboard the *Invincible* standing off of Velasco on 1-Jun-1836 for his return to Veracruz. However, hard feelings among the Texans, especially a group of 230 (some references say 130) new volunteers under Gen. [Thomas Jefferson Green](#) who had arrived on the steamer *Ocean* from New Orleans, delayed the departure, wanting to punish Santa Anna [Dienst 1909 p. 58, Binkley 1940, Pierce 1969 p. 165, Myers & Smith, Francaviglia 1998 p. 126, Crisp 2022 p. 519]. Instead, Santa Anna was brought ashore on the 4th at Quintana for safekeeping, staying a few days with Thomas F. McKinney (from 4- to 9-June according to the Ortega diary), before returning again to Velasco, staying at the Brown-Hoskins tavern/hotel until the 15th. In his diary, Herman Ehrenberg (uniquely) described Santa Anna’s departure from the *Invincible*: “After the longboat carrying the prisoner had laboriously made its way from the small fleet of ships back through the breakers, it had to cut across in front of the harbor of Velasco. All of the townspeople, some travelers, and General Green’s whole brigade of volunteers were gathered there. The trembling Mexican president, who happened by chance to be sitting under the fluttering colors of the Republic, took off his hat with a flourish as the boat glided past the darkly murmuring crowd assembled at Velasco. Groveling before his captors and never lifting his eyes as he gazed at the bottom of the boat, he bowed repeatedly to the crowd of spectators on the shore. It was a disgraceful sight. When the boat had gone by the crowd, he collapsed to his seat in the stern of the boat, exhausted and with mortal

terror on his face. ... This pitiful display said more in favor of the defeated and disgraced president than either Houston or Burnet could have said on his behalf in all their speeches. It served to remind the Texans who had suffered such terrible injuries and losses that Santa Anna was their prisoner now – and the prisoner of a civilized nation. He moved back into rooms he had occupied before in the house where President Burnet was living, and under Mister Burnet’s generous supervision, Santa Anna resigned himself to his fate.” [Crisp 2022 pp. 519-520]. The Crisp reference (p. 523n25) is incorrect in devaluing this account by claiming “the position of Velasco [was] slightly higher up the Brazos River than Quintana”, since the opposite was true at the time (e.g., see Figure 94), so *Invincible*’s longboat would indeed have to pass Velasco to reach Quintana as it traveled up the Brazos River from offshore. The story continues with Ortega’s diary entry for the 9th, which says “There was great excitement for us to go to Velasco in Captain Paton’s care At 5 in the afternoon ... we were installed in a hotel” [Nuñez Ortega 1836 p. 7]. Ramón Martínez Caro wrote “After we were turned over to Captain Patton ... he took us to Velasco and lodged us in the second story of a house whose first floor was a restaurant.” [Caro 1837 p. 137]. [William H. Patton](#) was the one put in charge of the prisoners, and took them to his family’s plantation two miles upriver from Columbia for some weeks (now [Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site](#)) on 15-Jun-1836 aboard the steamer *Laura*, until they were again transferred on 30-Jul-1836 to [Orozimbo Plantation](#) for several months. Finally, at the request of the Republic Of Texas government, Santa Anna was sent to Washington DC, departing Velasco by sea on 6-Dec-1836 [Nuñez Ortega 1836 p. 22].

Another conflict between the military and civil authorities of the new republic also occurred at Velasco in mid-July, when Lt. Col. [Henry Millard](#) of the [Texas Revolutionary Army](#) (unhappy about the government’s failure to provide for the army) ordered Capt. [Amasa Turner](#) to arrest Ad Interim President [David G. Burnet](#), which Turner declined to do [Binkley 1940, Pierce 1969]. So, Turner and his unit must have returned to Velasco after the Battle of San Jacinto.

A man named Buegel served as a soldier at the fort in the period of 1836-1837, and he said “I served for sixteen months with the soldiers in Velasco. Our captain’s name was Snell. We had to guard the fort since the Mexicans were trying to land. From the fort, which was three hundred paces from the shoreline, we could, during the day, see three ships in the telescope. That was in May 1837.” [Seele 1979]. Snell was apparently Capt. [Martin K. Snell](#) of Company E, 1st Regiment of the [Army Of The Republic Of Texas](#) (who had first arrived in Texas at Velasco among the New Orleans Greys in Oct-1835). Company E moved to Velasco in Sep-1836. Buegel also describes night-time sentry duty along the beach two miles from the fort, and that he scared off an attempt by three Mexican longboats to come ashore. He also describes a sea battle off Velasco, perhaps the incident where the *Independence* was defeated by *Vencedor del Alamo* and *Libertador* on 17-Apr-1837 (sometimes called the [Battle of the Brazos River](#)), capturing [William H. Wharton](#) who was a passenger [Dienst 1909, Douglas 1936]. Buegel also described the poor state of morale in his unit, ultimately leading to the burning of a barracks building. A hospital was also operated at Velasco, and eight Mexican prisoners (from the Battle of San Jacinto) were requisitioned by [Frederick A. Sawyer](#), acting Secretary of War, for use there from a large group working to build Fort Travis on Galveston Island [Sawyer 1836, Henson 1990].

In late Oct-1836, a visitor to Velasco from New Orleans aboard the schooner *Colonel Fannin* was [Francis Richard Lubbock](#) (later governor of Texas in 1861-1863), who wrote of his arrival “Velasco, on the left

bank of the Brazos, at its mouth, was at this time the chief port of the Republic, while Quintana, on the opposite side, was the seat of an extensive foreign trade. American Galveston had not then been established. The main business house here, and perhaps the largest in the whole country, was that of McKinney and Williams.” [Lubbock 1900 pp. 29-30], where he found his brother [Thomas S. Lubbock](#) employed. He apparently stayed at a new hotel, stating “On the very first day a schooner with quite a few passengers and a full cargo was wrecked upon the bar. It was said then that the Velasco bar was a hard sand bar, and when a vessel struck upon it she seldom escaped destruction. ... My first night was spent in a hotel kept by [J. M. \(John Milton\) Shreve](#), a Kentuckian (subsequently he was chief clerk of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas and I an assistant). His partner in the hotel proved to be [Benjamin F. Grayson](#), of my native town, Beaufort. He was a brother of Capt. Thos. W. Grayson.” [Lubbock 1900 pp. 33-34]. Afterwards, he traveled to Columbia, experiencing the heady days when the newly-elected government moved there, and decided to move to Texas. He returned to New Orleans, convinced his wife to move, and returned to Quintana and Velasco before year’s end, describing it as “Velasco was then the prospective seaport and commercial emporium that was cradled in the rich valley of the Brazos, and now again after half a century she lifts her head with buoyant hope of success.” [Lubbock 1900 pp. 35-43]. The last comment apparently refers to the “boom town” excitement when Velasco was moved upstream in the 1890’s.

In Feb-1837, [William Fairfax Gray](#) arrived by sea at Velasco aboard the schooner **Texas**. His diary gives us some excellent depictions of the area, including one of the better descriptions for the hazards of the Brazos bar: “About 4 o’clock (21-Feb-1837) we descried (caught sight of) the houses of Velasco and Quintana, and shortly after we were off the mouth of the river. The wind set strongly on shore, the surf ran high, with a great noise, and we now knew that it was these same breakers we had heard at daybreak, having then been off the mouth of the Brazos. The Captain concluded that the pilots could not come out, and determined to run in without one. He mistook the pass, and ran his vessel on the bar, where she thumped awfully. The squaresail sheet parted and the sail fell on deck, the jib sheet also parted, the vessel rolled on the bar, broached to, and several swells dashed over her broadside and was near sweeping the decks before the mainsail could be lowered. It was an awful moment; the Captain himself quailed, and the boldest held his breath for a time, for they thought the vessel would be a wreck, where many others had been before. The wreck of the **Flora**, of Middleton, lay a few hundred yards from us, having foundered on the same bar a few months before. By great exertion the mainsail was lowered, she obeyed the flying jib, and again got before the wind, and after a few more shakes which made her crack, she passed over the bar, and we floated under easy sail into the Brazos, passed Velasco, and rounded to at Quintana at sunset In the afternoon (22-Feb-1837) went over to Velasco with J. T. Gray, and saw the fort, Mexican prisoners, etc. ... Velasco has about one dozen poor houses, looks old and decaying. It is at the mouth of the river, on the east side. Quintana has four dwelling houses and one store; it is on the west side. The river is about 200 yards wide, and very deep; but the bar without the mouth has not more than six feet at its deepest pass. This will always retard the commercial prosperity of the port. There are no trees of any sort within several miles around.” [Gray 1837 pp. 201-202].

In early Jul-1837, a traveler named Thomas Rexford arrived at Velasco, after a six-week sea voyage aboard the **Belvadier** from New York. They had stopped at the mouth of the Mississippi, to obtain information about “Mexican cruisers”, and proceeded when the news was favorable. Rexford wrote in his journal that “The Village (or city as it is called) of Velasco ... contains about twenty houses; it has no

public buildings unless its Taverns, and Grog-shops 'of which there is a goodly number', can be termed as such ... On the west side of the River is a village plot laid out called Quintana with five or six houses. This, however, may be considered a part of Velasco as the harbor is common to both and the River only about three hundred yards broad There are large quantities of drift wood about the mouth of the River which serves the inhabitants for fuel and many other purposes: I took notice the Stock-ade fort was made of timber from the beach." [Rexford 1837].

This battery was apparently still in operation in 1840, when a visitor from the British diplomatic service described that it "...had an old brass 18-pounder with a touch-hole equivalent to the circumference of the mouth of Mrs. Sharpe (Sharp) – and 3 other small ones whose united ages amount to a greater number, than my arithmetic (which is fair to say was neglected in my youth) will permit me to calculate ..." [Sheridan 1954 p. 19]. Mrs. Sharp was Sarah Jane Wharton Calvit, the wife of [John Sharp](#), merchant, notary public and the United States consular agent at Velasco, who Sheridan had earlier described (p. 16) as "...a young lady, with beautiful eyes and an agreeable expression of countenance, but with a mouth of such dimensions, as entitles it to be compared only with the orifice which through which Harlequin jumps in the Pantomimes". Sheridan further describes the battery as having a [Liberty Pole](#), "... which rears high its stately head, crowned with a small beer barrel, intended to represent the Cap of Liberty, which I must take the liberty to represent, it hardly succeeds in doing". However, the battery appears to have been discontinued about this time, as the threat from Mexico decreased due to turmoil in that country [Pierce 1969]. Additional detailed history can be found about Velasco's use as a new thriving port, which later declined as Galveston developed [Guthrie 1993, Francaviglia 1998]. Eventually, the Brazos Bar proved too hazardous for increasingly larger ships, and with road and railway connections over a causeway, Galveston (and Houston) began to surpass Velasco as a port city.

In 1840, the **Lafitte** was the first steamboat built in Texas at or near Velasco by John Bradbury Follett (1795-1846), under contract with the firm of McKinney and Williams, for trade between the Brazos and Galveston, as reported by his son, Alexander Glass Follett [Follett 1895].

Early Statehood and Civil War Period (1846-1865)..... Forts Velasco #3 and #4

The town of Velasco existed afterwards for some decades, through the Civil War and beyond, but was itself largely abandoned in the late 1800's due to the hazard of hurricanes at its low-lying seaside location, and indeed the town was moved upstream about four miles in about 1891, becoming part of Freeport in 1957.

A map was made of the mouth of the Brazos, printed in 1858 with topographic data measured in 1852 [Bache 1858], shown in Figure 36 below. Please note the lack of buildings in Monument Square, the fact that the Battery is now gone, and that significant growth of the beach has occurred, with a new sandbar forming offshore on the Quintana side.

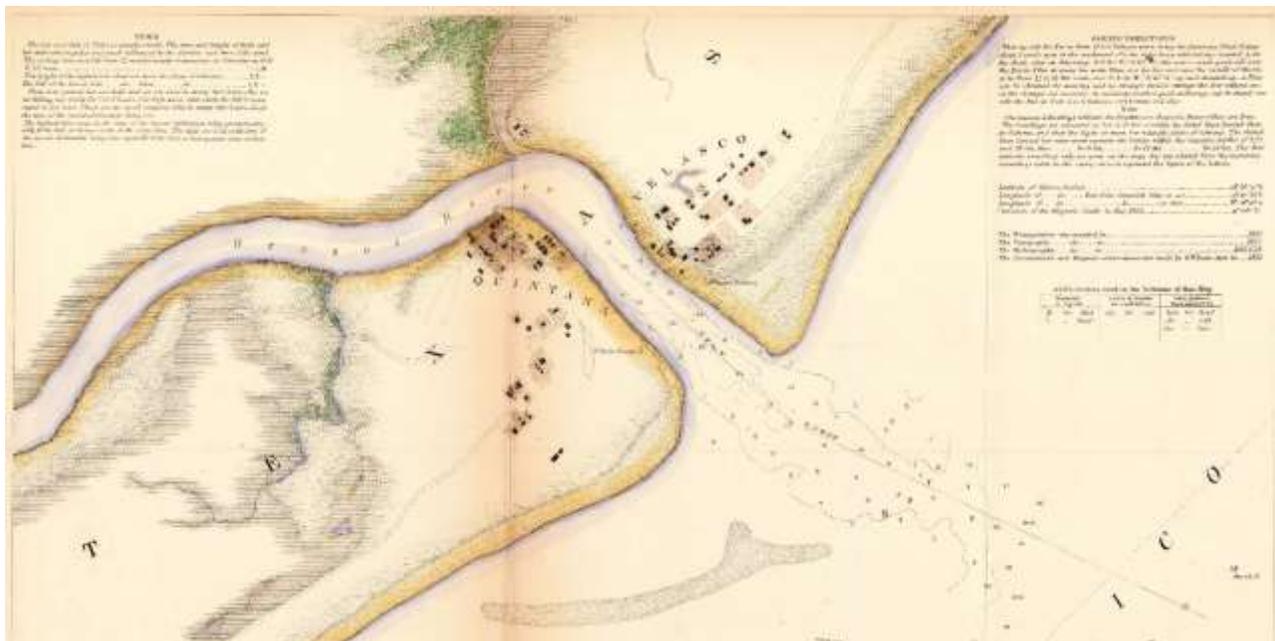


Figure 36: Upper portion of 1858 Bache Map of the Entrance to Brazos River by Coast Survey Office (digitized by BlueLine Print Shop, Freeport TX, from an original at BMNS)

During the Civil War, a series of artillery positions were constructed by the Confederate States Army, changed and improved over time, beginning with a simple earthen redoubt of two 18-pound cannons (known as the "Town Redoubt" or "Town Fort"), probably on new beachfront land closer to the gulf than the position of the former Republic Of Texas battery an example is shown in Figure 37 below). In Jan-1862, the Union ships *Midnight*, *Arthur* and *Rachel Seaman* engaged this shore battery, testing its strength and range [Barr 1961 p. 9].

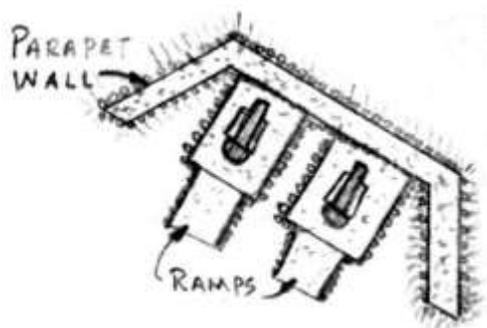


Figure 37: Artillery Redoubt at Velasco circa 1861-1862 (Courtesy: BCHM)

The redoubt was manned by two artillery companies belonging to the Thirteenth Texas Infantry regiment, utilizing at least one eighteen-pound cannon on 11-Aug-1862 to drive off a Union warship [Barr 1961]. This regiment was commanded by [Joseph Bates](#), a local planter appointed as Colonel in the Confederate Army, and for whom Fort Bates (Quintana side) was named. Soldiers posted to this Fort Velasco and nearby camp published their own handwritten weekly newspaper entitled "The Drum Tap", and two issues are known to exist (for 14- and 28-Jun-1862). The surviving issues are two pages each with three columns per page, written in a chatty manner with sarcastic humor, often writing about unit

resizing (known as “razeering”), elections for officers, and general disdain for quartermasters, sutlers and outside suppliers (especially “Brazorians”). Lack of quantity and quality of rations, coffee and uniforms is a frequent topic. The first page of the Issue No. 10 (28-Sep-1862) is illustrated below in Figure 38.

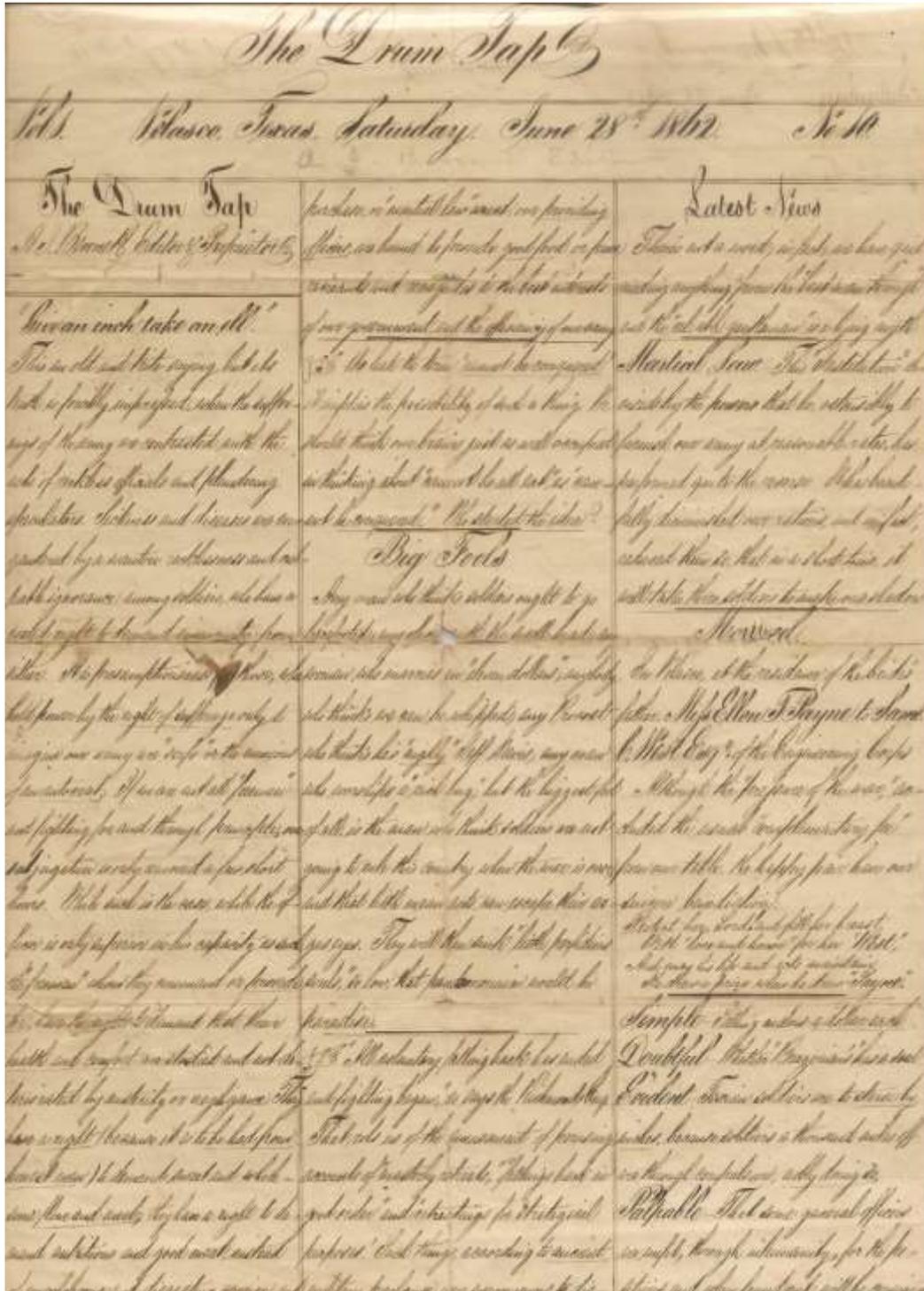


Figure 38: “The Drum Tap” – handwritten newspaper for Civil War Fort Velasco in 1862

The location of this early redoubt is shown in a large hand-drawn map of the central Texas coast by Confederate Army Capt. Tipton Walker from the early Civil War era [Walker 1862, sheet 2 of 3]. A close-up of the Velasco portion is shown in Figure 39 below. The location of Monument Square is marked in this map by a tent-like image, perhaps indicating an encampment used by soldiers in the early part of the war. About five miles upstream, a floating barrier of live-oak logs was also erected across the river, originally guarded by a battery of two 8-inch siege howitzers on the right bank; however, a second battery of two 12-pound siege guns were added on the left bank [Boyd et al 2014 p. 6].

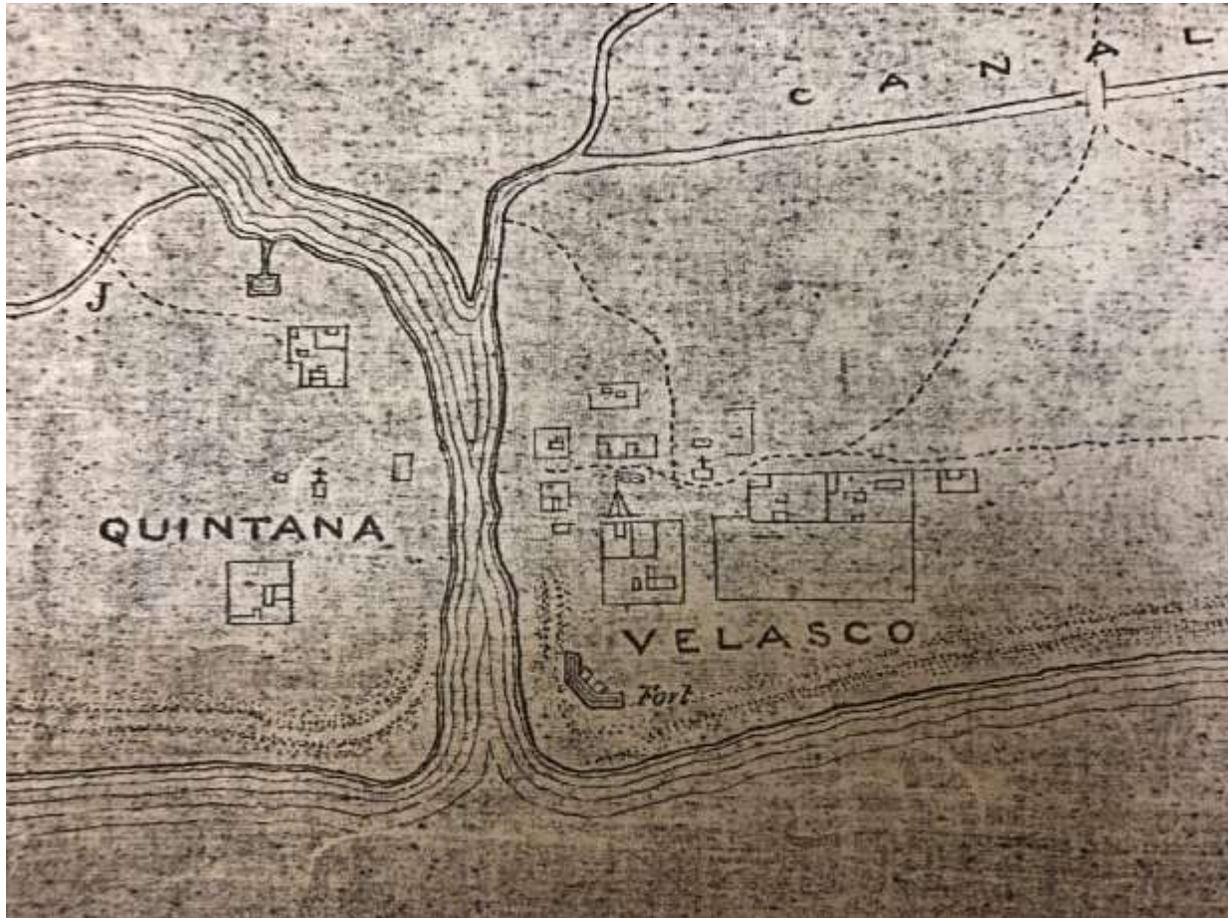


Figure 39: Detail of Tipton Walker map, National Archives Record Group 77, Civil War Map File Z 343

Another map (Figure 40) indicates a row of pilings was also erected across the mouth of the river as a defensive barrier, and that the “Town Redoubt” was also named Fort Velasco [Unknown 1863], with a similar “Fort Quintana” across the river. The British-flagged schooner **Rob Roy** had run the blockade into the Brazos in Sep-1863 looking for a load of cotton, and was commandeered by the Confederates for a few weeks to install the pilings [Wilson 2020 pp. 85-87]. This circa-1863 map also shows a ferry crossing from Quintana over the Brazos to a road along East Union Bayou and canal (labeled as “Covered Way”) leading to a structure at the canal crossing northeast of Velasco marked as *Tête de pont*, a term for a military work to protect a bridge. A similar structure is shown on the road over West Union Bayou into Quintana.

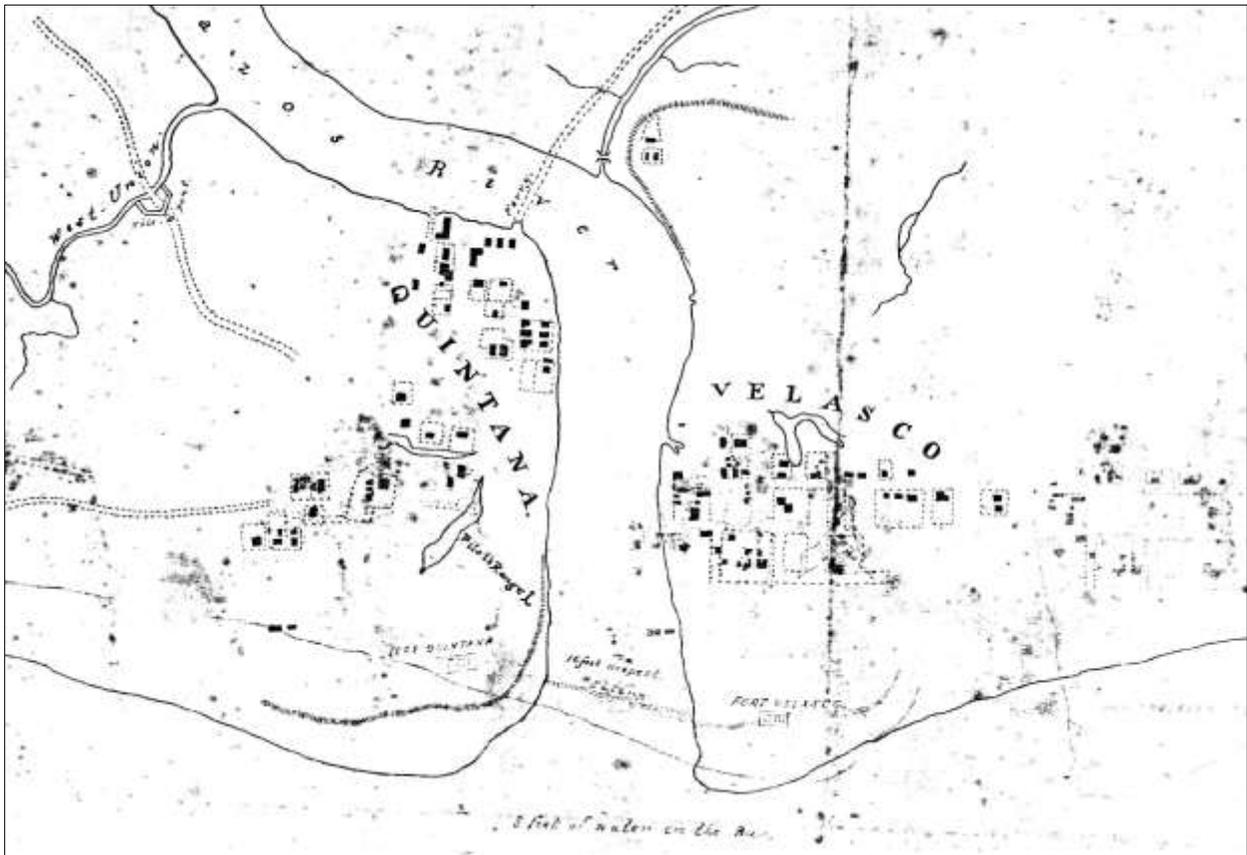


Figure 40: Close-up of Velasco/Quintana portion of National Archives map Z51-9, circa 1863 (the fort on the Velasco side is labeled as Fort Velasco)

The forts shown in Figures 39 and 40 are apparently the ones described by Commodore [Henry Haywood Bell](#) aboard the [USS Brooklyn](#) in his diary entry of 1-Jun-1863 – “Saw in the river at Velasco one steamer and one schooner. A newly-built fort on the Quintana side, and 100 tents adjacent On the Velasco side the battery is not so prominent; situated near the water and to the south of the white house with colonnades, some 40 or 50 men there in the rear of the fort.” [Bell 1863]. The “white house” is presumed to be the Archer-Herndon House [Smith Sep-2014]. In 1932, Mrs. T. A. Humphries wrote “On a sandy ridge in the neighborhood of the coast guard station, stands a clump of gnarled salt cedars and the crumbling ruins of a huge brick cistern. They are all that remains of the palatial summer home of the Herndons this spot was occupied by a stately white mansion, surrounded by wide porches and supported by solid colonial columns. It was the tallest house along the coast and could be seen so far at sea that it became a landmark. It stood on the highest point of land and was used as a lookout by the neighborhood. The house was surrounded by salt cedars and oleanders. Hidden among the shrubbery was an icehouse with concrete walls. In the spring of each year, a shipload of ice was brought from the north, carefully packed in sawdust, and stored for their use in the summer. In order that enemy ships should not enter the Brazos, the Confederate soldiers barred the channel with live oak logs driven into the bottom of the stream.” [Humphries 1932]. This original Archer-Herndon house was reported as destroyed in the 1875 hurricane [Smith Sep-2014].

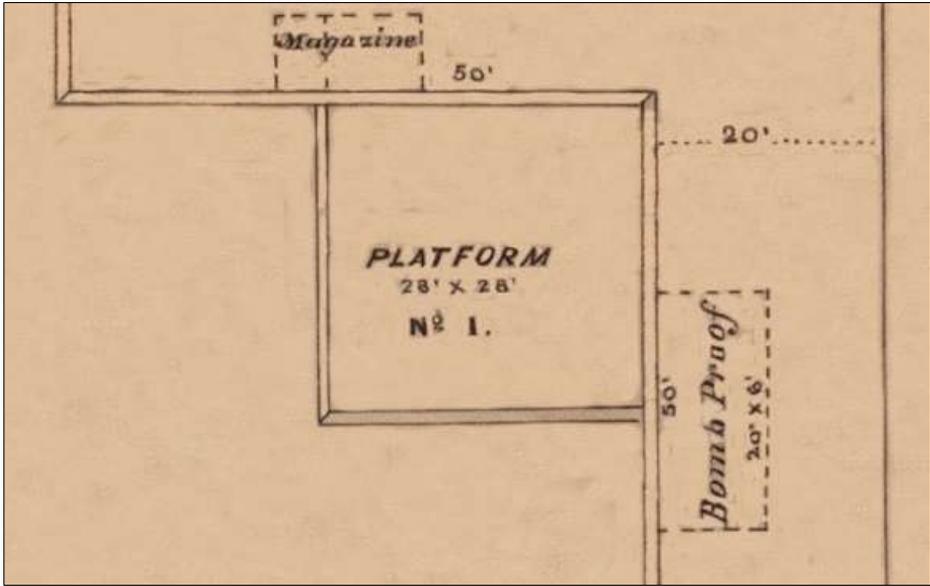
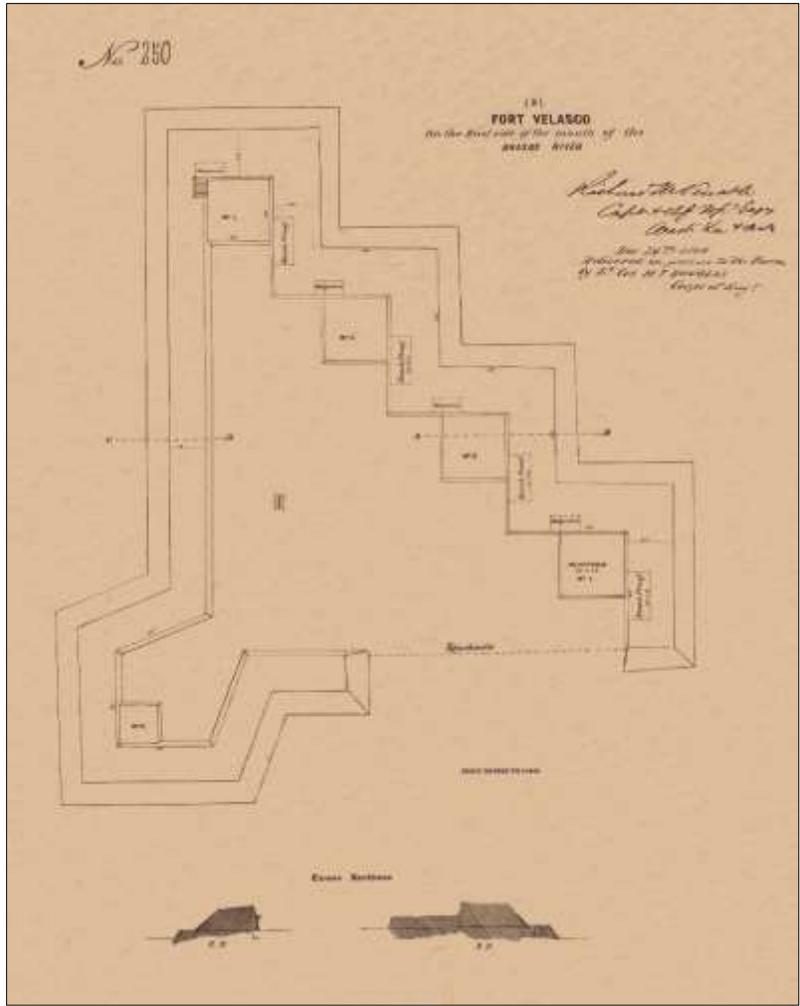


Figure 41: Civil War fort built at Velasco in 1863-1864, labeled as Fort Velasco (original + detail) from [Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection](#), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Stained original modified with Photoshop by Christiane Louise Kneupper

Due to the strategic importance of the Brazos River for blockade runners, work at Velasco eventually resulted in a formal five-gun-platform fortification known as Fort Sulakowski or Fort Velasco, completed in the winter of 1863-1864 adjacent to the town [Freeman 1995], and suspected to have existed at or near the south corner of Surfside-platted Block 568, shown in Figure 41 above labeled as Fort Velasco (No. 250) [Unknown 1864a]. Armament consisted of one 30-pound Parrot gun, one 32-pounder Navy gun, one 24-pound and one 18-pound Sea coast guns, and one 12-pounder [Cross 1864, Freeman 1995]. So effective was this battery that blockading Union warships estimated in early 1864 that it had six 32-pounders, and never engaged them for any period of time [Barr 1961 p. 29].

The fort was built under the supervision of Lt. Abram (or Abraham) Cross for his commander, Valery Sulakowski (who designed it), then Chief Engineer for the Confederate States Army for the District of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The fort was labeled as Fort Sulakowski in one of Cross' reports [Cross 1864] where he reported completion on 11-Jan-1864 – see item 1 in Figure 42 below. The Velasco fort complex was but one of several such forts built at or near the Brazos River mouth in this period, and similar Civil-War-era forts existed across the river at [Quintana](#) (Fort Bates, also known as Fort Quintana) and about a mile upriver (Fort Terrell, also known as Fort Bend); this last site being thought lost due to riverbank erosion in the 65 years after its founding [Freeman et al 1997, Freeman 1998].

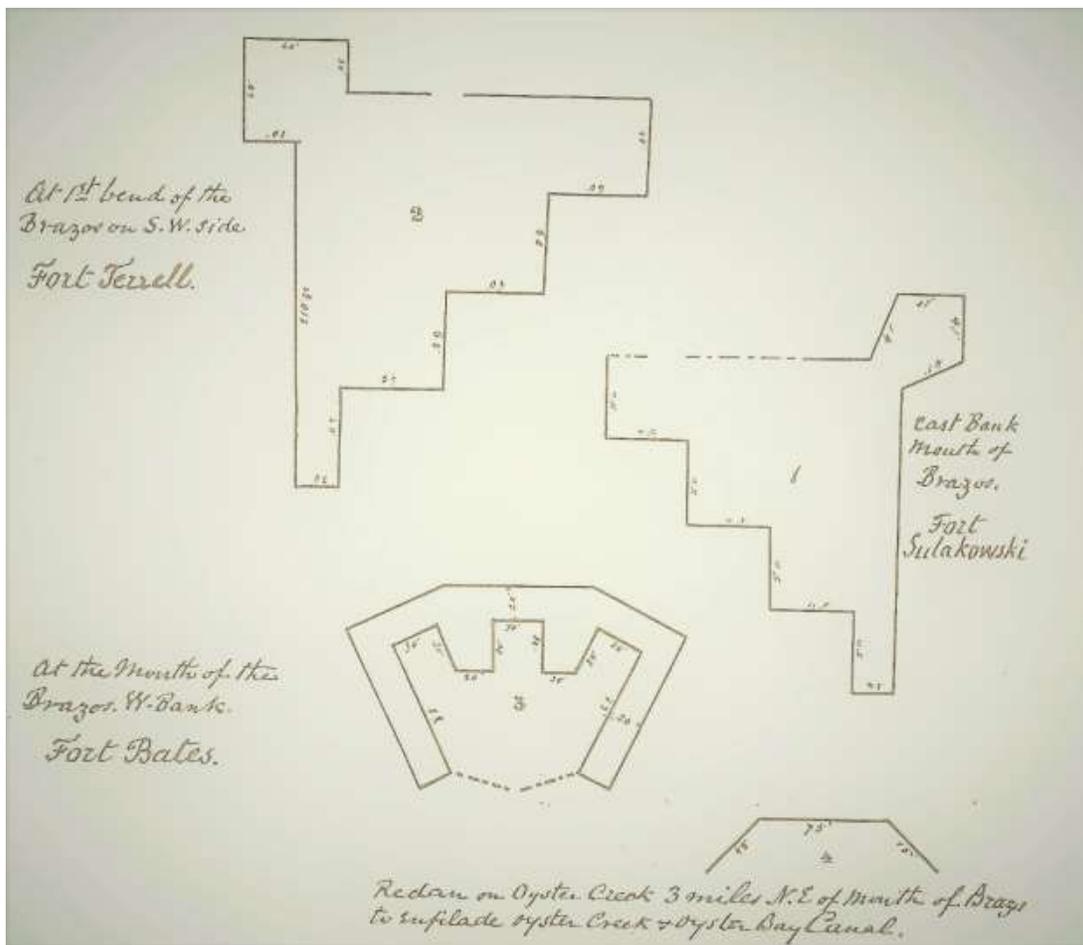


Figure 42: from [Cross 1864]; shown in [Freeman 1995, Figure 9] (Courtesy: Prewitt & Associates)

Detailed diagrams of these other forts can also be found in the [Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection](#), labeled as [Redan on Oyster Creek](#) (No. 235), [Fort Quintana](#) (No. 251), [Fort on Bend of River](#) (No. 252) but also a drawing of [Redoubt on Oyster Creek Road](#) (No. 245) not shown in Cross' report. Thus, it appears there were two works that protected the Oyster Creek area, with the redoubt perhaps constructed later. A drawing for the bridge across East Union Bayou is also found there, indicating it was some type of pontoon or barge-type bridge, labeled as [Boat Bridge across East Union Canal](#). There is also an overall map of the entire area, nicely showing the locations of and the roads leading to these works [Unknown 1864b], shown in Figure 43 below.

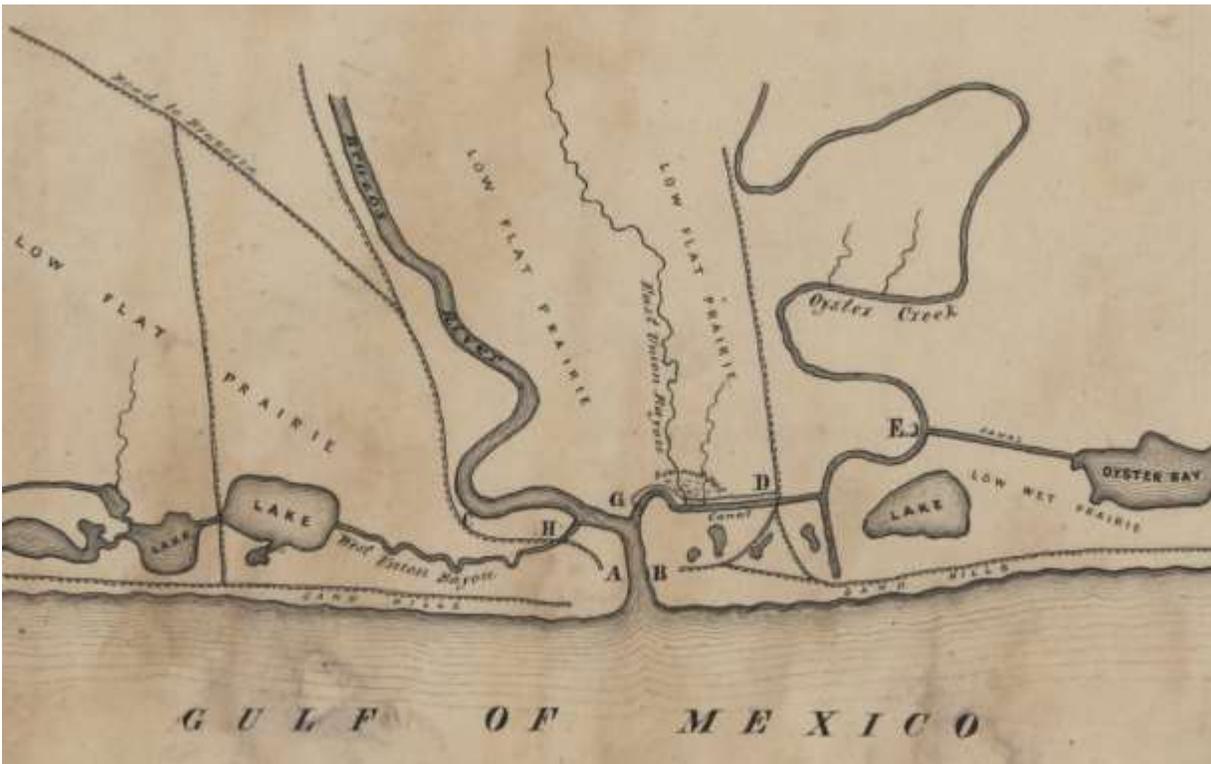


Figure 43: Detail from “Map Shewing Locations of Works at the Mouth of the Brazos” (original from [Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection](#), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

These forts were thick stacked-earth embankments topped with sod, with the guns [en barbette](#), since brick forts (such as Fort Sumter) were by-then considered obsolete [Barr 1961 p. 3]. The Brazos forts resembled Fort Moultrie in coastal South Carolina, an area where Valery Sulakowski had worked earlier in the war (see Figure 44 below). It was also reported that, during this time, the large number of Confederate troops at Velasco scavenged material from the nearby site of the 1832 fort [Looscan 1898].



Figure 44: Fort Moultrie by Conrad Wise Chapman
 (from website at <https://deadconfederates.com/tag/valery-sulakowski/>)

During the period of construction, Dr. Thomas B. Grayson, a surgeon with the Army, was stationed at Velasco, and he wrote a short passage in a Christmas 1863 letter home *“During the past ten or twelve days quite a number of schooners have run the blockade at this port. A majority of them, so Madam Rumor says, are loaded with gun, ammunition and army stores for ‘Old Jeff’.* On Wednesday, the Yankees played quite ‘a trick’ on our pilots. A schooner came in sight and as is usual with the ‘blockade running’, made a signal for a pilot. Three pilots, not thinking but what it was a vessel desiring to come into our port, jumped in a yawl and went out to them, when to their great surprise they found it was a Yankee boat. They took the pilots on board, carried them out on sea some thirty miles, when they allowed them to take the yawl and make to shore if they could, which they succeeded in doing about 12 o’clock last night. They in future, will I guess, be rather particular before they board another boat.” He also wrote about a schooner that grounded nearby, which soldiers had to guard from Yankee gunboats, while recovering its cargo of guns and powder [Grayson 1863].

The redoubt on the Brazos-Galveston Canal was remembered by a nearby resident, Susan Adaline “Addie” Hudgins Follett (1876-1977), as being near the Velasco bridge over the canal where her grandfather was the bridge tender and toll collector. She wrote *“Across the bridge, on the north side of the canal, was what was locally called ‘Mud Fort’.* The inhabitants had built it hastily during the Civil War when the Yankee blockade vessels were patrolling the Gulf of Mexico, trying to keep out shipments of flour, salt, ammunition, and other necessities Men with teams (oxen or horses), scrapers, plows and shovels dug a moat about eighteen or twenty feet wide all around the fort area. The material was thrown to the inside, raising the elevation, with part of it being piled higher, forming a breastwork on the side facing the canal. I don’t think it was ever used during the war. It was on Grandpa’s land.” Later in her document, she wrote *“A few years ago when the canal was widened on the north side, the dredge cut into and destroyed the ‘old fort’.* Now the spot is taken over by the Surfside Bridge Marina. Thus, end the ‘OLD MUD FORT’ – UNWEPT, UNHONORED AND UNSUNG, THE MUD FORT’S DEMISE!” [Follett

1983]. She also mentioned that the canal bridge rotated to allow boats to pass, since it pivoted atop a pedestal on the south bank.

A rough map was published in an article in the New York Herald in 1864 (see Figure 45 below), which apparently shows the new forts at the mouth of the Brazos [Keim 1864] as estimated from Yankee warships offshore; the article stating "... north of the river, is situated Velasco ... Here the enemy has constructed his main fort, which mounts three guns, and has also assembled here a sizeable force". Please note that the Velasco fort (marked as "Main Fort") is shown to be abutting the town and on the river-side of a house labeled as "Story House Porticoed", thought to be the Archer-Herndon House. The map appears to be derivative of the 1858 Bache map, but the illustrator may have chosen an incorrect structure on the map for the "porticoed" house.



Figure 45: Map found in New York Herald, 9-Jan-1864

Post-Civil War Period

In 1888, an update of the Bache map was accomplished (Figure 48 below) by the same agency, then known as the [U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey](#) (USCGS), showing that Velasco had many fewer structures (mostly due to damaging hurricanes mentioned previously), with no evidence of any of the Velasco fortifications, although the site of Fort Terrell was shown on the extreme left edge, marked as “Old Fort”.

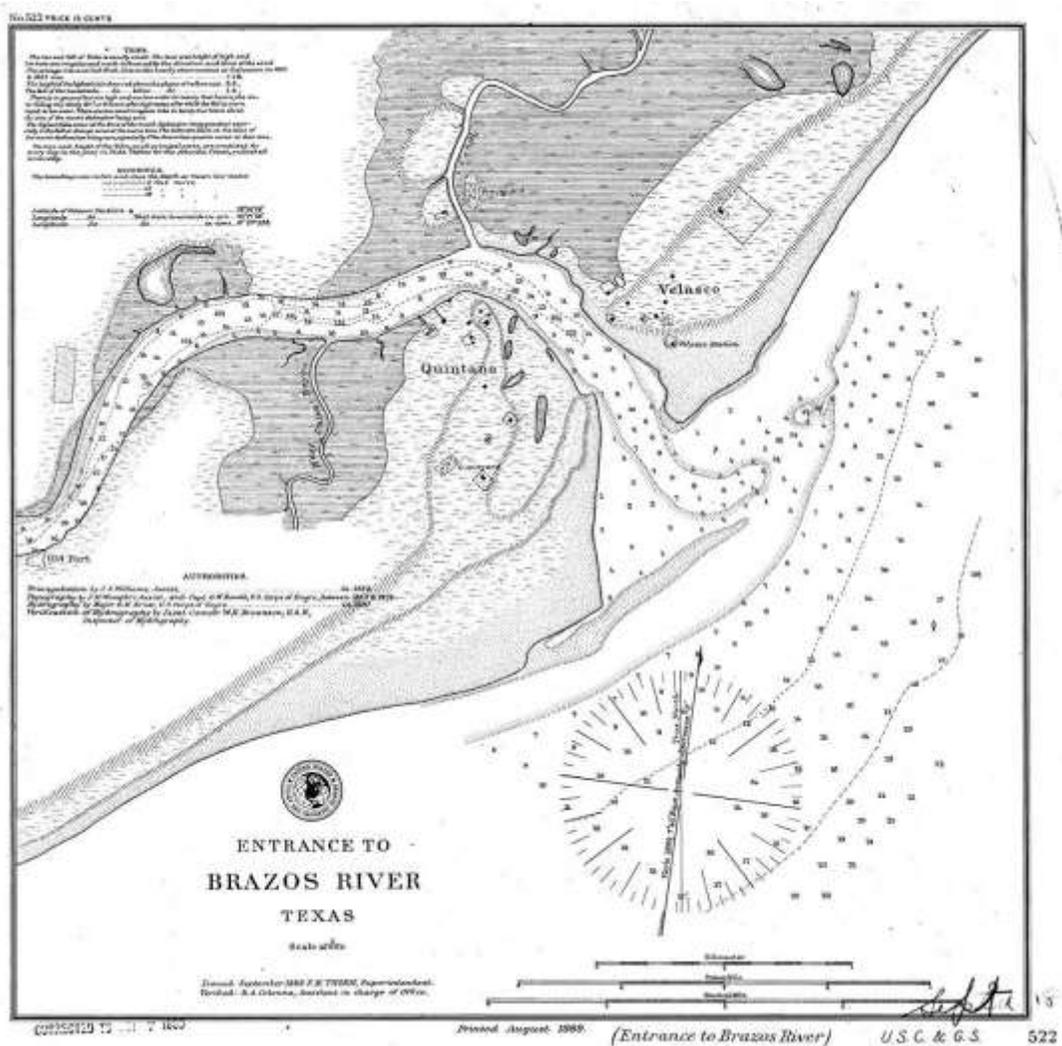


Figure 48: 1888 Map (full size + detail) by United States Coast and Geodetic Survey (Courtesy: BCHM)

In 1889, as the first actual jetty construction was begun by the Brazos River Channel And Dock Company, an attempt was made to finance the project with bonds on the English market, so the British harbor expert [Sir John Coode](#) was asked to evaluate the plans [Wisner 1891]. After his son came to Brazoria County to collect data and measurements, they prepared a report including four map drawings. Drawing #1 (227 x 106 cm) was a “General Plan” showing the Brazos River and Oyster Creek north to about [Chenango](#), railroads to north of [Arcola](#), and the new jetties under construction; Drawing #2 (370.5 x 111.2 cm) was a “Plan of Brazos River” showing the last few miles of the Brazos River including many fine details and a proposed town of Brazos (soon to be the location of new Velasco), shown in Figure 49 below; Drawing #3 (121.3 x 68.5 cm) showed seven figures of the Brazos mouth as it had changed over time. There is a fourth drawing (142.2 x 96 cm) showing the lands of the Texas Land And Immigration Company in Brazoria County, not apparently made by Coode but perhaps given to him so these lands could be drawn into his other three drawings. All originals are at the Briscoe Center, mounted on a canvas backing, and stored in a rolled condition [Coode 1890]. A framed and mounted copy of Drawing #3 was later located at BMNS. High-resolution photos of the Briscoe originals were made in Jan-2020 at our request (di_11904 through di_11907).



Figure 49: Sir John Coode Drawing #2 of the mouth of the Brazos River in 1890 (370.5 x 111.2 cm)

The author was allowed to make cell phone photos of portions (close-ups) of the originals, and are shown below in Figures 50-52. Drawing #2 also indicates the location of the live-oak-log obstruction from the Civil War near the location of new Velasco (now Riverside Park in Freeport), an area shown in Figure 50. Figure 51 shows the Velasco/Quintana area, and Figure 52 shows the jetties under construction. Interestingly, these drawings indicate the use of “[wing dams](#)” at the river’s mouth and along the river-side of the jetties, remnants of which were once observed along the muddy bank before the harbor widening of the early 1990’s. Drawing #2 also shows the location of an “Old Fort” (Fort Terrell), perhaps derivative of the 1889 USCGC map. Similar to the 1888 USCGS map, it also shows the location of a “Graveyard” along East Bayou near to its mouth on the Brazos River. This cemetery was the burial ground for old Velasco, and has been known in recent years as the “Kramer Cemetery” or “Shannon Family Cemetery”, but was lost to history once a new larger and straighter section of the [Gulf Intracoastal Waterway](#) (aka Intracoastal Canal) was built through the area in the period of 1938-1940, separating its location from old Velasco/Surfside. One of three Shannon graves known from family records to be there was James Thompson Shannon (1818-1883). Six identifiable graves of the Kramer family were moved in 1973 to Gulf Prairie Cemetery in Jones Creek, since the area was subsequently

dredged away in expansion of the Intracoastal Canal and adjacent port facilities. Graves of other notable persons (including historians) are listed in Appendix 3.

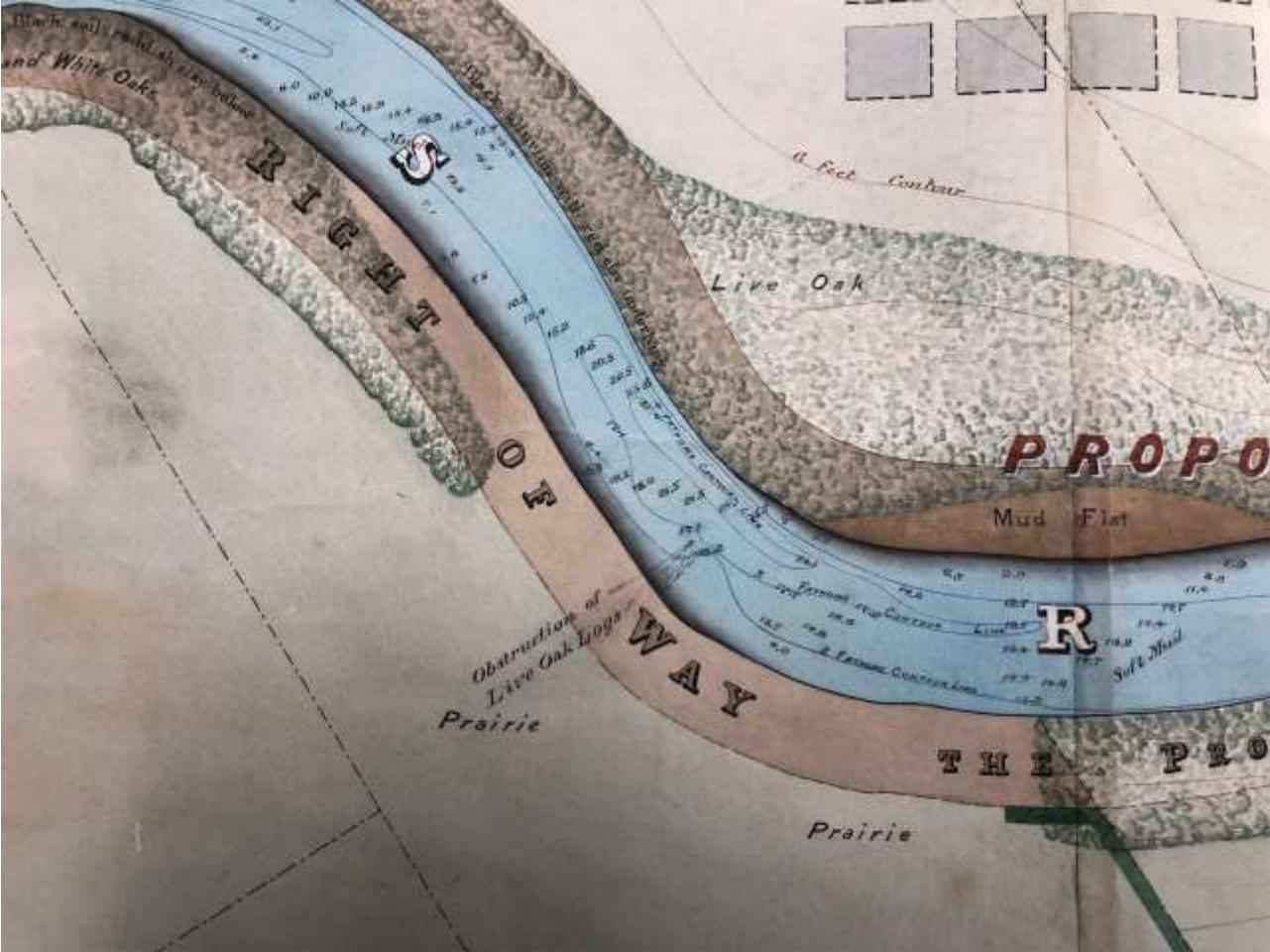


Figure 50: close-up of Coode Drawing #2 focusing on Live Oak Log Obstruction



Figure 51: close-ups of Coode Drawing #2 in Velasco/Quintana area

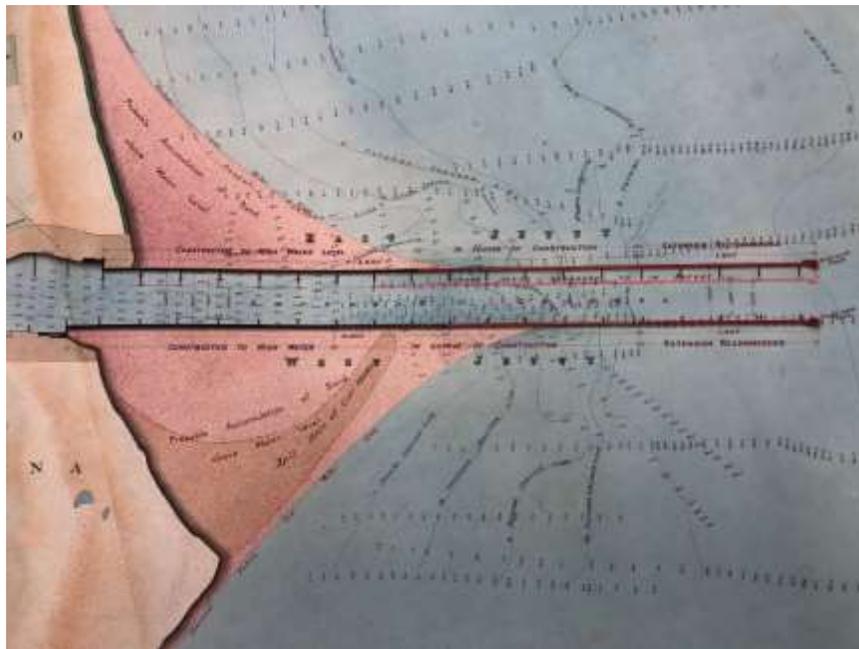


Figure 52: close-up of Coode Drawing #2 showing jetties under construction

The Coode Drawing #3 is shown in Figure 53 below. It graphically shows the appearance of the Brazos mouth at seven points between 1858 and Nov-1889.

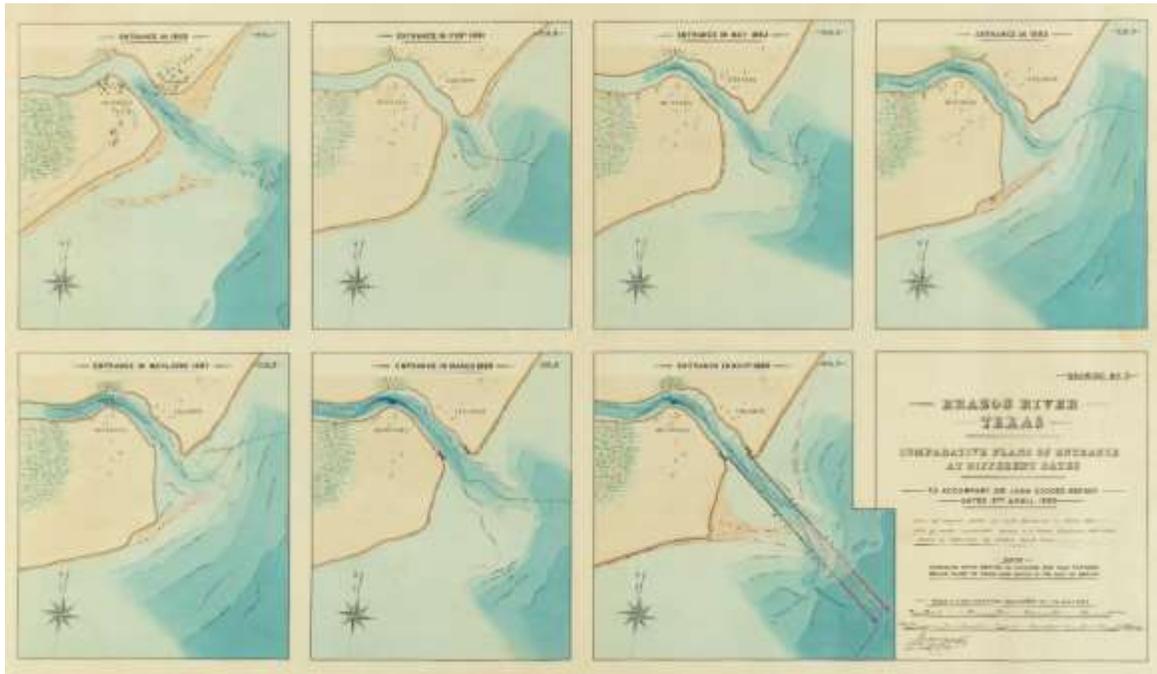


Figure 53: photo duplication of Coode Drawing #3

The Coode Drawing #2 is the only known historical map that actually labels individual houses at Velasco and Quintana (critically, the “Shannon” and “Herndon” houses), the construction period of the first jetties, and Drawing #3 shows how the beach grew in the period of 1858 to 1889. This “Herndon house” seems to be an outbuilding or new structure built after the 1875 hurricane, in the west end of that property. These maps apparently were accompanied by a written report on the jetty project, although our efforts to locate a copy of the report in 2019 have been unsuccessful. A small excerpt and some comments about it, though, can be found in [Wisner 1891 pp. 529-530].

There was apparently another survey of the Brazos by the USCGS soon after in 1891 entitled “Map of the Brazos River, Texas”, and two close-ups of the Velasco area are shown in Figure 54 below. It is notable since it shows some details for houses and a cistern in Velasco Block 13, remnants of which were found in later archaeological excavations. The subsequent updates of the USCGS map in 1904 and 1912 continue to show houses (presumably identified as the Shannon and Herndon houses by comparison to the Coode map), so it is assumed that they survived the 1900 hurricane, although this is unclear since both maps indicate the topography was from 1897.

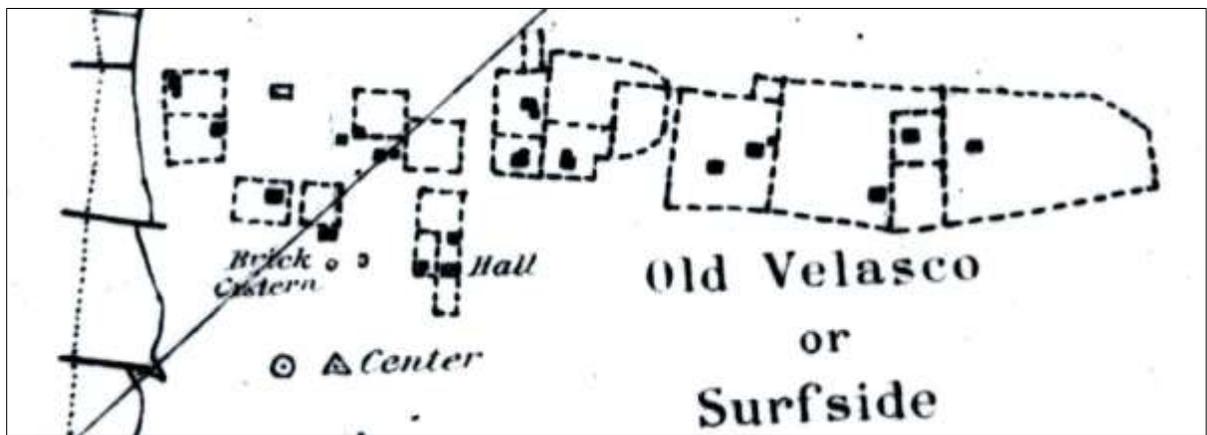
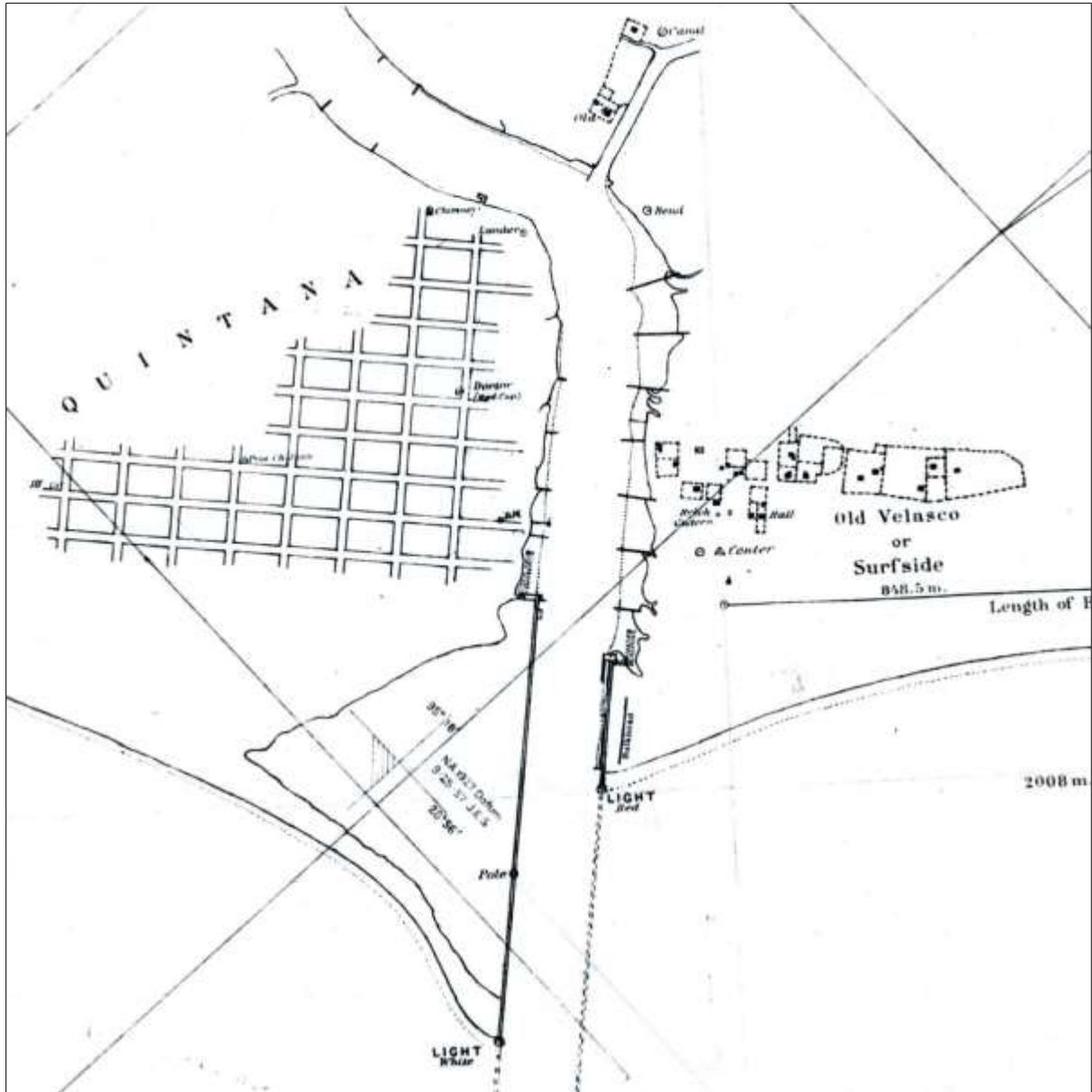


Figure 54: Velasco detail from 1891 USCGS map (Courtesy: BCHM)

In this period, there was great hope that the jetty project would allow the Brazos to develop as a major deep-water port, which did not really develop at the time, as Mother Nature continued to make things difficult (major floods in 1899 and 1913, hurricanes in 1900, 1915 and 1932). However, there was a real estate boom in and around the new town in the 1890's. At that time, the site of new Velasco also became a destination for hunting and fishing parties, as seen in one photo from 1891 (Figure 55) at the Capitol Saloon - so named since Velasco was once capitol of the [Ad Interim government](#) for the new Republic of Texas.

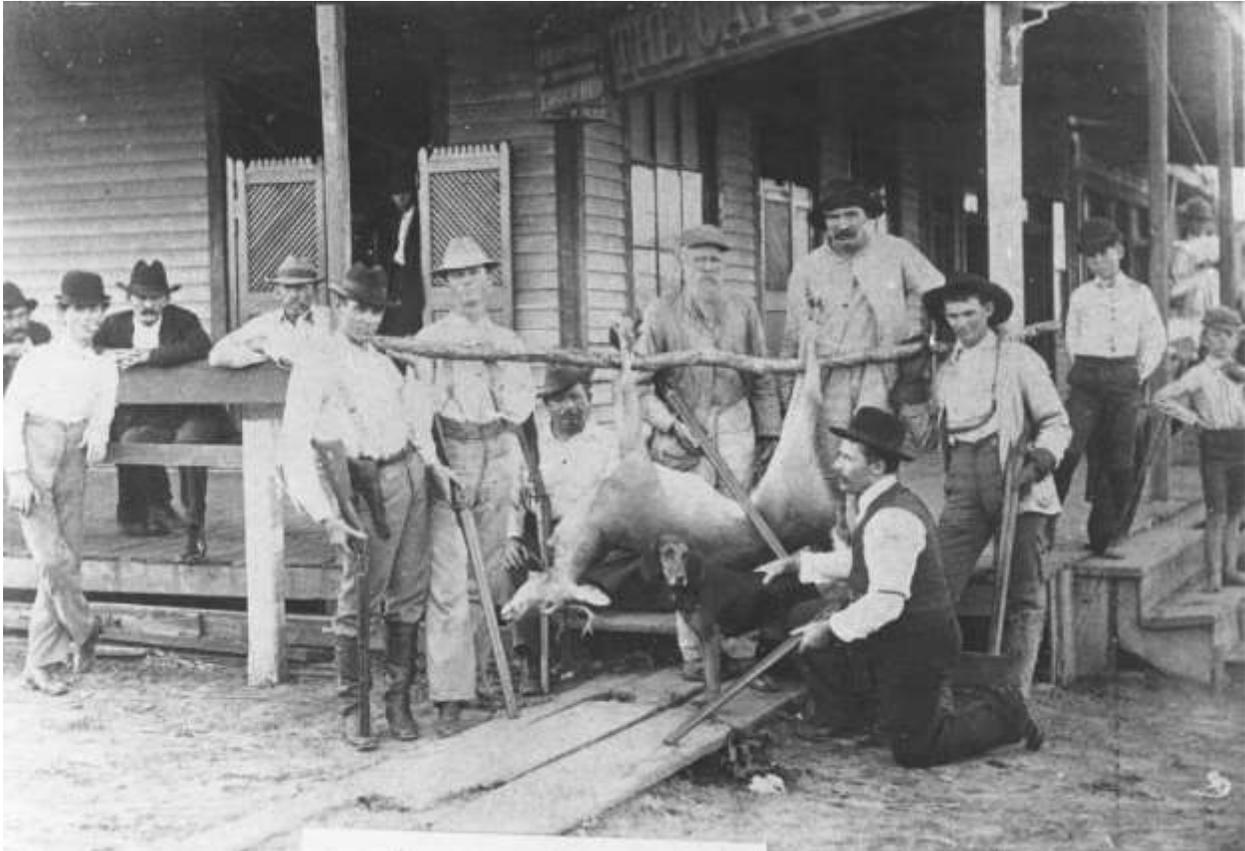


Figure 55: Hunting party at the Capitol Saloon in Velasco, circa 1891 (BCHM photo 1986.049p.0005)

A large fold-up brochure (60 x 92 cm, folded into 27 panels), printed on behalf of the Brazos River Channel and Dock Company, was widely circulated. The front side is shown below in Figure 56.



Figure 56: brochure for “The First and Only Deep Water Port on the Texas Coast” (Courtesy: Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas, Map #1189A)

The other side had 27 small panels, often with wildly enthusiastic or exaggerated claims, and can be seen in a [full view of both sides preserved at the Portal to Texas History](#). Two of the panels are reproduced in Figure 56A below. Only in more recent decades, has this vision been realized by the Brazos River Harbor Navigation District (now [Port Freeport](#)).

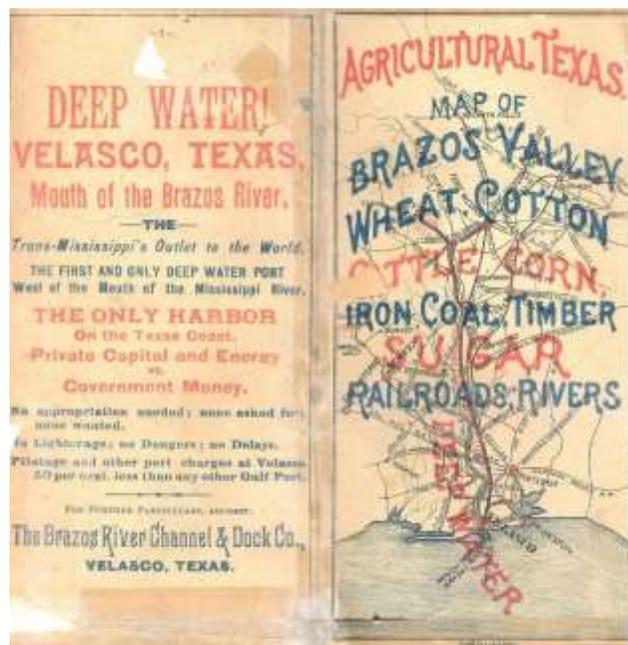


Figure 56A: Two panels from back side of brochure for “The First and Only Deep Water Port on the Texas Coast” (Courtesy: BCHM)

The hotel shown in the upper central part of Figure 56, known sometimes simply as “The Velasco”, was built in late 1891 in new Velasco by the Brazos River Channel And Dock Company, as mentioned in a new weekly newspaper, *The Velasco Times* ([many issues](#) have been preserved, also at the Portal to Texas History). This hotel is also mentioned on rear panel 27 of the brochure. Its location was near the intended wharves as seen in the map-like image on the right side of Figure 56 entitled “View of the Jetties”. A detail of this area is shown in Figure 56B below. Its grounds occupied an entire city block, today bounded by South Avenue A and B, and Caldwell St. and North Velasco Blvd. (across the street from today’s Maria’s Kitchen restaurant), with its back near and facing Caldwell St. and its front facing North Velasco Blvd. (southeast direction, to catch prevailing winds?). The BCHM has a number of old photographs of the as-built hotel ([01](#), [02](#), [03](#), [04](#), [05](#), [06](#), [07](#)), and also views from an upper floor (most probably the open gazebo or cupola – [08](#), [09](#), [10](#), [11](#)) with some of these showing an inundated Velasco during the 1899 Brazos River flood ([12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#)) or after the 1900 hurricane ([17](#)). The Velasco Hotel was “blown down” in the 1900 hurricane [Carlton 1938]. Figure 56B also shows the nearby railroad depot.

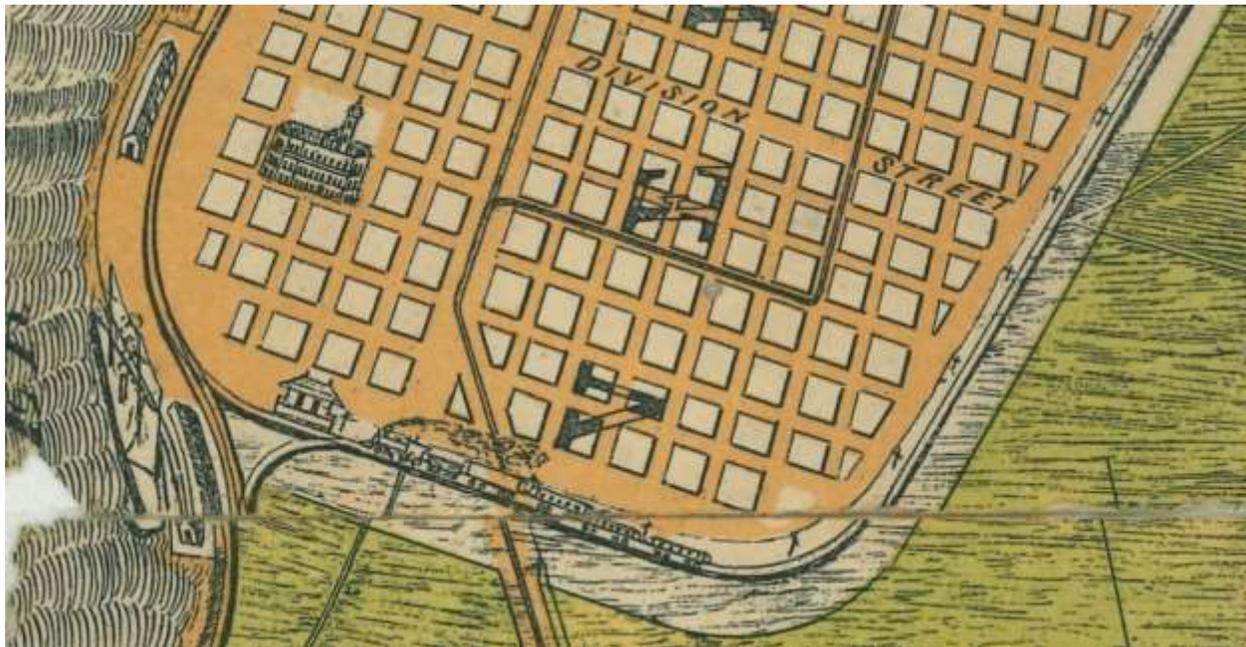


Figure 56B: High-resolution detail from “View of the Jetties” – new Velasco portion (courtesy: BCHM)

A similar but separate hotel was built in 1892 near the beach at Surfside, and it can be seen in “View of the Jetties” (Figure 56) near where Gulf Boulevard would meet the beach, today on property owned by the Cradle of Texas Conservancy (CTC) just east of where Hwy-332 ends at the beach. A detail from this area is shown below in Figure 56C.



Figure 56C: High-resolution detail from “View of the Jetties” – Surfside portion (Courtesy: BCHM)

An existing Lifesaving Station is also seen in the image near the beach about five blocks east of the Surfside Hotel. A lighthouse is also drawn in “View of the Jetties” (not actually built until 1896), on the outside of the first bend of the Brazos River from the Gulf. These two structures survived the 1900 hurricane. Accounts from Alvin, Lake Jackson and Velasco indicate the “eye” of the hurricane passed over those areas.

The original Surfside Hotel was opened on 16-May-1892 by the Brazos River Channel And Dock Company (as indicated in rear panel 10 of the brochure from Figure 56), and had a [similar design](#) to the Velasco Hotel, so the two are often confused. Its original as-built configuration is shown below in Figure 57 from a pre-1900 photograph by Martin Armstrong, which also had a [nearby dance pavilion](#) down the beach nearer the river. Another photo at BCHM appears misidentified as the Velasco Hotel, but appears to be a [side and rear view of the Surfside Hotel under construction](#). This hotel was apparently damaged in the 1900 storm but survived and was repaired circa 1903-1904 [Glenn 2019]. It has been reported as burned in 1904 or 1905 [Creighton 1975 p. 316], although we have found no newspaper accounts confirming such dates. In 1906, it was advertised as being new, and photographs of the period by E. F. Roeller show a different (perhaps remodeled, perhaps totally new) structure – [01](#), [02](#), [03](#), [04](#). We have found newspaper accounts that it did burn down to ashes on Sunday, 4-Aug-1907 [Unknown 1907].



Figure 57: The original Surfside Hotel (Courtesy: BCHM; extracted from Photo 1984.011p.0011)

The new newspaper (*The Velasco Times*, later [Velasco Daily Times](#)), published from 1891 to 1893, was a staunch advocate for new Velasco. On more than one occasion, the paper published one particular image of the new jetties, reproduced below as Figure 58.

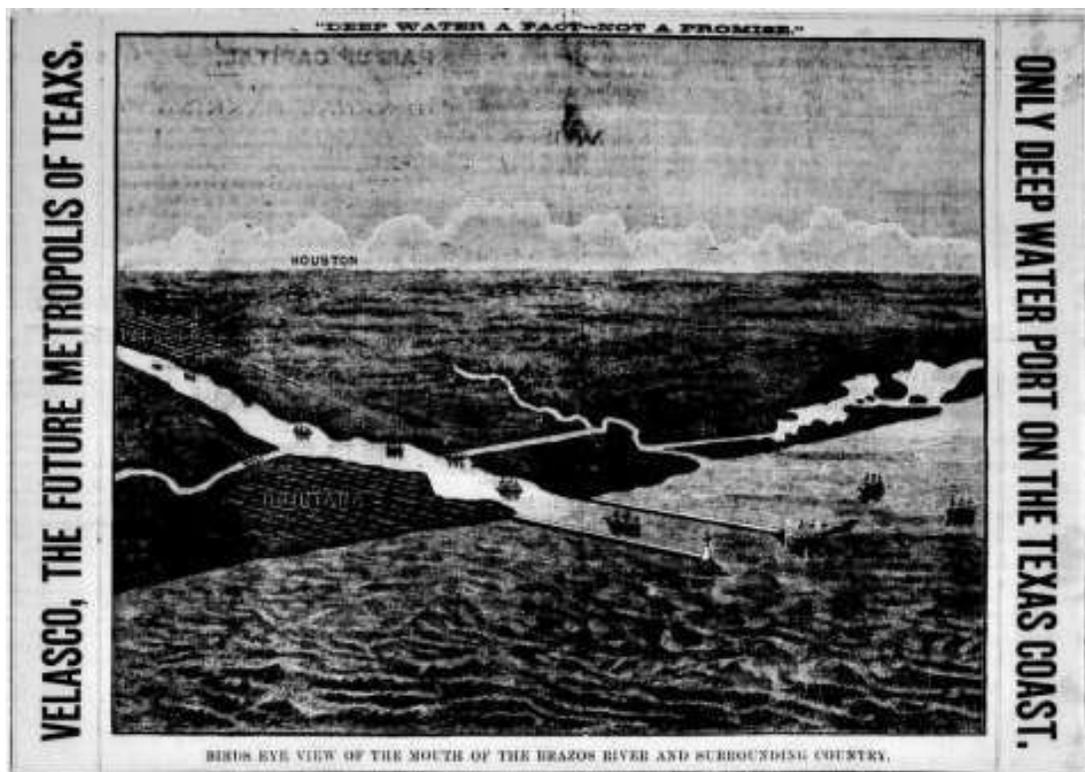


Figure 58: Bird Eye's View of the mouth of the Brazos River, Velasco Times issue of 14-Nov-1891

In the period of 1887-1888, a station had been established at old Velasco by the [U. S. Life-saving Service](#), known as [Velasco Station](#), to be located near the beach one-and-a-half miles northeast of the river. A spare boathouse was reported built in about 1910 on leased land adjacent to the Brazos River. The original Life-saving Station was reported damaged by a Dec-1913 flood (being left on an island), and was destroyed by a 1915 hurricane [BCHM Vertical File-Coast Guard]. An old photo from this period is shown below in Figure 59.



Figure 59: Velasco Life-Saving Station (Pre-1915)
Courtesy: BCHM (Photo 1985.099p.0001)

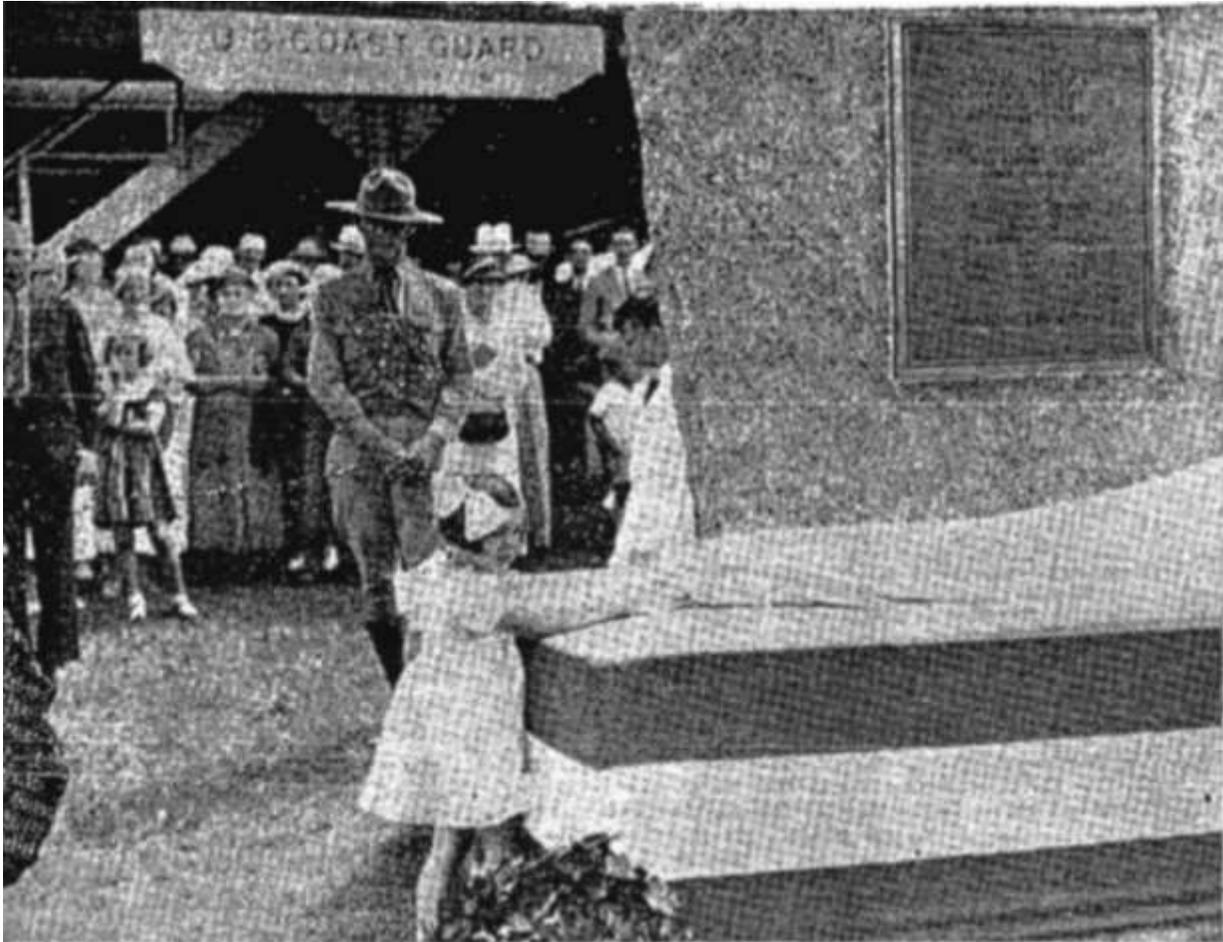
The exact location of the 1887-1915 station has been a bit of a mystery; however, close examination of the 1914 version of the USCGS chart reveals its location just northeast of the mouth of Oyster Creek (see Figure 60 below, marked with a red arrow), in agreement with that shown in Figure 56C. A point there is marked as L.S.S. (elsewhere on the chart, this abbreviation is identified as "life saving station"). It also indicates that the mouth of Oyster Creek, once silted over, has been reestablished and enlarged, presumably by the floodwaters of 1913, endangering the location of the station and also isolating it from Velasco. The station can also be observed in the background in Figure 57 (right side, on horizon just above picket fence). Other documents have also been found that seem to confirm this outlying location of the Life-Saving Station ([Map of Velasco](#) and BCHM document [1988.070c.0231](#)). The site of the Brazos Lighthouse is also seen in Figure 60, highlighted by a green arrow. This station is also discussed in Appendix II of an archaeological report [Fox et al 1981 pp. 91-92].



Figure 60: Detail from USCGS chart published Jan-1914 (Courtesy: BCHM, document 2010.017c.0003)

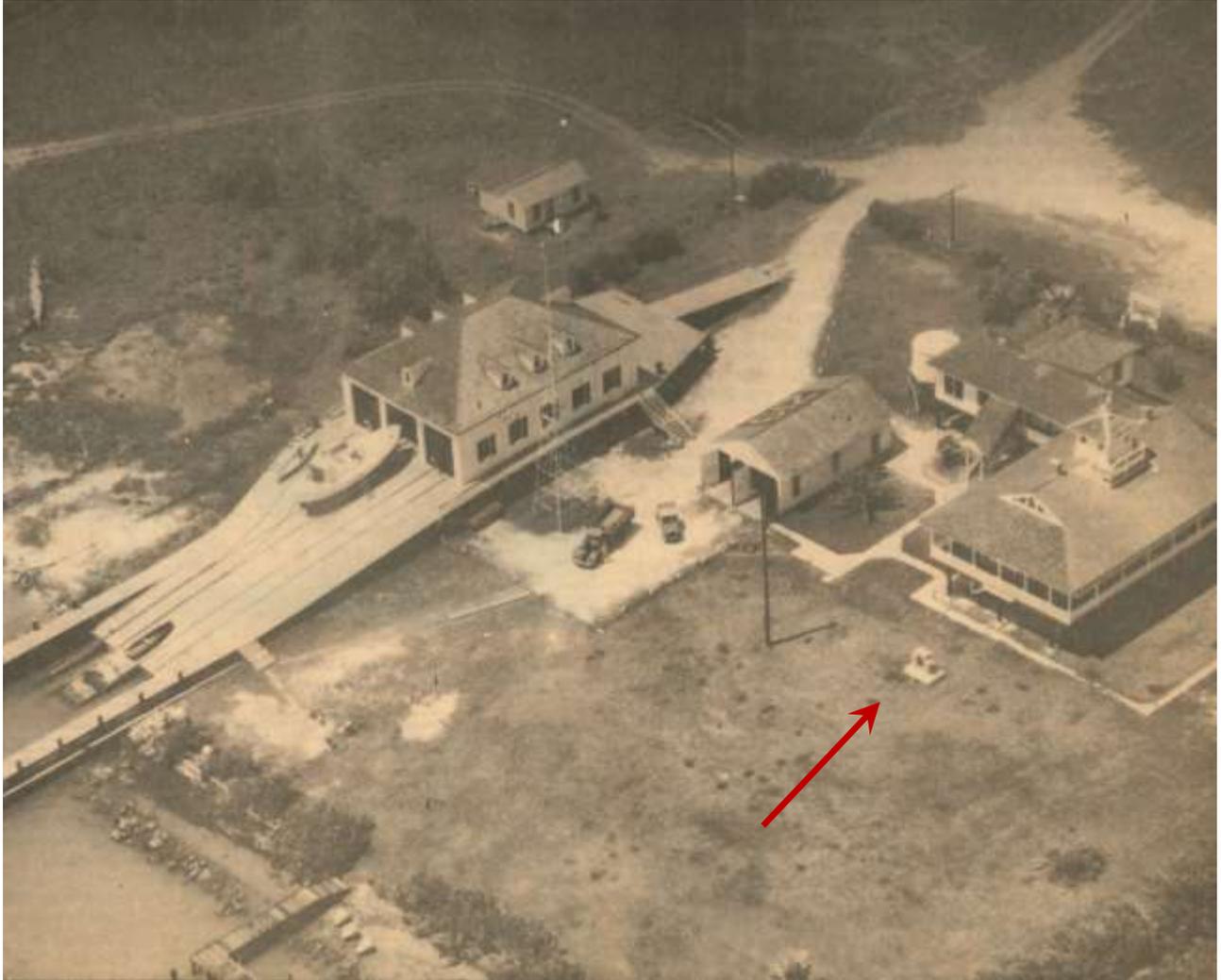
After the damage from the 1913 flood and the 1915 hurricane, plans were made for a replacement, and the Life-saving Service merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to become the U. S. Coast Guard. Thus, in 1916-1917, a new Coast Guard station house and garage were built near the end of Fort Street, by purchasing the leased land (of the spare boathouse).

In 1936, two large granite stones with similar brass plaques about Velasco were installed during the Texas Centennial - [one](#) on the lawn on the river side of the Coast Guard station house (now present in front of Surfside city hall) – see Figures 61 and 62, and [another](#) was placed in new Velasco (now on the lawn in front of the Velasco Community House in the “Velasco” section of Freeport), the latter additionally entitled “Four Miles Southeast To The Original Site Of Velasco” [Dorchester & Wilson 1936]. Both markers have since been moved from their original locations.



**Figure 61: Velasco-Freeport “Texas Centennial” Celebration and Monument Dedication (14-May-1936)
Little Miss Laura Ballinger Randall (of Galveston) and Outstanding Boy Scout Jerry Butler (of Freeport)
Photo from article in Freeport Facts, 21-May-1936 (courtesy of BCHM)**

A new three-bay boathouse was added to the Coast Guard station in the 1935-1938 period, and the name was changed to Freeport Station. An aerial view of the station (circa 1940) is shown below in Figure 62; the location of the historical marker placed in 1936 is shown with a red arrow. Additional cast-aluminum historical marker/plaques were placed for “[Old Velasco, C.S.A](#)” in 1964 and “[Velasco](#)” (i.e., Battle of Velasco) in 1965, both now located on the east margin of Hwy-332 near the beach. The former was originally located near the Coast Guard station, but was moved in about 1988 to its current location. A separate marker for “[Old Velasco](#)” was installed in the wall of the Velasco Elementary School in 1969, to honor the naming of that school, but was moved to its own concrete base along Karankawa Street at a later time, although this is located in the new Velasco area (now Freeport).



***Figure 62: Aerial View of Freeport Coast Guard Station, pre-WWII (notice location of historical marker)
Photo from article in Brazosport Facts, 28-Aug-1988 (courtesy of BCHM)***

The station was surrounded by as many as nine houses for the families of the Guardsmen, as recalled by a visitor in 1941 [Grubbs 1985], and these are easily seen in an undated photo below, as Figure 63. The area of Block 568 can be seen in the upper left, just beyond the houses. The road known as Fort Street (later as Ave. C or Coast Guard Rd., now as Monument Ave.) can be seen entering the photo from this same general area (left side).



***Figure 63: Coast Guard Station Freeport
(Courtesy: BCHM Photo 2005.036p.0004)***

The station house suffered damage from a fire and Hurricane Alicia in 1983, and was eventually demolished. In the period of 1990-1992, a new station was built just upstream of the old one, since the harbor channel was being widened, dredging away the land where the previous station existed. The 1938 boat house was moved and re-purposed as a city hall building for the Village of Surfside Beach. The 1936 granite marker was moved in front of the new city hall.

A separate government agency, the U. S. Lighthouse Board, established the Brazos Lighthouse in 1896 just upstream of Velasco at the first bend of the river, such that the light aligned with the centerline of the river channel as it met the Gulf. The agency was renamed the [U. S. Lighthouse Service](#) in 1910, and merged into the Coast Guard in 1939. The Brazos Lighthouse was operated until 1954, but existed until 1967 when it was dismantled, so at some point in its history, it was administered by all of these agencies. A photo of the facility is shown below, as Figure 64. The turret or “lens house” from atop the derrick was saved, and today sits on the lawn of the county courthouse in Angleton.



**Figure 64: Brazos Lighthouse, as viewed from the southeast (looking northwest)
(Courtesy: BCHM, Photo 1985.009p.0002)**

The layout of the facility can be seen in another photo (Figure 65 below), seen from above and to the west-southwest. The Dow barge canal (former mouth of East Union Bayou) is seen crossing horizontally across the middle of the image, while the Intracoastal Canal heads northeast in the upper right; the harbor channel (Old Brazos River) is off the edge of the photo to the right.



Figure 65: Brazos River Lighthouse (Courtesy: BCHM Photo 2006.014p. 0001)

From the earliest days, access to Velasco was primarily by boat travel; however, a land route was established down the higher ground between East Union Bayou and Oyster Creek, to enter the eastern side of Velasco. Once a Brazos-Galveston canal was established, the road had to cross over the canal. Civil War-era maps (as seen in Figures 39, 43 and 46) show such a road, and a spliced image is shown below (western part of Sheet 1 and eastern part of Sheet 2 of the 1862 Tipton Walker maps) as Figure 66. The image also shows how Oyster Creek originally drained directly to the Gulf, and that two segments of canal were used to join Drum Bay to Oyster Creek and then to East Union Bayou and the Brazos River. These canals were originally created in the 1850's by the [Galveston and Brazos Navigation Company](#), although they were originally suggested by Stephen F. Austin as early as 1825 [Smith Jan-2000, Austin 1826]. Indeed, the creation of these canals provided an alternate drainage for the flood waters of Oyster Creek, and prevented its freshets from scouring its original channel into the Gulf, eventually causing the original mouth to silt over at some point after the Civil War.

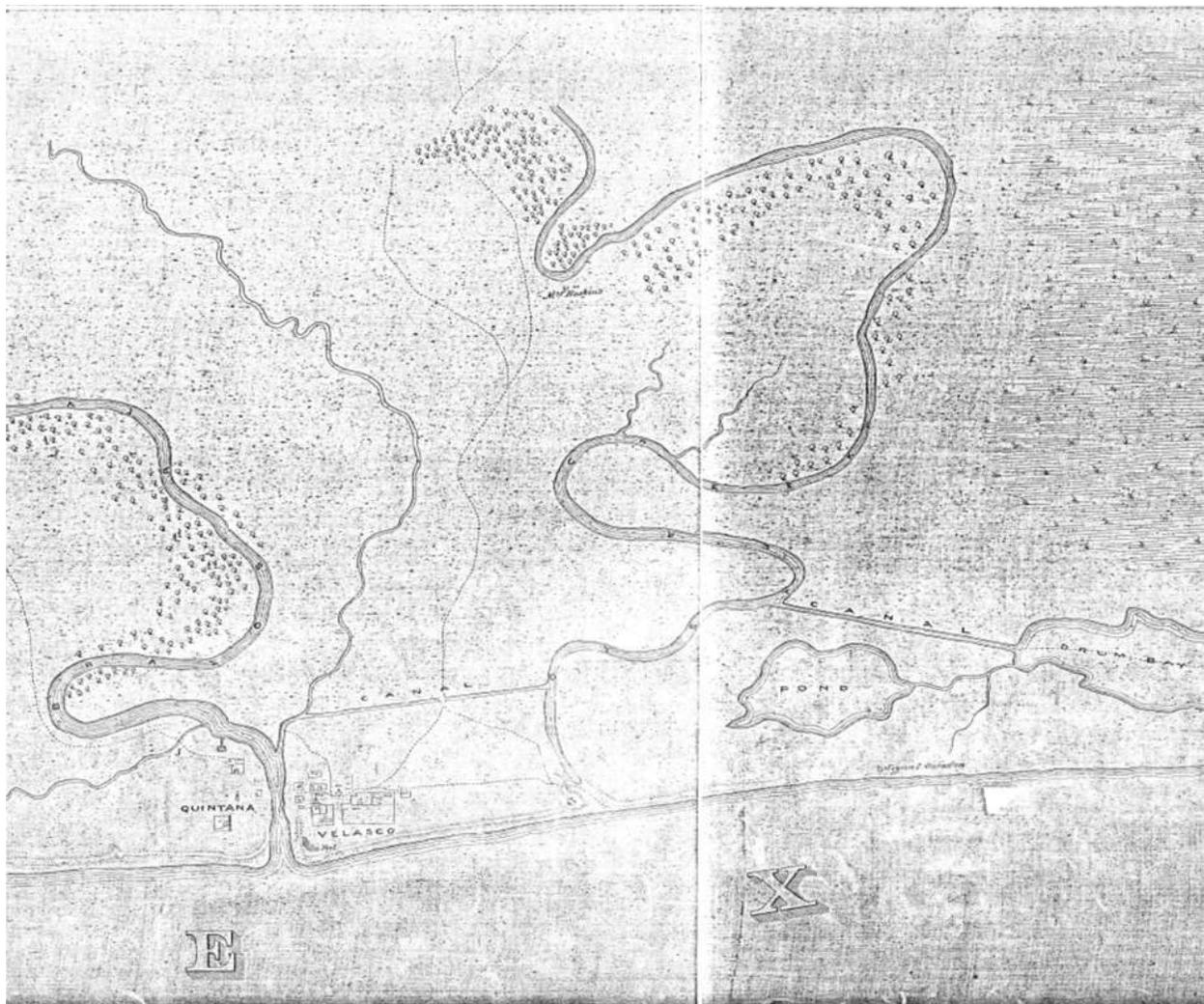


Figure 66: Spliced detail from Tipton Walker maps (circa 1862)

This canal crossing northeast of Velasco was operated by the John Longest Hudgins family for many

years, and a photo of the swing bridge used is shown below in Figure 67, also showing their residence and blacksmith shop. For many years, the bridge was a pivot swing bridge, atop a column on the south bank, as indicated in Figure 68. The bridge is labeled as “Drawbridge” on Coode Drawing #2, showing a fenced area (residence?) on the south bank (Figure 49).

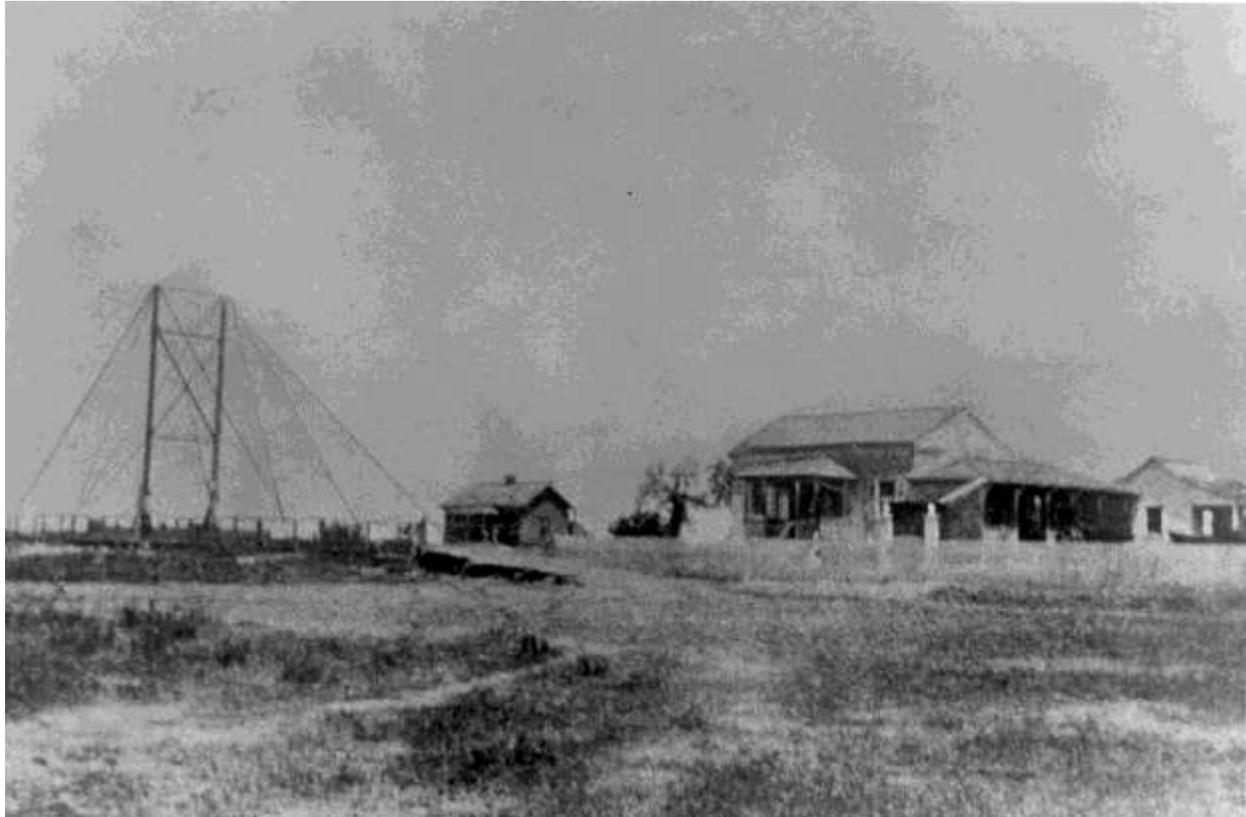


Figure 67: First bridge into Velasco – center-pivot swing type – and John L. Hudgins dwelling and blacksmith buildings - circa 1885 (Courtesy: BCHM, Photo 1985.074p0001)

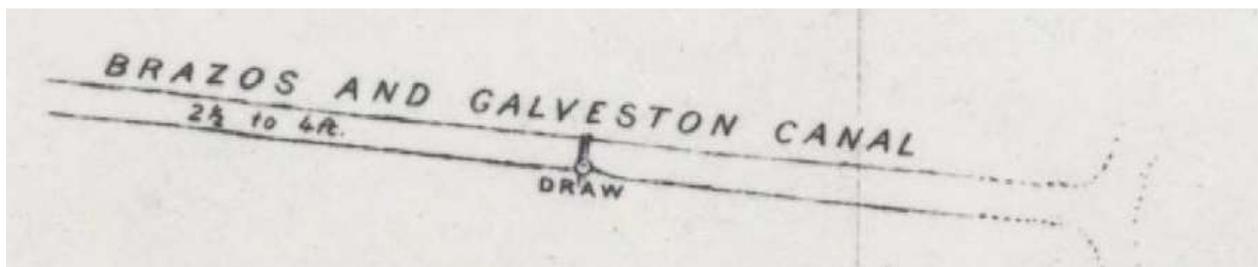


Figure 68: Detail from 1891 USCGS map (other parts shown in Figure 54)

At some point after 1912 and before 1930, perhaps to service the new Coast Guard station, a new route was established directly from new Velasco, crossing East Union Bayou near the Brazos River and the Brazos Lighthouse, to enter the west side of Velasco. Addie Hudgins Follett described it as the “Boulevard” [Follett 1983]. Indeed, one of the plan-type documents for new Velasco show this road as an extension of Gulf Boulevard in new Velasco ([copy1](#), [copy2](#)). The original “Oyster Creek Road” was apparently abandoned, although a 1930 aerial photo shows that a new straight pathway (pipeline,

electrical lines, unimproved road?) of some type had been built from new Velasco crossing East Union Bayou connecting with the old Hudgins canal crossing. This pathway at the canal crossing is indicated with a blue arrow, and the new crossing into west Velasco is indicated with a red arrow, in Figure 69 below. The Brazos Lighthouse location is shown with a green arrow, and the Coast Guard Station with a yellow arrow. Close examination of the west crossing indicates no bridge at this time, so a ferry must have existed. Indeed, records exist telling of the crossing as the end of the Velasco Terminal Railway, and that rail passengers had to disembark, cross the ferry, and then take a wagon to travel further into Surfside. Joy Grubbs described it in 1941 *“As we approached the canal, we had to drive out on a small ferry supported by oil drums and run by a motor. I was so afraid the car might roll off into the canal, but we made it safely across to the island.”* [Grubbs 1985]. Later, a two-way pontoon swing bridge replaced a one-way pontoon ferry [Creighton 1975 p. 374]. A newspaper article indicates that it was in 1941 that the ferry was replaced with the swing bridge [Soefje 1988].



Figure 69: Detail from Tobin Surveys Inc. Photo 1619-3-10 (28-Nov-1930)

Another important aspect is revealed in the entire 1930 series of Tobin aerial photographs – please note the great number of spoil mounds along the widened canals, and also even-larger mounds along the Brazos River (including one at Velasco – just off the tip of the yellow arrow, at the bottom edge of Figure 69). Apparently, in the period before 1930 (and probably afterwards as well) the practice was to simply put dredge spoil up on the banks. This fact will become important in later considerations of archaeology at the site.

The 1888 and 1891 USCGS maps (Figures 48 and 54) were updated again in 1892, beginning a series of charts identified as [Chart# 525 published by the U. S. Dept. of Commerce](#). The original Chart #525 was published in Oct-1892 (topography and hydrography from 1891), with updates in Mar-1899 (1897), Sep-1904 (1897, 1904), Jun-1909 (1897, 1907), 1914 (1897, 1912), May-1934 (1933) and Oct-1935. A portion

of the 1914 chart is shown above in Figure 60. Some outlying details are shown on these charts, for example the dome of the Velasco Hotel (illustrated in Figure 56) is marked in the new Velasco area in the 1891, 1892, 1899, 1904 and 1909 versions, although it was believed destroyed in the 1900 storm. The site of Fort Terrell is marked as “Old Fort” on all versions from 1888 to 1914. The Brazos Lighthouse is shown on the USCGS charts of 1899 on. The Oyster Creek Road is shown on the 1914 chart, and both it and the new roads are shown on the 1934 and 1935 versions, indicating that the original road remained in service until at least 1935.

As the entire series of USCGS charts and other maps in this report reveal, beach accretion at Velasco occurred due to storms and delta formation both before and after creation of the jetties, accumulating about 1725 feet of total land to the seaward of the original beach in front of the 1832 fort. Although several early attempts failed to improve access for ships over the Brazos Bar by creation of jetties, the first permanent construction did not occur until 1889 [Brazos 1890, Wisner 1891, Kramig]. Further accretion mostly stopped and even reversed some after 1929, when the Brazos River was diverted seven miles to the southwest through a purposefully excavated ‘Diversion Channel’, since river silt no longer nourished any further “delta” deposits. Thus, the original 1832 fort location is now inland from the beach by about 2150 feet and considered less-than-optimal for recreational use, and indeed any remaining remnants of these original forts or graves might be disturbed by replica reconstruction. A Coast Guard radar tower has also recently been built to seaward, hindering any unobstructed view towards the beach, sea and river mouth.

The earliest topographic map of the modern era is found with the 1943 USGS Quad for Freeport (Figure 70 below). No wooded areas are seen near the Brazos mouth and, indeed only a few are found along the course of lower Oyster Creek, in the area of the original Oyster Creek Road. By this point, the original Intracoastal Canal had been created (in 1938-1940), and lower East Union Bayou was channelized around the new Dow Chemical Plant-A complex to create a barge and seawater canal to Dow’s Plant-B. The Oyster Creek Road into east Velasco is not seen, so its use must have discontinued prior to 1943. The former Velasco Terminal Railroad line has been converted for use at Plant-A, and the new road has been re-routed (following the new barge canal), which was done in 1941. The new road is also seen to cross both canals, and was marked as County Road 229 on a 1948 Brazoria County road map. In 1949, the new route was designated as [FM-1460](#), but this route was discontinued when a new “high-bridge” was built in 1954 over the Intracoastal Canal near the original Hudgins canal crossing. This “high-bridge” was eventually replaced in about 1998 with a new version right beside it, and the 1954 version was demolished. Parts of these two former paths into west Velasco are today known as Dow Canal Rd. (S. Avenue D when leaving Freeport) and Old Surfside Rd./CR-229 (Gulf Boulevard when leaving Freeport). Beginning in the 1970’s, the spit of land between the two canal crossings was dredged away to expand the Intracoastal Canal and create additional harbor areas. The path of the former road into west Velasco (shown in the 1943 map as a segment to “Brazosport” on the Gulf side of the canal) is known today as Thunder Rd. The articles by Mrs. T. A. Humphries mention that the 1913 flood caused erosion in the salt marsh, revealing a narrow mile-long brick-paved road to the “Old Steamboat Landing” on East Union Bayou [Humphries 1932], which may be the road shown in the 1862 Tipton Walker map (as seen in Figures 39 and 66, leading to East Union Bayou near the Brazos), and which had a bridge installed over the bayou later in the Civil War to facilitate movement of troops and equipment (as seen in Figure 43). Thus, such a brick-paved road (at least in Surfside) may have been created during the Civil War or

before. This segment may have been re-purposed after 1913 to become the “new road” segment at Surfside, today lying buried under the road base and asphalt of Thunder Road. As seen in the 1943 USGS map, from this road can be seen an unimproved road with a hairpin shape; the length nearest the beach is the former path of Fort Street, and future path of Monument Ave. The length on the landward side is today found as an undeveloped right-of-way – an extension of modern Militia Drive. The former dune ridge of the 1830’s appears to be marked by a series of T shapes, and along this line is seen a mound near the river (Civil War fort?). Finally, this map reveals how little development had occurred even up through 1943 at Surfside.

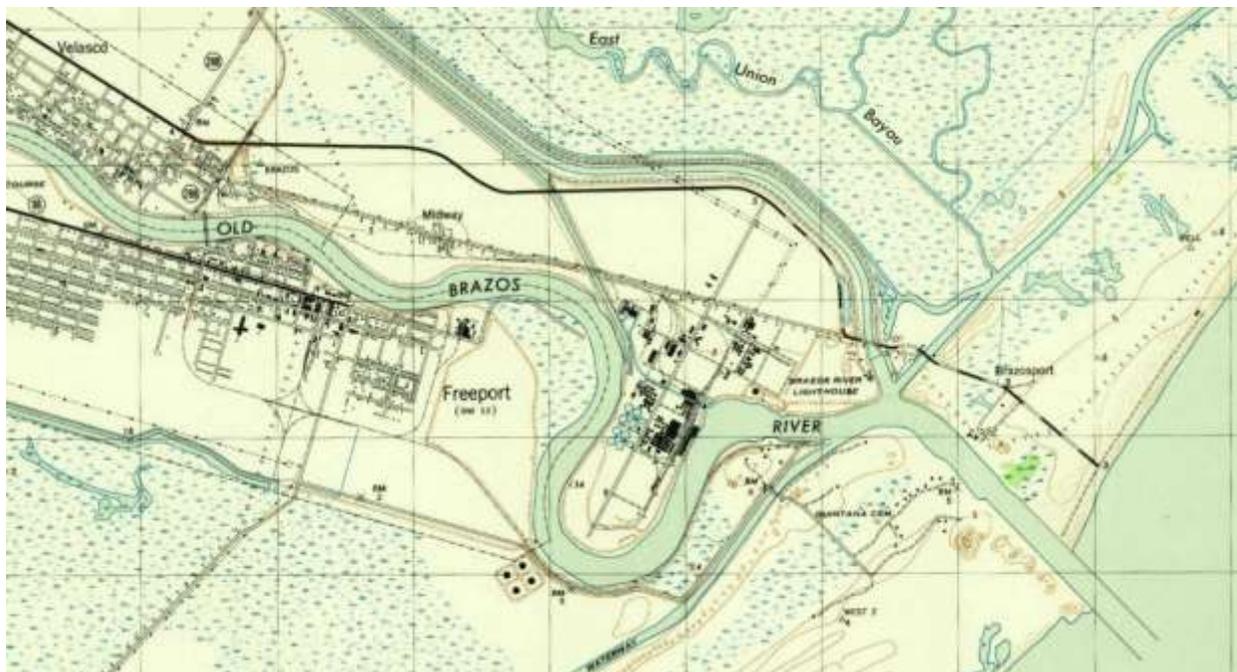


Figure 70: Detail from 1943 USGS 1:24000 “Freeport” Quad Map

No fortifications are known to have been placed during World War I or II on the Velasco side, although troops from Company A of the 3rd Texas Militia were stationed in 1917 at nearby [Bryan Mound](#) to protect the Freeport Sulphur Company’s works [Creighton p. 329]. During World War II, a pair of gun mounds were placed on the Quintana side, each mounting a single rotating 155-mm coastal artillery piece, installed in late 1942 using the [Panama Mount](#), but withdrawn in Feb-1944 [Germany & Bailey 2007].

Updates of the USGS maps were made in 1964, 1974, 1984, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019. Google Earth has historical images (archived aerial photos) for 1974, 1982, 1985, 1995, 2004 and many later images. BCHM has aerial photos from Tobin in 1930 (as in Figure 69) and 1956-1957, Kargl in 1940 and Williams-Stackhouse in 1976. All of these are not shown here, but which can be viewed to show the continuing development of the area, if you will, the rebirth of old Velasco as the new Surfside.

***Then I saw a magic city, the metropolis of the west,
On the Brazos bank reclining, like a rose upon the breast,
Of a maiden fair, while suitors from every nation came,***

*To do homage to her beauty, and her splendor leaped to fame;
For the major part of commerce of every Western state,
Found egress to the ocean through her deep and narrow gate;
And art and science flourished in that balmy, healthful air,
And her men were brave and noble and her women pure and fair.*

- poem by Charles Diggs Hudgins, son of John L. Hudgins, about Velasco (from "Maid of San Jacinto", a book of poetry [Hudgins 1900])

SUMMARY OF MODERN EFFORTS AT ARCHAEOLOGY, RESEARCH AND RESTORATION



Figure 71: Carving on 1940 Brazoria County Courthouse above east-side (now employee) entrance

Before beginning, it may be useful to review the fact that the Velasco-platted blocks (e.g., shown in Figures 30 and 31) and those created later for Surfside are not the same. The angle of the streets was

slightly different, as were the block size and shape. But, in some cases, modern attempts to overlay the Surfside block margins with those platted in 1837 for Velasco, do reveal some overlap (see Figure 85 below). For example, Velasco Block 13 and Surfside Block 568 are largely congruent, although not exactly. The same goes for the Velasco block labeled as Monument Square and modern Surfside Block 569. One important exception is that the modern Monument Ave. (previously known as Ave. C or Coast Guard Road) sits largely atop the old Velasco road known as Fort Street, especially so on the southwest end, near the river. A chart of the modern Surfside blocks is shown in Figure 72 below, colorized by the author for the current owners in the area of property owned by the Cradle Of Texas Conservancy (CTC), shown in yellow, and showing the right-of-way for the new jetty line installed in the early 1990's. The CTC owns Lots 5-8 in Block 560, Lots 1-5, 10, 12 and 14 in Block 568, and some undivided interest in several Lots of Block 561. The city hall for Surfside Beach sits on Lots 2-4 of Block 560, and the Brazos River Harbor Navigation District (now [Port Freeport](#)) owns lots along the current jetty right-of-way.



Figure 72: Chart showing Surfside blocks and lots (colorized for current owners) in area of CTC property

In 1961, just upstream of old Velasco, a 9-pound cannonball was discovered at Dow's Plant-A property, and revived interest in the 1832 fort and battle [[Dow 1961](#)]. Featured in the article was a drawing by Zella May McDaniel (1929-2018), reproduced in Figure 73 below, the first of several artist's renditions of Fort Velasco, this one from a perspective high above the Gulf and during the Battle of Velasco.

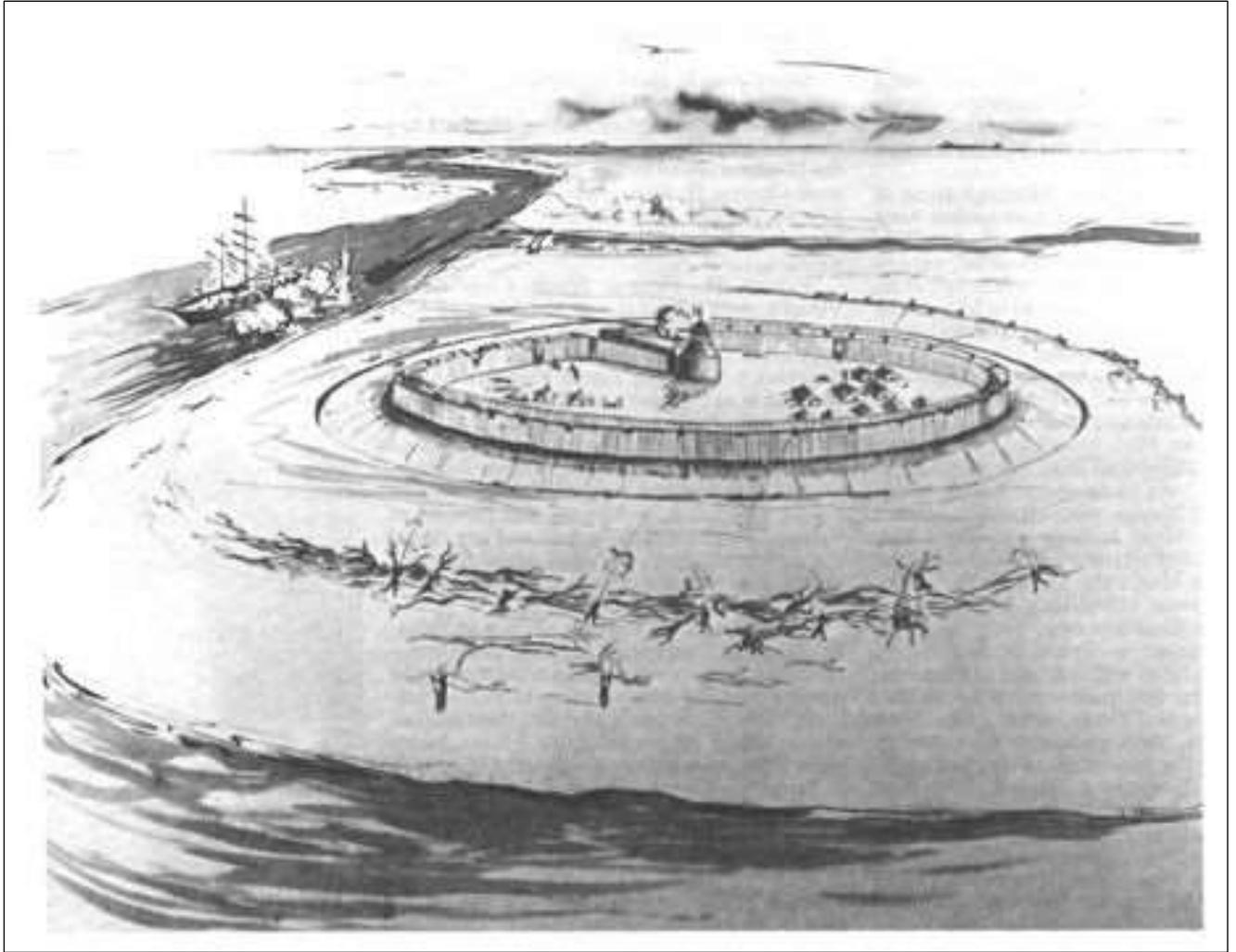


Figure 73: Rendition of Fort Velasco viewed from the Gulf by Zella May McDaniel (courtesy: BCHM)

Shortly thereafter, many members of the local Gulf Coast chapter of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers (TSPE) became interested in researching, finding and reconstructing this fort (see Kramig papers). By the late 1960's, property was bought piecemeal and privately in Surfside Blocks 560 and 568 by TSPE members and donated to the effort, ultimately resulting in an organization called the Texas Gulf Coast Parks and Historical Restoration Association, later changed to the Fort Velasco Restoration Association (FVRA), led by the late Messrs. Harold Singleton (1922-1978), Dale Sandlin (1913-2010), George Kramig (1919-2011) and Howard B. Fearn (1923-2012), among others. Inspections and excavations were accomplished in 1970-1971 by TSPE members, finding a cistern and several brick foundations in Surfside Block 568. This period also saw the use of informal excavations by Boy Scouts under the direction of Lagett Cleaver, Dale Sandlin and Howard B. Fearn to excavate the cistern, and also in Block 568 by a local amateur archaeologist (Raymond Walley) in 1972-1973 [Fox et al 1981 p. 4]. Some of the artifacts from this work are archived at the [Brazoria County Historical Museum](#) (BCHM), some being termed the Dale Sandlin Collection. For example:

Metal military button (1.5" diameter) of 11th Permanent Battalion of the Mexican Army, a unit that was

known to have some portions of it stationed at the 1830-1832 forts such as Anahuac and Barranco Colorado:

<https://bchm.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/2DFC5900-D358-456D-A093-182267552547>

Staffordshire “transfer ware” shards:

<https://bchm.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/9BF48BAC-C889-40A5-99F3-541193381573>

Other artifacts from this period are stored at the [Brazosport Museum of Natural Science](#) (BMNS), although some items apparently were kept for private collections. At the time, their belief was that this was direct evidence of the 1832 Mexican fort.

At a later time, a private collector found two other examples of 11th Battalion buttons on the “beach” along the water’s edge below the eroding cut-bank along the harbor channel adjacent to 41BO125. They were smaller (19mm diameter), shown in Figures 74 and 75 below). The numerals resemble, and had been previously identified, as JJ but are now thought to show an “antique cursive” 11 and be that of the 11th Battalion. So, it might appear that “soldados” from this unit were stationed as well at the 1832 Fort Velasco. Unlike forts such as Anahuac and Barranco Colorado, which submitted detailed monthly reports (including muster lists) of their complement (involving both the 11th and 12th Permanent Battalions), Ugartechea does not seem to have had time to do that, but in one letter he did mention that he had deserters from both of these Battalions [Ugartechea 7-Jun-1832b].



Figure 74 – Front and Back views of 11th Battalion button found at site of Fort Velasco



Figure 75: Another 11th Battalion button found at site of Fort Velasco

The Brazoria County Historical Survey Committee and Adele Perry (Mrs. John S.) Caldwell (1895-1974) provided personal knowledge and research on the subject, and then the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce created a tourist brochure about the Battle Of Velasco in about 1970; several versions were published over the next few years [Brazosport 1970]. One of the drawings included in these brochures is shown in Figure 76 below, illustrating the schooner *Brazoria* at the moonlit battle.

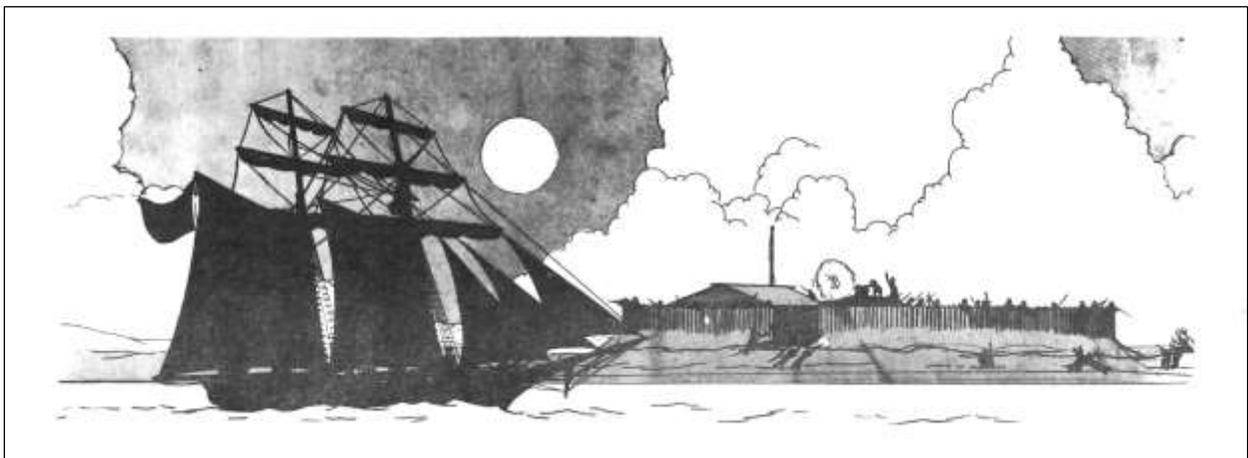


Figure 76: Drawing by Dan Parkinson; featured in Chamber of Commerce brochure (courtesy: BCHM)

The Chamber of Commerce brochure also mentions the fort was 300 feet in diameter, and another drawing was included showing a two-dimensional plot diagram and layout for such a fort (Figure 77 below). Examination of the McDaniel drawing (Figure 73) reveals an uncanny resemblance to the aforementioned 1822 diagram found in the Stephen F. Austin Map Collection (Figure 19) which showed a fort-like structure of 120 varas (about 330 feet) diameter. Although the origin of the McDaniel drawing remains unknown to this author, it almost seems that her three-dimensional rendition (prior to 1961?), and also the FVRA conclusions circa 1970 about a fort of 300-foot diameter, had their origins with this Austin diagram. As stated above, the Austin 1822 diagram was apparently known to the FVRA and Anne Fox in 1980 [Fox 1991].

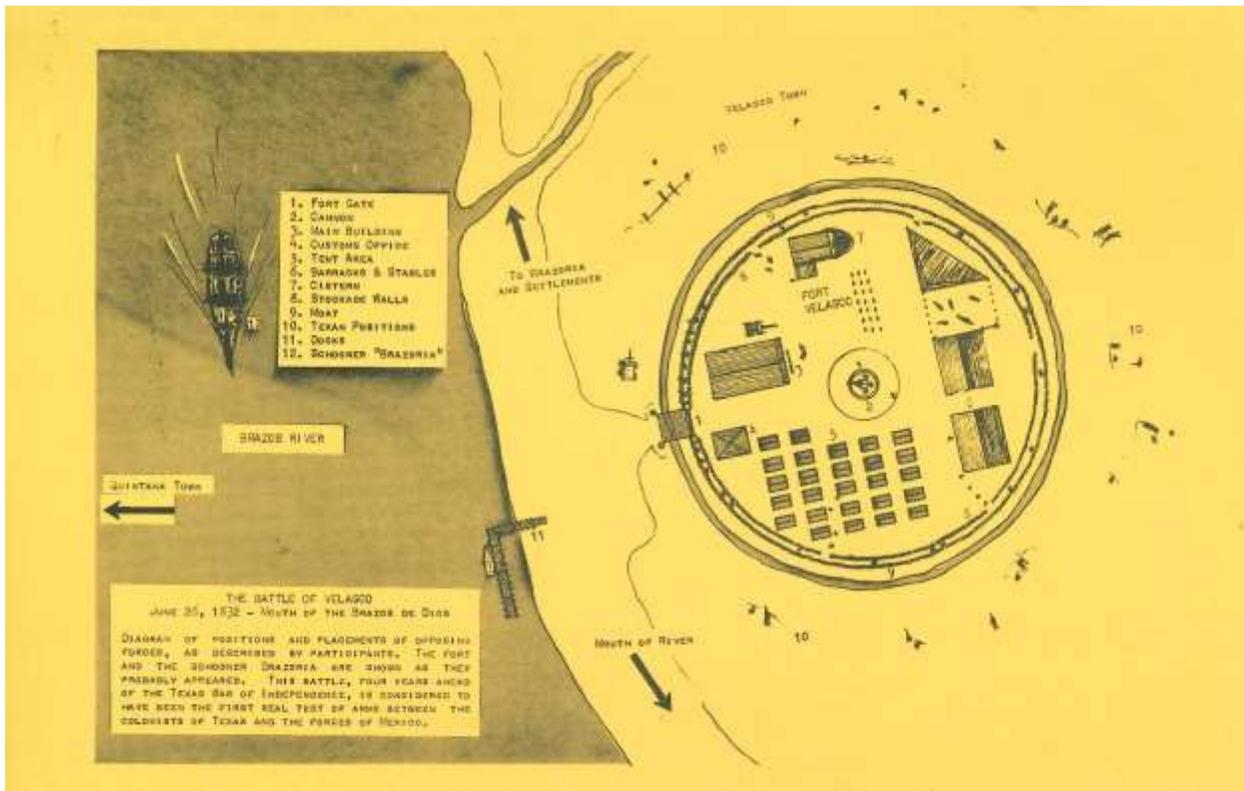


Figure 77: Drawing featured in Brazosport Chamber of Commerce brochure (courtesy: BCHM)

Ultimately, plans were drawn up for a circular fort replica of 300-foot diameter (see Figure 78 below), incorporating the structural features found in the TSPE and other excavations of the time [Fearn 1971].

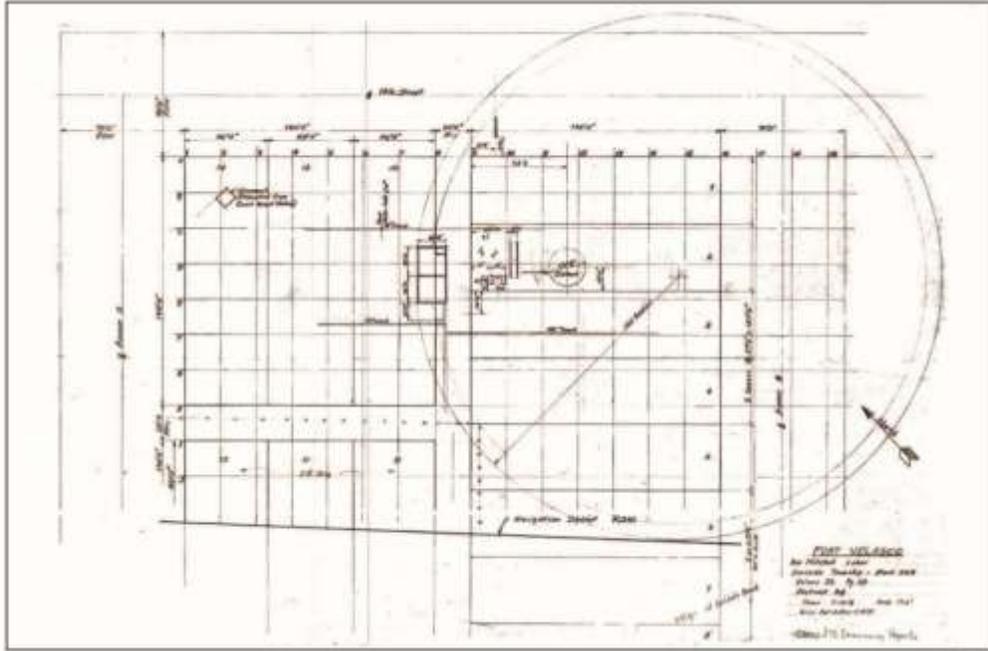


Figure 78: Digitized copy of 1970's FVRA design drawing (Courtesy: Blueline Print Shop, Freeport TX)

However, in this drawing is information found nowhere else in print concerning the archaeological efforts in the 1970's, including the size and location of the cistern (19' 9"), details on the brick structures (width of chimney base of 8'), and the location of certain trenches. This area of the drawing is shown in greater detail below in Figure 79.

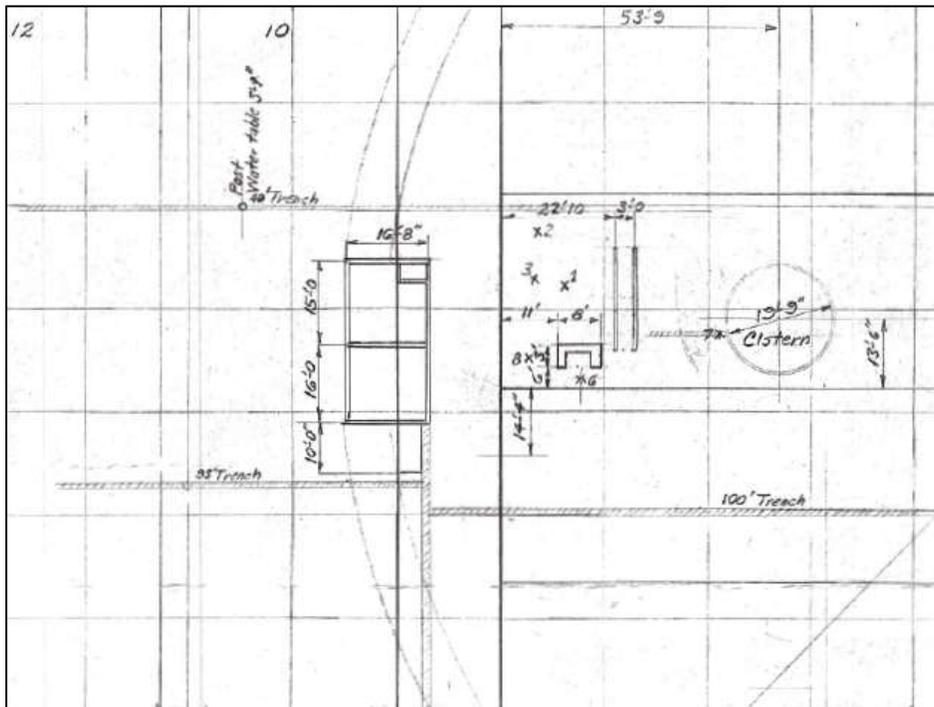


Figure 79: Detail from FVRA blueprint

Another drawing was found in the Map Case at the BCHM, which appears to be a CAD-type blueprint of a more-detailed “reconstruction concept”, although unlabeled as to source, author or creation date (Figure 80). It was originally found in about 1995 in the Map Case Drawer 8 among many other unlabeled oversized drawings and maps, and then cataloged as BCHM Ref# 96.98.01 in 1996, although its stated radius of 150’ suggest it belongs to the earlier FVRA efforts.

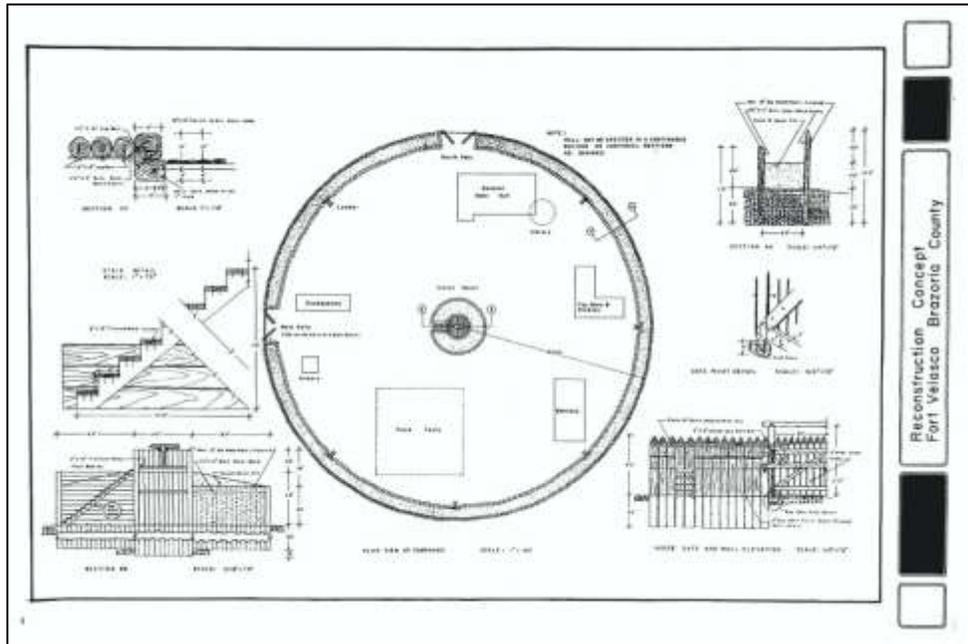


Figure 80: “Reconstruction Concept – Fort Velasco Brazoria County” Drawing (BCHM accession# 96.008c.0001, unknown source, author or date)

Although much public outreach was done through the 1970’s, in the form of a traveling exhibit (with character posters, script and music), including a diorama (see Figure 81 below) and many presentations to public groups, the lands and funds for such a large project did not materialize.



Figure 81: George Kramig showing diorama (traveling exhibit); later displayed at BCHM but no longer in existence (courtesy: BCHM)

The character posters were drawn by Anna Brightwell in 1975, and copies of the dozen characters are shown together in Figure 82 below, provided by courtesy of BCHM.



Figure 82: Character Posters by Anna Brightwell, circa 1975 (© BCHM)

Henry Brown, Domingo Ugartechea, Britt Bailey, William Russell, Juan Davis Bradburn, Uncle Bubba Thomas Bell, John Austin, Strap Buckner, Ben Brigham, unnamed Texian, Ed Robinson

At one point, a historical play entitled “Birth Of A Giant” was to be written by the late [Kermit Hunter](#) (1910-2001), a playwright and dean at SMU [Brazosport 1975], with the goal of the play for advertising and fundraising [Frantz 1974]. However, no script has ever been found, including in the Kermit Hunter Papers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, so the project must never have been completed. The plans also included creation of a large amphitheater in Freeport [Freeport 1975], although only a more-modest outdoor stage was built in about 1985 extending over the water at the extreme upper end of the Freeport harbor channel (known as “The Landing”) as part of Freeport Municipal Park, and it is still in existence.

An excellent history of Brazoria County was published in this period [Creighton 1975], which included a passage about the 1832 fort and battle, and published again the rendition of Fort Velasco by Zella May McDaniel, previously shown in Figure 73.

During this period, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hired the Anthropology Lab at Texas A&M University to accomplish a reconnaissance survey around the harbor area in late 1975. It focused on prehistoric sites but more or less seconded the FVRA conclusion that the 1832 fort was in Surfside Block 568, and also resulted in the formal registration of the presumed site of the 1832 fort as archaeological site 41BO125 at the [Texas Archeological Research Laboratory](#) (TARL) in Austin [Baxter & Ippolito 1975, Ippolito & Baxter 1976].

One outcome of the FVRA group was the occasional newspaper article, sometimes including artwork

showing an interpretive drawing of Fort Velasco, for example see Figure 83 below.



Figure 83: Drawing by B. Hackney of Fort Velasco in 13-Jun-1976 Brazosport Facts article (courtesy: BCHM)

Another outcome of the FVRA group was the formal publication of a small book entitled “Thunder On The Brazos” by one of the members, Mary Delaney Boddie, which is an excellent summary of the precursors, order of battle and especially the political aftermath of the Battle of Velasco [Boddie 1978]. In the same time period, the Brazosport Chamber Of Commerce and its president (from 1967-1988) Dan Parkinson continued to contribute artwork about the 1832 Fort Velasco (for example, see Figure 84 below).

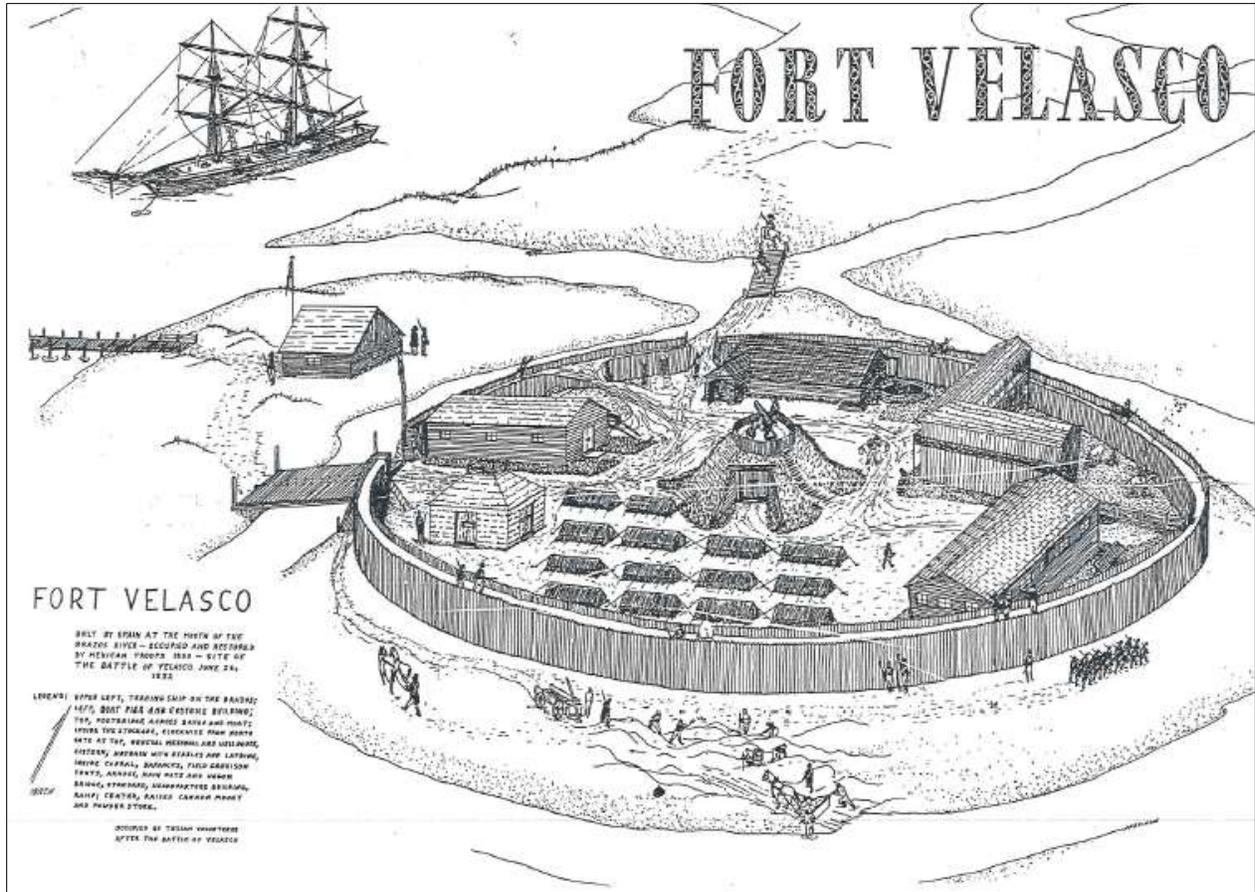


Figure 84: Drawing by Dan Parkinson; featured in 8-Feb-1980 Brazosport Facts (courtesy: BCHM)

A visiting David Hicks found one of the Chamber Of Commerce brochures, and with Mr. Parkinson developed it into a historical novel about the [Anahuac Disturbances](#) and the [Battle of Velasco](#), entitled "The Texians" [Hicks & Parkinson 1980].

In anticipation of the Freeport harbor widening, the [Center for Archaeological Research](#) (CAR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) was contracted to do a cultural resource survey around the harbor channel, including further minor excavations in Blocks 568 and 569 in the period of Oct-Nov 1980 [Fox et al 1981]. The artifacts collected have been archived at TARL in Austin. In this report, one key diagram is their Figure 7 (page 39), repeated here as Figure 85 below. The interesting part is the overlay of new Surfside streets and blocks over the old Velasco blocks, indicating that modern Ave. C/Coast Guard Rd./Monument Ave. lies at an odd angle from other streets, and approximates the path of Velasco's Fort Street. This was probably due, as we will see in subsequent pages, to the fact that Fort Street was one of the few streets to remain in service after Velasco was moved upstream in 1891. In Figure 85, please also note that 14th St./Parkview Rd. intersects at an angle such that its imaginary extension to the northwest would pass into the area of the old Monument Square block. In a departure from previous thinking, the location of the 1832 fort was hypothesized to be within Monument Square, and a small dashed circle is proposed as the probable location, just west of this intersection.

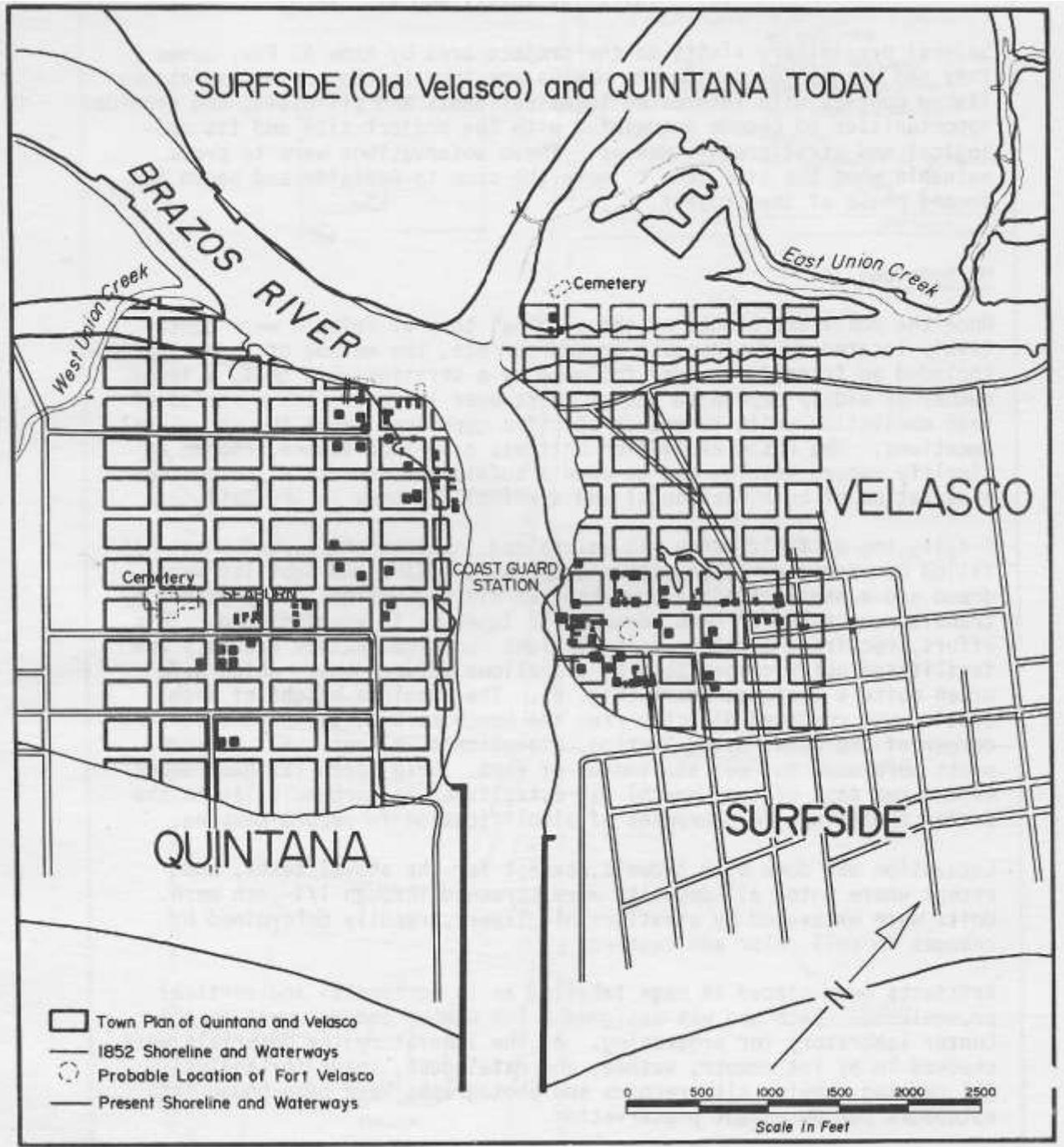


Figure 85: copy of Figure 7 (page 39) in [Fox et al 1981]

In the same report, another diagram (Figure 8, p. 41) shows the locations of their excavations, but also reveals further details, such as their conclusion for the “Most likely area for fort remains” in the corner formed by intersection of Ave. C/Coast Guard Rd. and the jetty line (Surfside Block 569), and also the FVRA investigations in Block 568. It is reproduced below as Figure 86 of this report.

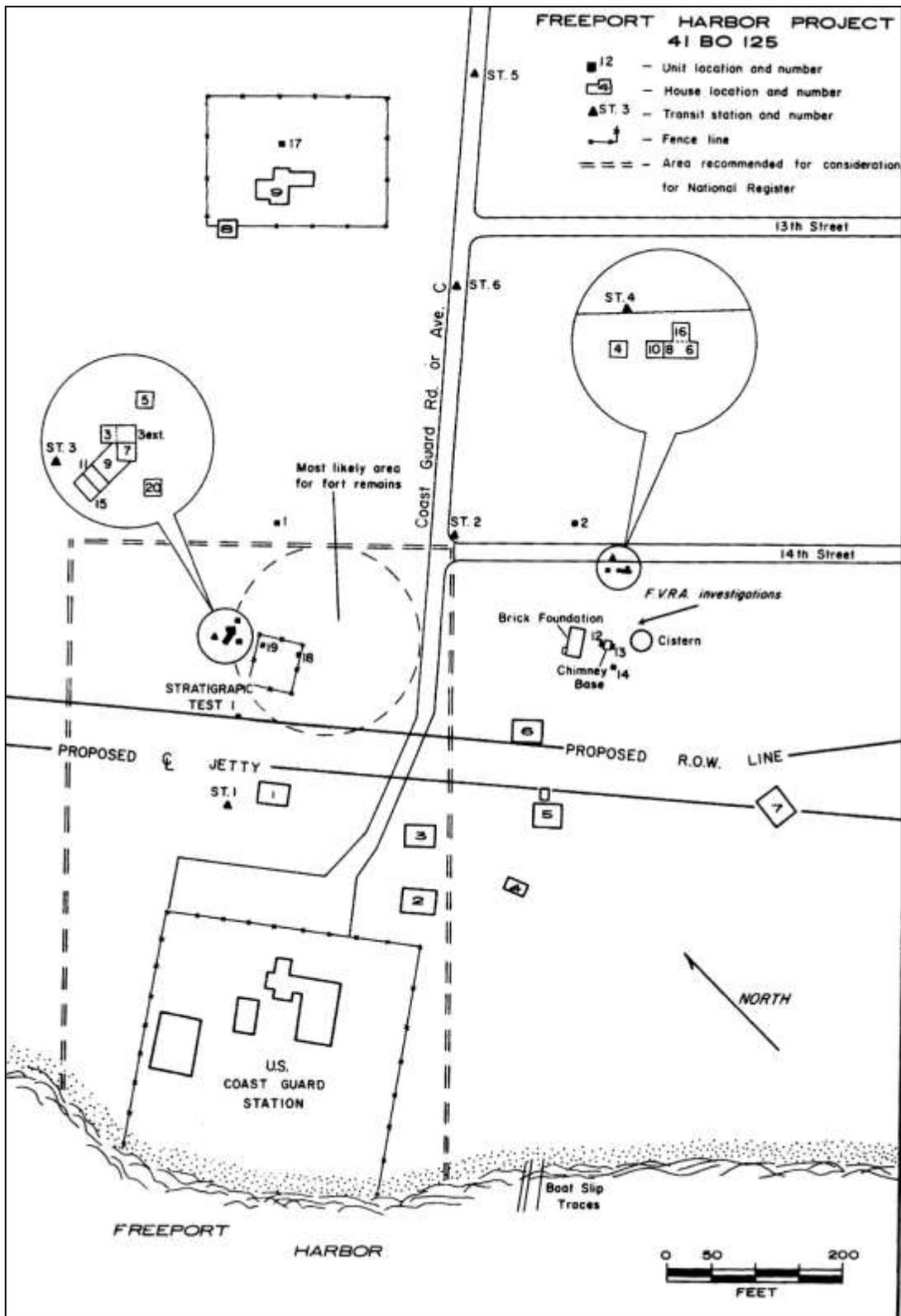


Figure 86: copy of Figure 8 (page 41) in [Fox et al 1981]

At about the same time, an underwater survey of the harbor channel was conducted based on magnetic

anomalies detected in earlier studies, although no historically significant artifacts were found [Bond 1980].

The appearance of the 1822 Austin diagram in 1982 seemed to roughly confirm the earlier FVRA design for a fort replica of 300-foot diameter. Ultimately, the property in Block 568 was transferred officially from the Gulf Coast Parks and Historical Restoration Association (Dale Sandlin, President) to the CTC via a Warranty Deed on 30-Jul-1985. George Kramig became one of the CTC directors until a few years before his death in 2011. Since the transfer of land, the CTC fully adopted the FVRA's goal of a replica Fort Velasco, although several subsequent approaches to build a replica have also not been successful.

During the actual Freeport Harbor widening in the early 1990's, a dense collection of artifacts (a "trash pit") was observed in the ground where the old Coast Guard station and its fenced-in area had stood for many years, and then excavated by emergency salvage techniques (as the dredge began its work), collected and studied by members of the [Brazosport Archaeological Society](#) (BAS), an affiliate group of the [BMNS](#). The location of this excavation was approximately where the concrete pad is shown in the center of the photo image (Figure 87) below, which is a northwest-facing (upstream) view of the Coast Guard station in 1991 just before its removal for the harbor widening operations.



Figure 87: Panoramic view from multiple photos of Coast Guard Station in 1991 (courtesy: BAS)

The cleaned artifacts from this salvage operation, often called the "Velasco Collection", are archived at the BMNS [Pollan et al 1996]. One interesting find among the debris was an unfused but fired 20-pound Parrott shell, and later research revealed such rounds had been fired at Velasco by the [USS Midnight](#) in 1862 [Smith 1992] and by others in 1864-1865 [Freeman 1995 p. 44]. The shell was restored, and is shown in the photos of Figure 88 below.

VELASCO - 20 POUND PARROTT SHELL



Initial Condition



Initial Electrolysis



Final Electrolysis



Final Preservation

Figure 88: 20-pound Parrott shell found among trash pile in early 1990's

The BAS communicated these findings to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and also the Texas Historical Commission, even prevailing upon James Bruseth (while visiting a site over on Galveston island) to come to Velasco. An interesting anecdote is that a member of BAS, Johnney Pollan, while examining the cut bank, pulled an item from the eroding edge, handing it to Mr. Bruseth, explaining it was a bayonet from a Brown Bess musket. Mr. Bruseth then calmly but wryly asked the Corps representative, if they might have a contractor who could excavate the area. Based on these discoveries and artifacts revealed in the exposed “cut bank”, the COE halted further dredging temporarily and hired a professional excavation of the area by [Prewitt & Associates](#) of Austin [Earls et al 1992, Earls et al 1996], and these artifacts are housed at TARL. In their final report, one key diagram is their Figure 134 (p. 294), reproduced below as Figure 89. Please notice that their excavation locations were mostly associated with former Velasco Block 11, and that they essentially concurred with the overlay in [Fox et al 1981], also overlaying the structures observed in the 1858 Bache map. In their Block 13, the structure just to the left of the numeral 13 is thought to be the original Shannon house [Smith Dec-2014], and the structures alongside and underneath the line representing 14th St. are the Archer-Herndon property [Smith Sep-2014].

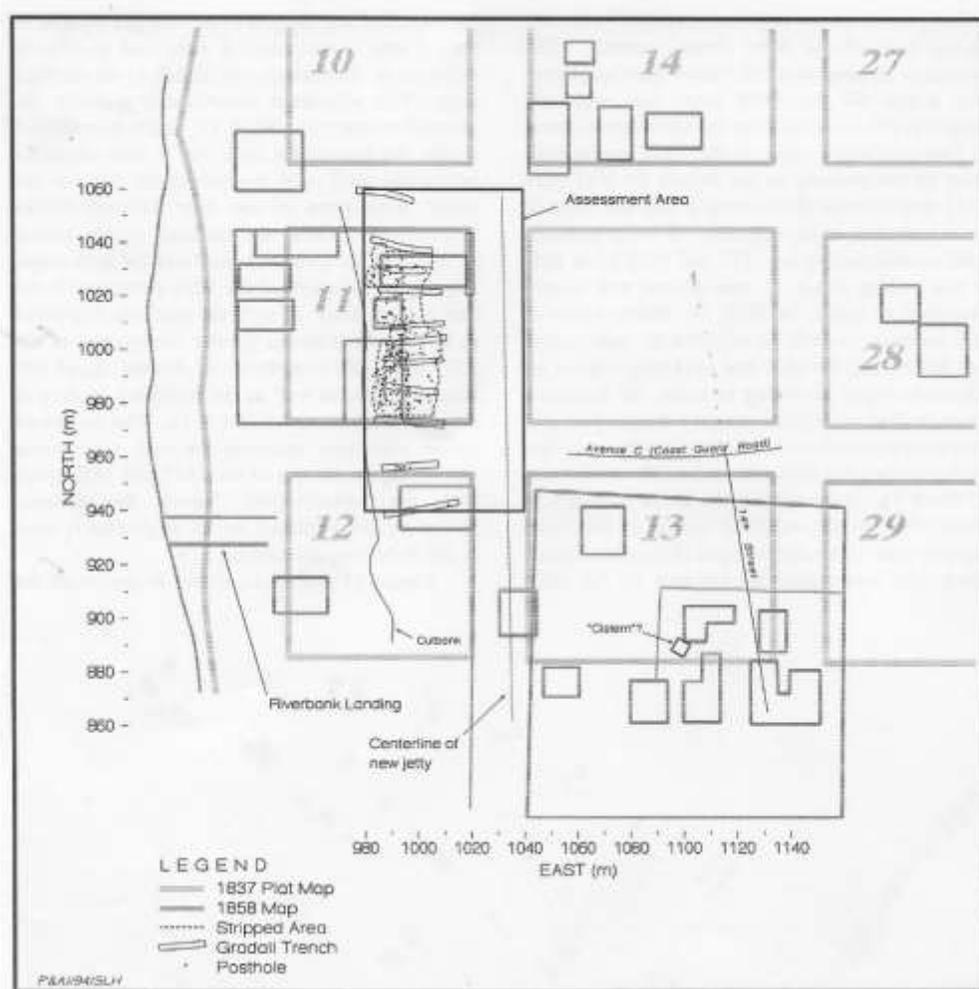


Figure 89: copy of Figure 194 (p. 294) in [Earls et al 1996] (Courtesy: Prewitt & Associates)

During this period, one early construction activity of the harbor widening project in this area had been the excavation of a 40'-wide trench by a mechanized "track hoe" for placement of large granite boulders (from the old jetty) as a landward extension of the new jetty line, circa 1990. At the time, no dredging had yet started, so there remained a substantial band of "land" between this row of granite boulders and the open water of the harbor channel. Most of this area was subsequently dredged away, and that remaining has since eroded and sloughed-in such that the boulders now act in their intended role as a bulwark against further erosion. Afterwards, we learned that the operator of this machine had uncovered 27 cannonballs, some mortar rounds and wooden structures in the approximate location where Treaty Avenue intersects the new jetty line (see Figure 72 for location of this street). At a later time, BAS-member James L. Smith was able to interview the machine operator, and rendered the operator's recollections into a drawing, which he added to the TARL file for 41BO125 (Figure 90). This diagram and other information were also shared with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [Pollan 1990], after which it is believed they came out and dug some trenches, too shallow to reach the depth of the structures drawn in Figure 90, and with no known written report. Please note the multiple structural elements found, but especially their great depth. This may explain why multiple CRM surveys failed to find anything previously. Perhaps these elements were originally built by excavating underground and/or were covered in later years by dredge spoil (as shown in Figure 69, since one large spoil mound is seen atop this very spot).

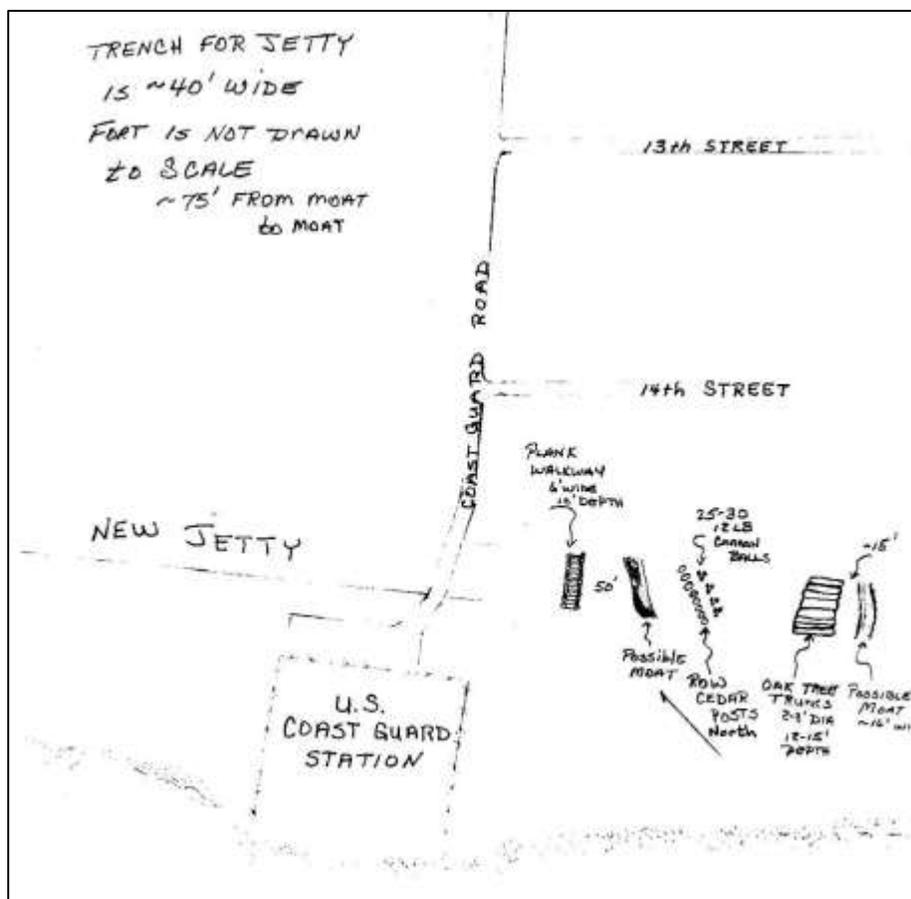


Figure 90: Drawing made by James L. Smith based on recollections of "track hoe" operator, circa 1990

We were also able to secure a photo of two of the cannonballs at a later time, (and estimated they were 12-pounders) after a fire at the machine operator's residence in Surfside, shown below in Figure 91. We have concluded that these were likely from the Civil War Fort Sulakowski, perhaps one "Magazine" as seen in Figure 41.



Figure 91: Two (of 27) cannonballs found when jetty line was built in early 1990's

In the period after construction of the onshore "jetty line" with granite boulders from the older north jetty, a dredge was used to remove most of the remaining land between the jetty line and the open water of the harbor channel. During this period (circa 1991), a collector apparently found additional cannonballs, which he later posted on Facebook. These pictures are shown below as a collage (collectively, as Figure 92), nicely showing the dredge which was in operation at the time. Words by the collector said that he found round lead shot (as displayed in the frame in the background behind the concreted but open ball), and the cannonballs were 6, 12 and fused 24-pound balls that had been found as concretions. One of the larger (24# ??) balls still had an intact fuse. As stated in the text of this report above Figure 41, the 1863 Fort Velasco was armed with heavy cannon (32, 24, 18 and 12-pounders), so these balls may be related to these.

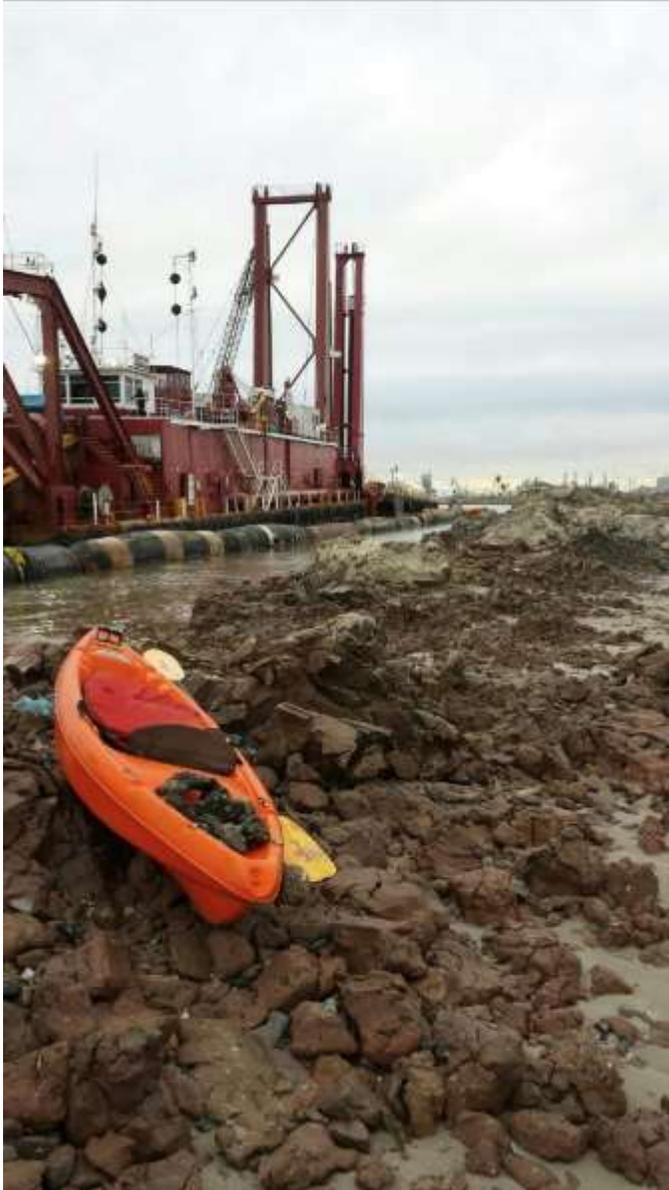




Figure 92: Finds made by collector during dredging of Freeport Harbor Channel, circa 1991

Also beginning about 1990, an assemblage of artifacts (mostly ceramics) had been collected gradually over several years by BAS members on the eroding beach of the harbor channel on the Quintana side (since excavations on land were requested but not allowed), often referred to as the “Quintana Collection” [Blake & Freeman 1998], and are housed at BMNS. One interesting discovery from there was a military coat-size button for the Republic Of Texas Marines Corps [Kneupper 1996]. Similar collections on the Velasco-side eroding “cut bank” and its “beach” over the following years were added to the “Velasco Collection”.

Additionally, some exterior portions of the brick foundations in Surfside Block 568 were excavated more fully by BAS in the period of 1996-2003; with artifacts archived at BMNS. One key finding was that the cistern and brick foundation were really of Anglo-American origin, and most likely from the early days of old Velasco (1835-1860’s), since very few Mexican or military artifacts were uncovered in this excavation (or in the previous excavations of the same area). Indeed, as mentioned above, it is believed that the brick foundations represent outbuildings or a later structure associated with the Archer-Herndon property (Lots 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Velasco Block 13) [Smith Sep-2014], and that the James T. Shannon (Lots 8 and 9) and [Jeremiah Brown](#) (Lot 10) houses were nearby [Smith Dec-2014] - for key of Velasco-platted lots, please see Figure 30 or 31.

In about 1999, a Master Plan was developed for the entire left bank of the old Brazos River at Surfside by Duke Landscape Architecture and Planning of Galveston, financed jointly by the Brazoria County Parks Commission, the Village of Surfside Beach and the CTC. It contained, again, the proposed fort replica of 300-foot diameter (largely in CTC-owned Block 568), advocated by the FVRA and then the CTC. The full Master Plan was illustrated by creating five adjacent drawings or “panels”, and the fort’s detail in Panel 4 is shown below in Figure 93. The full series of panels is shown in Appendix 4.



Figure 93: Detail of fort in Panel 4 of the Duke 1999 Master Plan (Courtesy: Bob Duke)

At about the same time, a journal by [Eduard Harkort](#) was found with descendants in Germany, translated and published [Brister 1999], which included a scale drawing of Velasco in Spring 1836,

showing a circular fort (in red) of just less than 100- feet diameter, now believed to be the only extant document to show or even mention the actual SIZE of the as-built 1832 fort [Harkort 1836a], shown In Figure 94 below.



Figure 93: Spliced drawings 3 and 4 from Harkort journal

It is unclear exactly when this drawing was made, but Harkort's journal indicates he arrived in Velasco about 8-Feb-1836, staying in the Brazoria area until leaving for San Felipe on 21-Feb-1836. The drawing is found in the journal between the entries of 12- and 15-Mar-1836, when the text reveals he was at Washington-on-the-Brazos, so perhaps he copied it into his journal then from observations made as he came through Velasco some weeks earlier. Harkort was ordered back to the coast (from [Beeson's Ford](#)) by Sam Houston on 27-Mar-1836, when the journal stops for six weeks. Sam Houston wrote to [Thomas Rusk](#) saying "I sent Colonel Harcourt, as principal engineer of the army, down to the coast, to erect fortifications at the most eligible point of defence." [Brister 1999 p. 361]. As stated above, in the Bell letter of 31-Mar-1836, the "coast" was Velasco and Galveston, so it would seem likely that Harkort was directly involved in any fort construction at Velasco circa Apr-1836. His name seems to appear in a document previously cited [Morgan 1836], when the "Twin Sisters", Robert Potter and others were transported on the schooner **Flash** from Velasco to New Washington in early Apr-1836, with the entry reading as "Col. Harricourt ... passage from Velasco".

On this 1836 drawing, the distance to the beach is about 500 feet from the fort's seaward wall, and about 200 feet to the river from the fort's riverside wall. A close-up of the Velasco portion is shown below in Figure 95. At the time, the parties to the Duke Master Plan were unaware of the Harkort journal published that same year. The Master Plan also included a RV park (*never built, instead the county built a parking lot and restroom building*) and a boat ramp (*since built by Surfside*).

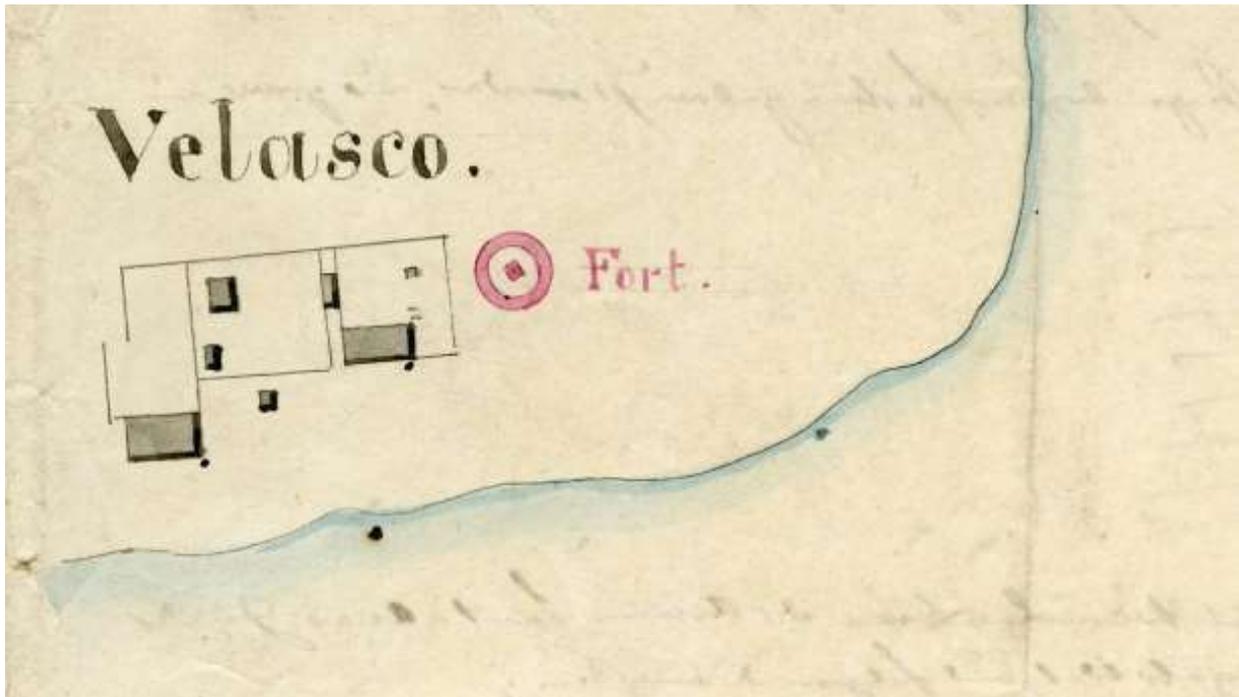


Figure 95: Close-up Detail of Velasco from scale drawing [Harkort 1836a].

This pair of drawings were not the only ones included in Harkort's journal. In total, ten drawings were found in the journal for various areas of southeast Texas, and high-resolution photo duplicates were generously made in 2020 by the Dortmund archive for each from the original journal at our request. One other has relevance for Velasco, as it shows a large-scale drawing of the lower Brazos River, and an excerpt of it for the mouth of the Brazos is shown in Figure 96 below (in this drawing, the direction of southeast is at the top of the map). Please note the dark writing for "Little Fort" and the faint writing for "Batterie", perhaps showing it just northeast of the town of Velasco.



Figure 96: Detail of mouth of Brazos from Harkort Drawing No. 6

In 2002, the Village of Surfside Beach became interested in purchasing land around the City Hall for future community parks. The portion of Block 569 not involved in the jetty line (Lots 1-4, 10, 12 and 14) was donated by private owners to the Village in 2002 (Brazoria County Deed #2002019805, 27-Mar-2002). Plans for the boat ramp in the 1999 Duke Master Plan were amended to branch off the new harbor servicing the new Coast Guard Station. Starting in about 2005, and due to the appearance and accepted use of modern non-invasive techniques (such as ground-penetrating radar or GPR), discussions occurred between the Village of Surfside Beach and the CTC to potentially examine Block 569 with such techniques to see if any definitive evidence could be found for the 1832 fort. The activity was called the “Fort Velasco Discovery Project”, but nothing became of these early efforts. In 2006, plans to build the boat ramp resulted in a contract with Prewitt & Associates to survey and test the impacted area for historical remains. Their report indicates the area involved the former Velasco Block 14 but was heavily disturbed, and intact remnants of old Velasco were no longer present [McWilliams & Boyd 2007].

In 2008, some additional excavations (by trenching) were done by a firm (PBS&J, Austin TX) to test remaining areas between the harbor channel and the jetty line, before the area was lost to erosion [Stahman 2008]. In this report, one Figure shows not only the PBS&J trenches but also the USACE trenches, circa 1990 – the only known published record of this latter trenching. Although some evidence of old Velasco was found, the authors concluded there was low potential for further investigations. Earlier, the same firm had done an underwater survey, finding no significant anomalies would be disturbed [Borgens et al 2006], although this report is not publicly available.

Among the artifacts collected in all of these various excavations, only a small portion are of display quality, but may have a role in future displays (for example, color photographs for any on-site displays) or in other local museums such as the one maintained in Surfside City Hall.

In the period of 2014-2016, Surfside Block 569 was considered for reconstruction of a replica by the Village of Surfside Beach and the CTC, and a first-generation document was published informally [Llewellyn & Kneupper 2014]. It involved a general concept plan for a fort of 100-foot diameter, but also included an “executive summary” of the history of the site and more-recent archaeological investigations in that immediate area. As can be seen in this document, two published archaeological

reports mention the hypothesis about the location of the 1832 fort [Fox et al 1981, Earls et al 1996], basically in Block 569, which borders the current Freeport Harbor channel, and is currently owned by the Brazos River Harbor Navigation District (part) and Village of Surfside Beach (part), as seen in Figure 72. This conclusion was largely based on the reasonable assumption that Monument Square marked the location of the 1832 fort. The CTC owns the adjacent portion of Block 568 not involved with the jetty line (and four lots in Block 560), which as stated previously has been held in trust for a fort reconstruction since the 1960's, and which has been found to contain historical remnants of the old town of Velasco and (perhaps portions of) the Civil War Fort Velasco.

However, as these discussions for a replica became more serious, it was thought best to first attempt to look for any evidence of the 1832 fort prior to any construction using non-invasive techniques to cover the widest possible area. Bid requests were issued in Feb-2015 to four cultural resource management (CRM) firms, to request proposals for a remote-sensing geophysical survey, in a joint effort between CTC and the Village of Surfside Beach. Moore Archaeological Consulting (Houston) was selected, who proposed using GPR and Magnetometry to conduct the survey. The fieldwork was accomplished over the course of two visits in Sep-2015, under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7350, and their final report was produced in 2017 [Hadley & Mangum 2017]. A number of low and medium priority anomalies were identified, but no definitive evidence of the 1832 fort or any other identifiable features were depicted in the resultant geophysical maps.

Following the 2015 survey, no ground-truthing excavations were conducted to investigate and verify any of the geophysical anomalies identified. Also, the Village of Surfside Beach spread several feet of dredge spoil (from boat ramp channel dredging, previously inventoried in large piles on the NW end of Block 569) over the surface of Block 569 and also atop the asphalt surface of Monument Ave. west of Parkview Rd., in furtherance of their plans to build an extensive connecting trail system funded through a Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) grant. The Village of Surfside Beach then built a circular fence-like structure of 100' diameter starting in 2017 at the approximate location in Block 569 presumed (since 1981) to be the historic location of the 1832 fort. Since that time, however, efforts have largely ceased to build a replica at this location.

In the late spring of 2017, the Village of Surfside Beach leased the surface area of Block 568 from the CTC to place connecting trails according to the previously obtained TPWD grant. Despite the fact that the lease agreement prohibited excavations or soil disturbance, proper instructions were not given to a bulldozer operator hired to clear the area of brush and weeds, and several inches of soil were bladed up into three piles of dirt and rubble. The well-known and exposed cistern cavity was filled in with a portion of the bladed soil. Some weeks later, the owners (CTC) discovered this fact, and observed historical artifacts crushed and scattered across the block. During the following weeks, surface collections were attempted by CTC members to recover exposed artifacts [Callahan 2017]. The one surviving datum marker from the BAS excavations of 1996-2003 (two others had been previously destroyed by drainage earthwork) was apparently swept away as it could not be located.

In light of the fact that Monument Square may have instead commemorated the graves of the Texian dead from the Battle Of Velasco (perhaps where John Austin's division took many casualties), the exact location of the 1832 fort might be just adjacent (south) of this area. It is well to remember that the

graves of Texan dead are buried on the bluff at LaGrange (called Monument Hill), and in Goliad it is the Fannin Memorial Monument, both created in the same era. Again, Ellen Shannon claimed her 1887 residence (in Lots 8 and 9 of Velasco Block 13, fronting on the southeast side of Fort Street) as the sight of the Mexican fort, which was agreed with by Mr. Alexander Glass Follett, Sr. [Looscan 1898]. Since both were long-time Velasco residents in the period when remnants of the 1832 fort remained visible, their accounts should be accorded substantial authority. Also, the 1845 MacGreal-O'Connor deed mentions that the Archer-Herndon property was near the "Old Fort" [Brazoria 1845]. The assumption that Monument Square was the location of the 1832 fort does not share similar first-hand accounts. In 1931, Mrs. T. A. Humphries described the location as "*For many years, a cedar post marked the site of the old Mexican fort captured by the Texans in the Battle of Velasco in 1832. It was finally washed away and the location forgotten.*" [Humphries 1931]. This area today is thought to exist in the west corner of Surfside Block 568, very close to the current jetty right-of-way. The 1887 Shannon house is the one apparently shown in the 1888 map (Figure 48), 1890 Goode Drawing #2 (Figure 51) and 1891 map (Figure 54) surrounded by a fence, and (in Figure 54) along Fort Street (which is approximated today by Monument Ave.). This last map even shows the cistern found in various archaeological examinations of the area. Thus, it seems the 1832 fort should lie beach-ward from the current Monument Ave., not northward of this street.

Based on this hypothesis, another attempt was made for a geophysical survey in the 2019-2020 period, but instead focusing on Block 568 and the surrounding rights-of-way, funded by the CTC. Bids were solicited in late 2019, and Cultural Resources Analysts Inc. was selected in Feb-2020. Fieldwork was done in Jun-2020 involving ground-penetrating radar, magnetic gradiometry and electric resistance, followed by analysis and minor ground-truthing (selective excavations) through Jan-2021. The final report [Pye 2021] was published on 23-Aug-2021, and a copy has been uploaded for public access at the Index of Texas Archaeology (ITA): <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2021/iss1/23/>. The report also contains significant archival research done in the period since August-2019, revealing new details about the 1832 Fort Velasco location, the townsite of (old) Velasco, a Republic of Texas battery, and two Civil-War-era forts – *an early excerpt of the preceding discussion in this document*. Based on the geophysical results, it is thought that the data shows strong evidence for the presence of the rear bastion of the 1863 (Civil War era) Fort Velasco, as well as almost the entirety of the 1832 Fort Velasco – located in the approximate area of the Shannon house in current Block 568. The GPR anomalies for these items were found at some depth (2.5 to 3.5 meters), suggesting again that they may be remnants of the original trenches built around the 1832 fort dug deep into the then-existing soil and/or covered later by dredge spoil. No definitive geophysical evidence was found to suggest that graves, associated with casualties in the 1832 Battle of Velasco, were present in the surveyed area. However, as stated above, the Texian graves probably exist in the Block 569 area.

Various artists' renditions of the 1832 fort have also been done over the years as dioramas (shown in Figure 81 above, and another one by museum volunteer Elmer Kerls in Figure 97 below), that were once used at the Brazoria County Historical Museum (BCHM) in Angleton, now no longer in existence. Most historical descriptions of the fort describe two concentric sharpened wood-pole palisades, with sand filling the annular space in between (for an elevated walkway), and a sand mound in the center where a single long eight or nine-pounder (naval) cannon was mounted on a pivot surrounded by a parapet, to engage ships in the harbor channel or nearby Gulf waters. A smaller swivel gun was apparently mounted

on the north wall, intended mostly for anti-personnel use.



Figure 97: Image of diorama by Elmer Kerls formerly at BCHM (photo courtesy of BCHM)

Still another diorama has been built and is on display at the Freeport Historical Museum (see Figure 98 below), and there is a similar diorama at the Surfside Museum (upper floor of city hall) shown in Figure 99 below:



Figure 98: Diorama on display at Freeport Historical Museum



Figure 99: Diorama on display at the Surfside Museum

As can be seen, and due to lack of specific details in the historical record, some “*artistic license*” has been used in these interpretations of the fort. Later dioramas seem to adhere to a smaller size for the fort, probably based on the 1999 appearance of the Harkort drawing.

Research has revealed that a popular coastal fortification in Europe of the era was known as a [Martello tower](#) [George Nelson personal communication], typically equipped with a single naval cannon on a standard wooden carriage, but atop a rotating frame secured to a central pole or pivot (at the rear of the frame) to aim in any direction (for example, see Figure 100 below).



Figure 100: pivot-mounted cannon on a Martello tower

Other photos: [Cannon mount on Martello tower](#)

Indeed, if the 1822 Austin drawing is scrutinized closely, there is a detail that looks very similar to this arrangement (see Figure 101 below). Thus, it would seem that the concept of a [Martello tower](#) was known to professionally-trained soldiers of the Mexican army in this period, and likely that a crude but working version of a pivot-mounted cannon was constructed at Fort Velasco.



Figure 101: Detail of gun tower from 1822 Austin drawing

Another version, more like a horizontal wheel mount, was suggested by a diagram from the BCHM, and this type was reported used in ships of privateers and the Texas Navy (Figure 102 below). Such a design for a rotating cannon mount seems to have come directly from those developed for use on the “Jeffersonian gunboats” of the U.S. Navy in the period of 1801-1812, and subsequently used to arm “Baltimore Clipper” schooners built in 1820-1821 [Chapelle 1949].

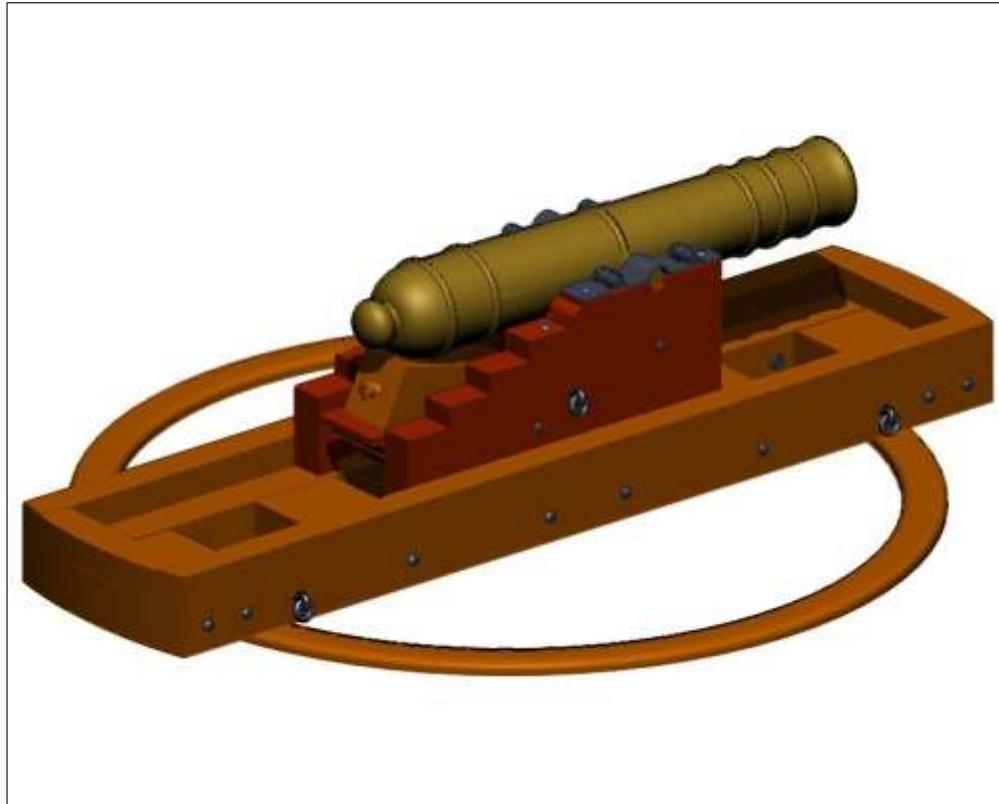


Figure 102: Pivot gun carriage with rotating frame (Courtesy: Michael Bailey at BCHM)

Still another type of pivot mount was used for the cannon type known as a carronade in this era, where the pivot was at the front. Please see the Wikipedia page for Carronade (at the bottom) for an image of this mount: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carronade>

The specific size of the bastion’s cannon at Fort Velasco is not perfectly clear, since several sizes were mentioned in various references, including 6-, 8-, 9- and long 9-pounder cannon. But, among the first-hand accounts, only two sizes are mentioned - a “Cannon of 8” (in Ugartechea’s letters [Ugartechea 26-Mar-1832, 1-Jul-1832] or 8-pound cannon (in [John Austin](#)’s inventory of arms returned to Mexia [Cotten 1832, Holley 1883], and a long 9-pounder (in [Smith [1836] and [Russell 1872]]), which is a term for a smallish piece of naval artillery, typically having a bore of 4.2” and using a ball of 4.1” diameter. An example is shown in Figure 103 below, for a long 8-pounder. The French-designed 8-livre cannon had a ball that weighed 8.633 English pounds, so these may all refer to the same or similar cannon. It may be important to note that Ugartechea NEVER used the word “pound” in any of his descriptions. Additional

secondary Texas references repeat the cannon size as 9- or long-9 pounds. The mention of a “cannon of 6” is found in an early letter of Ugartechea while still preparing at Anahuac [Ugartechea 13-Mar-1832], and is interpreted as “six-pound cannon” in [Henson 1982]; however, this may not have been the cannon he eventually took to Velasco, since he left Anahuac about a month later, and this description can be discounted in favor of the many mentions of 8 to 9 pounds.

Naval long gun info at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_long_gun

... it seems “long nines” refers to the full-length nine-pounder guns.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_artillery_in_the_Age_of_Sail

- see section on “long nines”



Figure 103: Long 8 pounder cannon
(from website at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8-pounder_long_gun)

In contrast, the swivel gun’s size is only mentioned as 4-ounces among first-hand accounts, where Ugartechea mentions it (twice) in his after-report [Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832]. Henry Smith in his account a few years later does mention a “four pounder” [Smith 1836], and this seems to be the source of later references mentioning a 4-pound cannon. However, a 4-pound cannon has a 3” diameter bore, and was probably too heavy for such a use. The authors of “The Texians” used instead a description of a two-inch ball for the swivel gun. The U. S. Army 1862 Ordnance Manual defines a 4-ounce cast-iron shot as being 1.231 inches diameter, and calculations confirm this size of cast-iron shot does indeed weigh right at 4 ounces. We conclude that the weapon was probably an iron-barreled muzzle-loading weapon (similar to a “[wall gun](#)”) but something less than a small cannon, something like that shown in Figure 104 below, but we are uncertain of the exact configuration.

Swivel gun info at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swivel_gun or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breech-loading_swivel_gun

National Park Service Manual: <https://www.nps.gov/stri/upload/Swivel-gun-manual-revised.pdf>



Figure 104: Various images of Swivel Guns of 1 to 1.5" bore

Other images: <http://www.vikingsword.com/vb/showthread.php?t=24913>

In the period of 2019-2020, a potential relic from Velasco was re-discovered in the area of Brownsville, Texas. Descendants of [William Jarvis Russell](#) in that area have handed down a flag reported by them to have been flown from the schooner *Brazoria* during the Battle of Velasco in 1832, and recovered by Russell after the ship was damaged. It was restored by the Brownsville Historical Association at Jessica Hack Textile Restoration in New Orleans with funds from a Historic Preservation Grant from the Daughters of the American Revolution [American Spirit 2020]. The restored flag is currently on display at the Brownsville Heritage Museum: https://www.brownvillehistory.org/assets/bha-banner-newsletter_april-2019.pdf. Historians disagree whether this flag is actually from the battle, since no flag is mentioned in contemporaneous accounts of the 1832 battle, although a similar red/white/blue flag was used to represent the firm of [McKinney, Williams and Company](#) [James Glover, personal communication] which was founded in 1834, and this design ultimately became the ensign of the Republic of Texas Navy. Such a design was known as early as 1834, since a Bill Of Lading for the Schooner *Brazoria* has a printed image of a steamboat flying such a flag [Maberry 2001 p. 29]. Perhaps the Russell flag was used or recovered in the years afterwards, as he was involved in the Texas Revolution. The program for the Velasco-Freeport Centennial Celebration on 14-May-1936 at the Velasco Coast Guard Station stated "At 9:45 A. M., a replica of the flag flown on the Schooner *Brazoria* during the Battle of Velasco, June 26, 1832 ... will be hoisted to the breeze."; however, the subsequent paragraph continues "The flag that was nailed to the mast of the Schooner *Brazoria* ... was the Mexican flag with the word 'Constitution' in the center". In 1958, Texas governor Price Daniel reestablished the Texas Navy as a ceremonial organization to publicize the marine interests of Texas, and this mostly social group was (and informally still is) referred to as the "Third Texas Navy", re-designated as the Texas Navy Association in 1972. This group uses a flag design essentially identical to the Russell flag (see Figure 105).



Figure 105: Ceremonial flag of the Texas Navy Association

CONCLUSIONS

The “port of Galvezton” was officially established in 1825, but chiefly operated out of the mouth of the Brazos until late 1831, when its administration was transferred to Anahuac. The city known today as Galveston, though, did not exist until after the Texas Revolution, although ships used the anchorage.

Premature and unsuccessful efforts by George Fisher were made as early as the summer of 1830 to establish a customs post at the mouth of the Brazos, including many plans and the seizure of at least one schooner for smuggling tobacco. However, actual creation of the first customs post was delayed until early 1831, built by Mexican soldiers under the command of Juan Davis Bradburn, using Anahuac as a base of operations.

Although some sort of customs house or post existed for about a year prior, the construction of the palisaded Fort Velasco occurred over a rather short period of about four weeks in Apr-May 1832, under the direction of Domingo de Ugartechea. The Battle of Velasco occurred only a month later, so the occupation period by the Mexican garrison of the fort was very short.

The 1832 fort built by the Mexican soldiers is now thought to have been about 100' in diameter, and some if not most buildings such as customs house, barracks, stables, offices and warehouses were probably built outside such a small fort, some of which were burnt down just prior to the Battle of Velasco. Strategically-important items such as a cistern or well, as well as armory, magazines or powder room were probably inside the fort walls.

Recent research, as described in this report, reveals that graves from the Battle of Velasco exist in the immediate vicinity of the 1832 fort. The presence of graves, suspected to exist in Block 569, provides an additional but important reason to continue archaeological efforts.

The fort's precise location has also now been confirmed, in the current Block 568, an area once occupied by the Shannon house in Velasco Block 13. The size of the circular images found in this geophysical survey may indicate the dry ditch surrounding the circular fort, and also support a fort diameter of approximately 100', as shown in the Harkort drawing. The depth of the GPR anomalies, along with a similar depth for the features found by the “track hoe” operator about 1990 (suspected to be from the Civil War fort), may explain why previous efforts have failed to find direct evidence of these forts.

In a larger sense, Brazoria County seems to have been in the center of early and growing dissent in this period among the Texian colonists leading to the Texas Revolution, catalyzed by the Law of 6-Apr-1830 and its zealous implementation by the likes of George Fisher, Juan Davis Bradburn, Thomas M. Thompson and later Santa Anna. Mexican leaders such as Jose Antonio Mexía, Domingo de Ugartechea, Lorenzo de Zavala and perhaps even Manuel Mier y Terán were more liberal and diplomatic with the Texans and, if their policies had prevailed, the Texas Revolution might never have happened.

Other forts were built later, also called Fort Velasco, during the Texas Revolution and the American Civil War. The Republic Of Texas battery and the original Civil War fort known as the "Town Fort" existed in areas now lost to modern harbor widening. However, near the current jetty line may be remains of the rear bastion of the Civil War fort known also as Fort Sulakowski. The redoubt on the Brazos-Galveston Canal was also lost, to widening of the Intracoastal Canal, and was approximately where the new high bridge crosses it today. Only the location of the redan on Oyster Creek appears to still be intact.

Old Velasco played a more significant role in early Texas history than is generally recognized today, and efforts should be made to redress the situation by historical interpretation of the area, to teach locals and promote heritage tourism for visitors. As mentioned by author [James Llewellyn Allhands](#) - *"To a close observer there is wealth of information about the early days of Texas; stored in the immediate vicinity of Brazoria. The story of its settlement is interesting, for the county, which name it bears, was truly the cradle of Texas liberty and virtually Texas at one time, yet not a monument has been erected, nor a marker placed, nor a spot in this immediate territory set aside as a memorial."* [Allhands 1931 p. 217].

Ongoing research will be posted at <https://velascohistoryarchaeology.weebly.com/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Certain historical markers, now located along the terminus of Hwy-332 near the beach, for Old Velasco, Velasco (Battle of ...) and/or the jetties might be re-located to the area near Surfside blocks 568 and 569, since this would be more historically accurate. Since discovery of the 1833 Arkansas Advocate article [Bertrand 1833], creation of a replica for the monument suggested for the graves of Texian dead from the Battle of Velasco has been discussed, and could be considered for the same area. A drawing was made by Leslie Bryson of Bryson Memorials (see Figure 106 below).

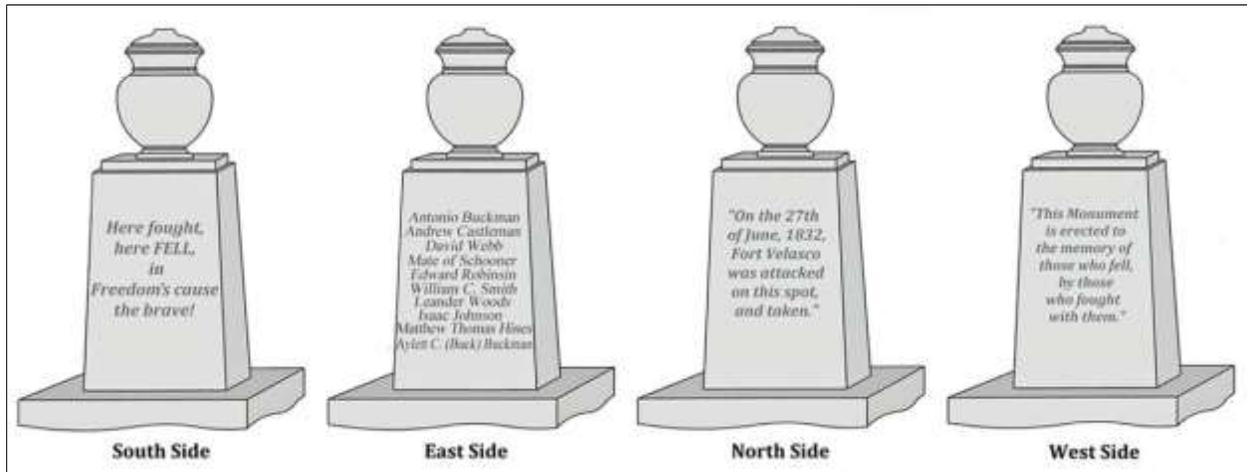
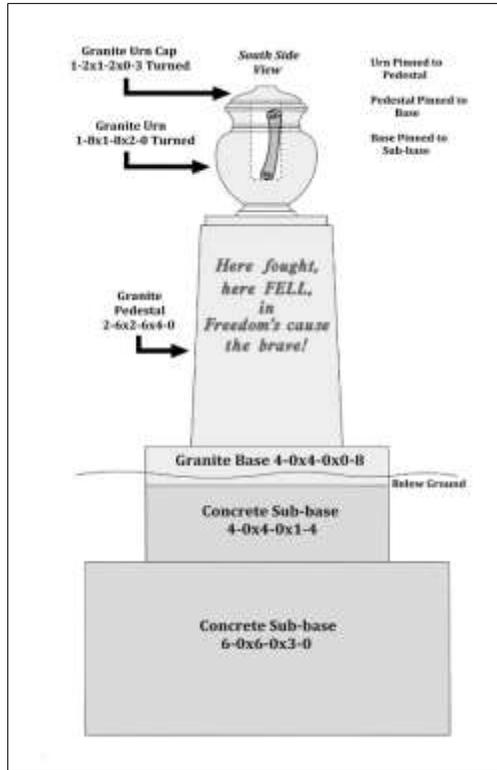


Figure 106: Drawing of potential re-creation of 1833 Monument, by Leslie Bryson

Lastly, other points of interest, might be considered for new markers, perhaps even modest ones sponsored by the county or village. For example, since the location of the U.S. Lifesaving Station has been clarified to be near the old mouth of Oyster Creek, it may be appropriate to place a marker near this spot, perhaps adjacent to the Blue Water Highway. Others might be placed for the Republic of Texas fort, Civil War forts, or the Surfside Hotel.

A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by their descendants.

- Thomas Babington Macaulay

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Stamp used on letters from José María Viesca, Governor of Coahuila y Tejas from 1827 to 1831 (e.g., TGLO Spanish Archives #568, Box 125/9 p.97)

Appendix 1 – Reference Details about 1832 fort construction

Any specific mention of details about the 1832 fort are quoted below.

Note: first-hand and/or contemporaneous accounts are highlighted in **bold Red**

[Ugartechea 13-Mar-1832]

“... getting myself ready for marching, within eight days, **with one cannon of 6 (un cañón á 6.) and 100 infantrymen**, carrying at the same time aboard, all of the utensils for fortifying myself at the mouth of the Brazos River, carrying with me the receiver named by the government for that point, Don Francisco Duclor ...”.

[Ugartechea 26-Mar-1862]

He was still at Anahuac on 26-Mar-1832, when he wrote another letter from there to [José de las Piedras](#), commander at Nacogdoches, twice mentioning his “**cañón de á 8**” and “**cañón de á ocho**”. Further, he wrote that he had **no gunpowder cartridges for his “cannon of eight”, but he will make 100 cartridges from Anahuac’s supply** and asks Piedras to replace it.

[Ugartechea 1-Jul-1832] – Guerra translation to English (unless noted otherwise)

p. 2: “... (Jun) 24th, around eleven, a force of about 150 men on horseback was observed coming toward the fort, and while still a long distance away, they maneuvered their horses to and fro. I chose not to fire cannon; because **I could not afford to waste the powder. It was in such short supply.**”

“... My cannon never failed to return their fire; and I had foreseen, I had the rifle and carbine men on the barbette so that is some way they could cover the artillerymen.

*p. 4 of original: “... **y en un lado del fuerte tenia un cañonsito de 4 onzas que casualmente estava colocado al frente del parapeto de los decidentes.***

Translation: “... and on one side of the fort, I had a little cannon of four ounces which incidentally was located in the front of the parapet of the dissidents.”

*p. 6 of the original: “... ningun tiro tenia para **el pedrero** pero de la misma polbora quedo probisto con 40 asi mande alavez a mi tropa con dezirles que haun unas utiliwzeran las ballonetas en el fuerte pues que ya los habiamos hecho corer.”*

Translation: “... we had no shot for the **swivel gun**, but from the same powder it resulted in providing for 40 so I commanded at the same time to my troops by saying to them perhaps some can use the bayonets in the fort now that we have made them run.”

*p. 6 of the original: “En este permanecimos y despues de haver comido la tropa que estava bastante fatigada por haver sostenido un largo y vivo fuego en el que se tiraron por una pequena fuerza 4,600 tiros de fucil, 96 con **el cañon de a ocho**, y setenta y seis con **el pedrero de cuatro onzas**, se dispuso para sufrir un neubo golpe al tiempo que con el antejo se bio que una columna come de 150 hombres de caballa se avansava asia al fuerte, pero a distancia de media milla echaron pie a tierra; ...”*

Translation: In this state we found ourselves and after having eaten, the troops which were plenty fatigued for having sustained a large and lively fire which were shot by a small force 4,600 musket shots, 96 with the **cannon of eight**, and seventy-six with **the swivel gun of four ounces**, disposed themselves to suffer a new attack at the time which could be seen with binoculars that a single column of 150 men on horseback was advancing toward the fort, but at a distance of half a mile, they dismounted ...”

- *transcriptions and translation by Xavier Sendejo, Sep-2019*

p.3: “ ... the schooner moored on the river at **about two hundred paces from the fort.**”
 ... after the battle, he mentions “I ordered that my wounded be taken out from the fort, and placed in one of the two houses that I had left unburned.” – **thus indicating that buildings were mostly OUTSIDE of the small fort.**

Note: certain parts of the original Spanish handwritten text appears to have been incorrectly and only partially translated in both known translations, complicated by the complicated syntax used by Ugartechea. The term he used for the swivel gun was “**cañonsito de 4 onzas**” and “**pedrero de cuatro onzas**” (meaning 4 ounces). At another point, he writes “**cañon de a ocho**” (meaning “**cannon of eight**”), a term not found in either original translation. So, it appears the swivel gun was not a hefty swivel-mounted cannon but more like a large smoothbore flintlock weapon. The “cannon of eight” then agrees with [John Austin’s](#) identification of the main cannon (see next section). The Guerra translation did correctly translate the term for ounces, but this has been marked out in local copies and replaced with pounds – probably a misinterpretation that has been promulgated into later secondary references. The Ordnance Manual of the U. S. Army for 1862 lists that 4-ounce cast-iron shot has a diameter of 1.231 inches, so it seems most likely that Ugartechea had a small swivel-pin-mounted muzzle loader (i.e., a “wall gun”) of this size.

Weight.		Diameter.	Weight.		Diameter.	Weight.		Diameter.
Lbs.	Oz.	In.	Lbs.	In.	Lbs.	In.	Lbs.	In.
0	4	1.231	9	4.065	23	5.581	37	6.512
6	1.403	10	4.211	24	5.639	38	6.570	
8	1.551	11	4.346	25	5.714	39	6.627	
10	1.605	12	4.474	26	5.780	40	6.684	
12	1.701	13	4.595	27	5.862	41	6.738	
14	1.865	14	4.710	28	5.930	42	6.793	
1	1.954	15	4.819	29	6.004	43	6.846	
2	2.462	16	4.924	30	6.068	44	6.898	
3	2.819	17	5.025	31	6.140	45	6.951	
4	3.104	18	5.121	32	6.205	46	7.002	
5	3.341	19	5.215	33	6.268	47	7.052	
6	3.551	20	5.304	34	6.330	48	7.101	
7	3.738	21	5.392	35	6.392	49	7.145	
8	3.908	22	5.478	36	6.442	50	7.198	

[Fisher 1832]

“In few day a vessel goes from here to the mouth of the river Brazos with **100 men and a 8 pounder**, under command of Leut. Colonel Domingo Ugartechea, with all the necessaries for a fortification at the entrance of said River, accompanied by two other officers and two customhouse officers; in consequence of these preparations, it is necessary that you should with possible despach (*sic*) place said **buildings and the ferry boat**, also sufficient lumber to make the **sheds to the warehouse**, and in case of need, to put some repairs to Mitchells house. The officers of the **Constante** accompany the expedition, on board the **Topaz.**”

[Cotten 1832, Holley 1833]

Return of arms and ammunition taken at Fort Velasco, 26th June, 1832.

- 1 Brass cannon, 8 pounder, 1 Small Iron Swivle;**
- 30 Cartridges for the cannon 45 do For the swivel
- 2000 do For muskets 40 Cartouch boxes

2 Brass blunder-busses

8th. **The Cannon of 8, and the Swivel Gun**, shall remain on Fort Velasco, with all the public stores, supraumerary guns and ammunition. *Note: this provision has been copied into [Rowe 1903 p. 291].*

[Breedlove 1832]

Another version of the effects returned to Fort Velasco and Mexía:

1 Brass long nine Pounder (mounted on carriage) 1 Small iron Swivel (mounted on Block)

A Small Quantity cartridges Grape Shot and Balls for ea(ch) 1 Broken Rifle

1 Lott old Bayonets and Scabbards, 1 do Cartruch Boxes, etc.

[Wharton 1832]

"We have kept about 80 rounds of powder for the **9 pounder & all the shot & slugs.**"

[Fry 1832]

"... The Fort of Velasco was attacked by the American colonists under the command of Captain [John Austin](#), with a force of 120 men **The Fort, mounting one long brass nine pounder** and 90 men ... "

[Russell 1872]

"... The plan and structure of the fort were well understood, of **circular form, of logs and sand, with strong stakes, sharpened, and placed close together, all around the embankment. In the center, stood a bastion, in height considerably above the outer wall, on top of which was mounted a long nine-pounder, worked on a pivot, and around which, on top of the bastion, was a parapet made of wood, about two feet in height.**"

"... It was well known by that attacking party (Capt. John Austin's party) that there was **mounted on the wall of the fort a small piece of artillery facing the point of their approach**, but it was believed that the wooden breastwork was of sufficient thickness to protect those behind them. This proved quite a mistake. Very much damage was done by this small gun, the balls often passing through the planks, inflicting death or wounds. The man Robinson, who gave the alarm, was the first man killed."

"... the distance being only **one hundred and sixty-nine yards from the schooner to the bastion gun** in the fort ..."

"... The only serious damage done on board the ([Brazoria](#)) vessel by the post was, that during the night a **nine-pound shot** passed through her side, striking the mate (who, as per agreement, had retired, as was supposed, to a place of safety) just between his shoulders, passing entirely through him. His death was instantaneous."

[Linn 1986 p. 18]

The fort of Velasco was **constructed in circular form, covering about one half acre**. It was situated on the east bank of the Brazos River, and near its mouth. *Note: half acre circle equals about 166.5 feet diameter.*

[Pearson 1901]: quoting Edwin Waller from 1873-1874

... fort of circular form, having in the center a mound or raised platform of earth, whereon the artillery was placed *en barbette*, so as to fire over the outer wall, and command a range on every side. This outer wall was surrounded by a *fosse* or ditch, and perhaps something intended for *chevaux de frize*

or [abattis](#).

[Smith 1836]

p. 38: "... It will be recollected that there was a strong fortress at the mouth of the river Brazos [Velasco] garrisoned by about one hundred and fifty men, well armed and provisioned with **one long brass nine mounted on a carriage and one iron four pounder on a pivot.**"

p. 39: "... During the time our vessel (*Brazoria*) was getting in readiness, we had prepared a kind of breastwork for the land forces which was made **of cypress plank ten or twelve feet in length nailed on battons to the widths of about four feet** which were to be set up with props".

p. 40: "... we must suffer severely from the effects of their **nine-pounder** ..."

p. 41: "... they let off their **nine-pounder** and threw a double headed shot through her (*Brazoria's*) rigging ..." <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qt01>

p. 41-42: "**The fort was a complete circle enclosing but a small area so that it was full and completely manned. The nine-pounder was planted on an elevation in the center of [or] perhaps ten feet above the musquetry.** As soon as our company opened on the fort, it seemed to ignite instantaneously and flame like a volcano. And from that time until the battle ended, the fort seemed to emit one continued blaze of fire. **They had burned all the houses but two, one was used as a custom house, and the other a small office.**

p. 42: "We ... learned one thing, and that was in some measure to escape the shot of the **nine-pounder.**"
"**... planted the palisades within thirty paces of the fort so that their nine-pounder could not be depressed enough to bear upon us, but [we] were compelled to stand the four pounder and the musquetry.**"

[Brown 1970]: original edition is from 1893

"... The fort at Velasco stood about **a hundred and fifty yards both from the river and the Gulf shore** which formed a right angle. It consisted of **parallel rows of posts six feet apart, filled between with sand, earth and shells, for the outer walls.** Inside of the walls was an embankment on which musketeers could stand and shoot over without exposing anything but their heads. **In the center was an elevation of the same material, inclosed by higher posts,** on which the artillery was planted and protected by bulwarks.

[Looscan 1898]:

quoting Guy M. Bryan: "... logs were used, but in the manner of stockade ... The fort was circular in shape and composed of sound drift logs set perpendicularly in two circular rows, the space of several feet between them being filled in with sand. A mound of sand in the center, raised above the pickets, was surrounded by wood to prevent the sand being blown off. On this mound was mounted a nine-pound cannon, which was on a swivel so as to make a complete circuit guarding the mouth of the river; it could not, however, be depressed so as to protect the immediate vicinity, hence on the night of the attack by [John Austin](#), it could not play upon the Texians close to the fort, but was used against the schooner [Brazoria](#), commanded by Capt. Wm. J. Russell."

"Mrs. Ellen A. Shannon gives a reliable account of the site of the old fort, which, she says **is now marked by her own residence.** Her husband had often called her attention to one of the posts or upright logs of the old fort, with muskets stuck in it. During the Civil War the Confederate soldiers used all of the fences, posts, etc. of every kind for firewood, and probably every piece of iron that pertained to the accoutrements of an army."

*Quoting Mr. A. G. Follett: "... in 1875 the severe storm revealed evidence of the location of the old fort ... it washed up a number of small Mexican coins of the value of twenty-five cents and a **small copper cannon ball** on its site." (Mexican soldiers used brass canister shot, one such ball was also recovered in the salvage excavations of the early 1990's.)*

[Seele 1979 p. 99]

Buegel states "... **From the fort, which was three hundred paces from the shoreline, we could, during the day, see three ships in the telescope.**"

[Rowe 1903]

p.277: "...As soon as Colonel Ugartechea reached Anahuac with the troops furnished him by Terán to reinforce that place, he was sent by Bradburn **on April 2, 1832 with one hundred and ten men and an eight-pounder, to establish a fort at the mouth of the Brazos.**"

[Filisola 1848]

p. 81 (of English translation): "... Lieutenant Colonel Ugartechea ... arrived in Anahuac ... Davis ordered on the following April 2 that he **go with one hundred ten men and one piece of eight caliber artillery (Spanish p. 192: una pieza de á ocho)** to set up a fort at the mouth of the Brazos."

[Dow 1961]

"The new momento is a **cast-iron cannonball, weighing a trifle less than 9 pounds**. In a remarkable state of preservation, it was unearthed in some excavation work at the Chlorine-5 plant at Plant A. The weight of the cannonball, and the place where it was dug up, have led local historical researchers to conclude that it was fired by the Mexicans at the Texans during the battle of Velasco, June 25-26, 1832. **A long brass cannon, throwing a ball of nine pounds was the main defensive armament of the Mexican fort at Velasco during the battle.**"

[Creighton 1975]

p. 62: "When they ([John Austin](#) and others) passed by Velasco at the mouth of the Brazos, **Colonel Ugartechea, who had been sent there early in April (1832) with one hundred and ten men and an eight pounder to establish a fort**"

p. 65: "The fort at Velasco was not then strong. **It was built in circular form of drift logs standing perpendicularly in two rows. The intervening space was filled with sand. In the middle of the fort, raised on a bastion of sand somewhat higher than the outer walls, a nine-pound swivel gun covered all approaches. The main defect in this deployment was a two-foot parapet atop the bastion, which protected the gunners but prevented the gun from being deflected low enough to fire on attackers approaching the fort.**"

[Henson 1982, Gulick et al 1968 V:352-354, Bulletin 1999]

As mentioned previously, references indicate that men and material were transferred to Anahuac and then Velasco over a period time. Lamar says "The Vessel reached Anahuac in safety, landed the soldiers; and then **filling her with pickets to build a fort at Velasco**, she sailed with Col. Ugartechea aboard to the mouth of the Brazos, where she was wrecked and lost."

[Henson 1982 p. 88]

“... By the third week in March (1832), Ugartechea, accompanied by Francisco Duclor, the customs collector, had reached his destination on the eastern bank of the Brazos with 100 troops, **one six-pound cannon**, and all the materials needed to build the fort, to be named Velasco. Fisher had already ordered repairs to the old building that was being used as a customs house, and had also contracted for a new office, a ferryboat, and a warehouse. By May the little fort was complete, and **the mounted cannon commanded not only vessels crossing the bar but also all of the private buildings on the point of land near the entrance to the river.**

Note: the mention of a 6-pound cannon is obviously derivative of Ugartechea's letter of 13-May-1832 mentioning a cannon of 6-calibre; however, he departed later for the Brazos, and subsequently mentioned instead a "cañon of 8" several times.

[Boddie 1978] p. 8, columns 2-3

“... In the center was a higher structure on which was a **9-pound cannon mounted on a swivel**. The fort also had a **4-pound cannon.**”

[Hicks & Parkinson 1980]

pp. 173-174: “ ... **Three hundred yards from the seashore and a hundred yards from the river's edge**, the big stockade dominated the gateway to Texas' main water highway. **The fort was a circle, three hundred feet in diameter, the outer wall a double wall of large upright stakes, sharpened at the top. Six feet inside the first row was a second row of logs, with the space filled in with sand to about four feet from the top.** The resulting barricade was nearly impregnable to small cannon fire, and the final rise of the outer fence gave protection to the defenders at the wall.

In the center of the compound was a high mound of earth, taller than the facing walls. Hollowed into the side of this was a powder magazine, and on top was a **pivot-mounted nine-pound cannon**, surrounded by a wood parapet. Elsewhere in the compound, their roofs showing above the stockade, were various buildings. A wide, waist-deep moat surrounded the entire fort at a distance of fifty yards, fed from a small bayou that entered the river here.”

pp. 217-218: “There was one weapon the Texians did not know about. It was a **small swivel gun** that could be mounted at any of the several points on the perimeter wall. **Smaller than a cannon**, it could nevertheless **fire a two-inch ball** at great velocity and with deadly accuracy. Both the Texians and the Mexicans, most of them, were unaware of this weapon, but it might just make the difference. He was very sure they would try to get under the range of the big cannon. It was here, at close range, that the swivel gun would come into play.”

p.220: “Ugartechea called a lieutenant to him and directed the **swivel gun to be mounted on the north wall**. Within minutes it was there, and the gunners opened fire. ... The swivel gun was almost directly above him, and the gunner saw his flash and brought it around and down. He fired, and the ball found the bulwark, ripped through the planking and took Buckner high in the chest. He gasped and grabbed Britt Bailey's arm, his hand crushing down on his friend's bicep, then relaxing. Even a giant was no match for a **two-inch ball.**”

p. 226: “... we are low on ammunition for both our cannon and our muskets. We have **forty-five cannon balls, seventy-eight for the swivel gun and about six hundred musket rounds.**”

Appendix 2 – Details on 1822 Austin diagram

Words found on 1822 fort diagram in Stephen F. Austin Map Collection, Call# SA121822
Briscoe Center for American History (Austin, Texas)

High-resolution photocopies of each side were purchased in Sep-2019 from the Briscoe Center, as TIF files. Each image is about 236 MB in size, allowing fine details to be observed

The preferred citation: Stephen F. Austin Map Collection, Call Number SA 121822 (stored in 2.325/OD20), high-resolution photos available as [identifier number: di_11854, di_11863], The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

Front side:

Center:

Varas cuadradas	square varas
Area 11296	area 11296 (<i>equivalent to 60 varas radius</i>)

umentado el radio a 100 varas	increasing the radius to 100 varas
se dan 31,380 Varas cuadradas	gives 31,380 square varas
y 120 dan 45187 V. ^s quad. Espacio suficiente	and 120 gives 45187 square varas space
p. ^a (para) contener 25,000 cabezas de ganado	sufficient to contain 25,000 head of cattle

<i>lower center, left of fence (faintly, in English script):</i> trouble	
<i>about 110° from vertical</i> to prevent cattle falling

<i>upper left square: 120 varas</i>	120 varas
14400 varas cuadradas	14400 square varas
<i>(repeated for square in lower right square)</i>	
<i>above the square (faintly):</i> tala -- -	felling, (<i>for abattis</i>)
????	
___ lueta p. ^a tropa	_____ for troops
___ l foso	_____ moat

<i>buildings:</i> Torre	Tower
vigas	beams

<i>barricade?:</i> Mantelete	Mantlet or mantelet*
------------------------------	----------------------

<i>gate?:</i> x x hucas (tuercos?)	???? (<i>nuts?</i>)
p p laes (pernos?)	???? (<i>bolts?</i>)
y llave p. ^a (para) x x	and wrench for x x

<i>roof?:</i> g gozne	hinge
-----------------------	-------

Back side:

Top:

Escala de varas castellanos	scale of Castilian rods
-----------------------------	-------------------------

(Note: a Castilian rod or vara = 2.74247 feet = 0.914157 yards, so 60 varas = 164.5 feet, thus a radius of

60 varas = 329.1 feet diameter)

Upper center (to right of tower and above the profile):

at etcalade & with the Skins fine shade (*very faint, in English script?, and unsure of letters*)

Left side:

a a a Superficie ó nivel de la tierra

o o foso profundo de 3 pies

x x tierra sacada del foso y amontonada en forma de glacis siguiendo la linea de tiro D x x

D x x linea de tiro superior

D o o id id_ inferior_

f f f foso si se cree necesario

E estacada _ estando cada estaca á la distancia de 2 pies de la otra se necesitarán

564 estacas _ dando 22 pulgadas a cada soldado 615 guarnecerán el foso

en una fila y 1230 en dos filas – pero como regulam.^{te} no habrá banqueta

los soldados subirán lo mejor que puedan sobre las estacas y de allá

tirarán _ La Torre necesitará p.^a su guarnacion de 6 a 8 hombres _

a a a Surface or ground level

o o 3-foot deep moat

x x earth pulled out of the moat and piled in glacis** shape along the firing line

D x x line of top fire

D o o line of lower fire

f f f f moat if thought necessary

E stockade _ each stake being at the distance of 2 feet*** from the other, 564 stakes will be needed.

Giving 22 inches*** to each soldier, 615 will garrison the moat

in one row, and 1230 in two rows – but as there will regularly not be a bench,

the soldiers will climb as best they can over the stakes and shoot from there.

The Tower will need for its garrison 6 to 8 men.

Lower right:

Horizontal: A Map (in black ink, crossed out in pencil)

Drawing of fort by S F Austin (?) (*in pencil*)

1822

Vertical: Stephen Fuller Austin of the Province

of Texas Stephen Fuller Austin

Stephen Fuller Austin of the

Province of Texas (? S J Sunuary ?).

Mexico – 1822.

**mantlet - a large shield or portable shelter used for stopping projectiles in medieval and later warfare. For more info and images see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantlet>*

***glacis - a gently sloping bank, in particular one that slopes down from a fort, exposing attackers to the defenders' missiles.*

****these are Castilian measurements, with a foot and inch being about 0.92 of the English equivalent.*

Transcribed and translated by Chris Kneupper and James E. "Jake" Ivey, 2-Oct-2019

Appendix 3 – Burial Locations of Persons of importance to old Velasco

Allhands, James Llewellyn (1879-1978)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/204247294/james-llewellyn-allhands>

Archer, Branch Tanner (1790-1856)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6064464/branch-tanner-archer>

Austin, Stephen Fuller (1793-1836)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6464/stephen-fuller-austin>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45/stephen-fuller-austin>

Bache, Alexander Dallas (1806-1867)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6450164/alexander-dallas-bache>

Barker, Eugene Campbell (1874-1956)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56889391/eugene-campbell-barker>

Barnett, Thomas (1798-1843)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/235368292/thomas-barnett>

Bates, Joseph (1805-1888)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7779204/joseph-bates>

Brown, Henry Stevenson (1783-1834)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9443055/henry-stevenson-brown>

Brown, John Henry (1820-1895)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9803/john-henry-brown>

Brown, Jeremiah (-1839)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/213852706/jeremiah-brown>

Raine, Frances Rebecca *Spragins* Brown (1816-1907)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/197331293/frances-rebecca-raine>

Burnet, David Gouverneur (1788-1870)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6475360/david-gouverneur-burnet>

Chriesman, Horation (1792-1878)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16066259/horatio-chriesman>

Coode, Sir John (1816-1892)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6638581/robert-potter>

Cross, Abraham "Abram" (1837-1905)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/153209654/abraham-cross>

De Zavala, Lorenzo (1788-1836)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8063114/manuel-lorenzo_justiniano-de_zavala

Fearn, Howard B. (1923-2012)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122255128/howard-b-fearn>

Follett, Alexander Glass (1822-1906)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60130951/alexander-glass-follett>

Follett, Susan Adaline "Addie" *Hudgins* (1876-1977)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/41584680/susan-adaline-follett>

Gray, William Fairfax (1787-1841)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15123170/william-fairfax-gray>

Grayson, Thomas Wigg (1808-1873)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16233346/thomas-wigg-grayson>

Green, Thomas Jefferson (1802-1863)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8057227/thomas-jefferson-green>

John Hunter Herndon (1813-1878)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55665368/john-hunter-herndon>

Holley, Mary Austin Phelps (1784-1846)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29348131/mary-phelps-holley#>

Hoskins, Isaac C. (1797-1859)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/193877292/isaac-c.-hoskins>

Hoskins, Nancy Ann Spragins (1803-1873)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60049680/nancy-ann-hoskins>

Houston, Sam (1793-1863)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/510/sam-houston>

Hudgins, John Longest (1822-1909)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/102247137/john-longest-hudgins>

Hudgins, Charles D. (1857-1924)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/102251132/charles-d-hudgins>

Hunter, Kermit Houston (1910-2001)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40621971/kermit-houston-hunter>

Jack, Spencer Houston (1811-1840)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7730963/spencer-houston-jack>

Kramig, George Jr. (1919-2011)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/150228141/george-kramig>

Lamar, Mirabeau Buonaparte (1798-1859)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6548954/mirabeau-buonaparte-lamar>

Letts, Bessie Lucille (Mrs. Clark Wright, 1901-1996)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/1347566/bessie-wright>

Looscan, Adele Lubbock Briscoe (1848-1935)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28689477/adele-lubbock-looscan>

Lubbock, Francis Richard (1815-1905)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8062038/francis-richard-lubbock>

Manning, William Ray (1871-1942)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/179025954/william-ray-manning>

McKinley, Lela Ethel (1905-1978)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/107751395/lela-ethel-mckinley>

McKinney, Thomas Freeman (1801-1873)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/32784985/thomas-freeman-mckinney>

Mitchell, Asa (1795-1865)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173267663/asa-mitchell>

Mitchell, Charlotte *Woodmancy* (1800-1830)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/213476181/charlotte-mitchell>

Mitchell, Emily *Brisbane* (1816-1863)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/213476429/emily-mitchell>

Morgan, James (1787-1866)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8813220/james-morgan>

Potter, Robert (1800-1842)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6638581/robert-potter>

Russell, William Jarvis (1802-1881)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16292035/william-jarvis-russell>

Sandlin, Dale (1913-2010)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/50096683/dale-strait-sandlin>

Santa Anna, Antonio López de (1795-1876)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11566057/antonio-l%C3%B3pez_de_santa_anna

Shannon, James Thompson (1818-1883)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/212950127/james-thompson-shannon>

Shannon, Charlotte Waterman *Follett* (1830-1860)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/212951442/charlotte-waterman-shannon>

Shannon, Ellen Wilcox (1841-)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/212950825/ellen-adele-shannon>

Shelby, David (1799-1872)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/214659280/david-shelby>

Shreve, John Milton (1811-1886)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54230823/john-milton-shreve>

Singleton, Harold (1922-1978)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42113210/harold-dean-singleton>

Sulakowski, Valery (1825-1873)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205849071/valery-sulakowski>

Turner, Amasa (1800-1877)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30591492/amasa-turner>

Waller, Edwin Leonard (1800-1881)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18182/edwin-leonard-waller>

Wharton, William Harris (1802-1839)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6064483/william-harris-wharton>

Williams, Samuel May (1795-1858)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33399038/samuel-may-williams>

Wilson, Robert (1793-1856)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18207/robert-wilson>

Wisner, George Young (1841-1906)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/199636886/george-young-wisner>

Appendix 4 – Duke 1999 Master Plan (Courtesy of Bob Duke)

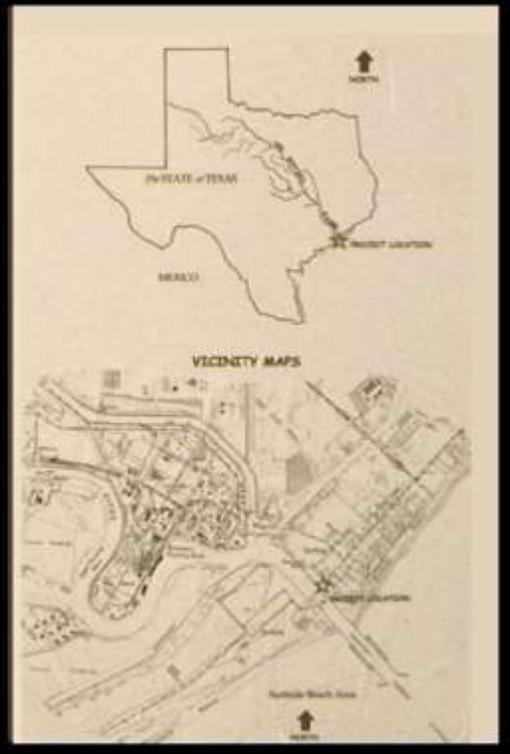
- five pages showing five panels (portrait)
- five pages showing five panels plus explanatory text (landscape)



A Master Plan

For:

- SURFSIDE JETTY PARK EXTENSION
- HISTORIC FORT VELASCO RECONSTRUCTION
- CITY OF SURFSIDE BEACH – CITY HALL PARK
- BOAT RAMP



Panel
1



DUKE

Landscape Architecture + Planning
1815 Avenue K
Galveston, Texas 77550-4920
409-762-5193 duke_lap@swbell.net



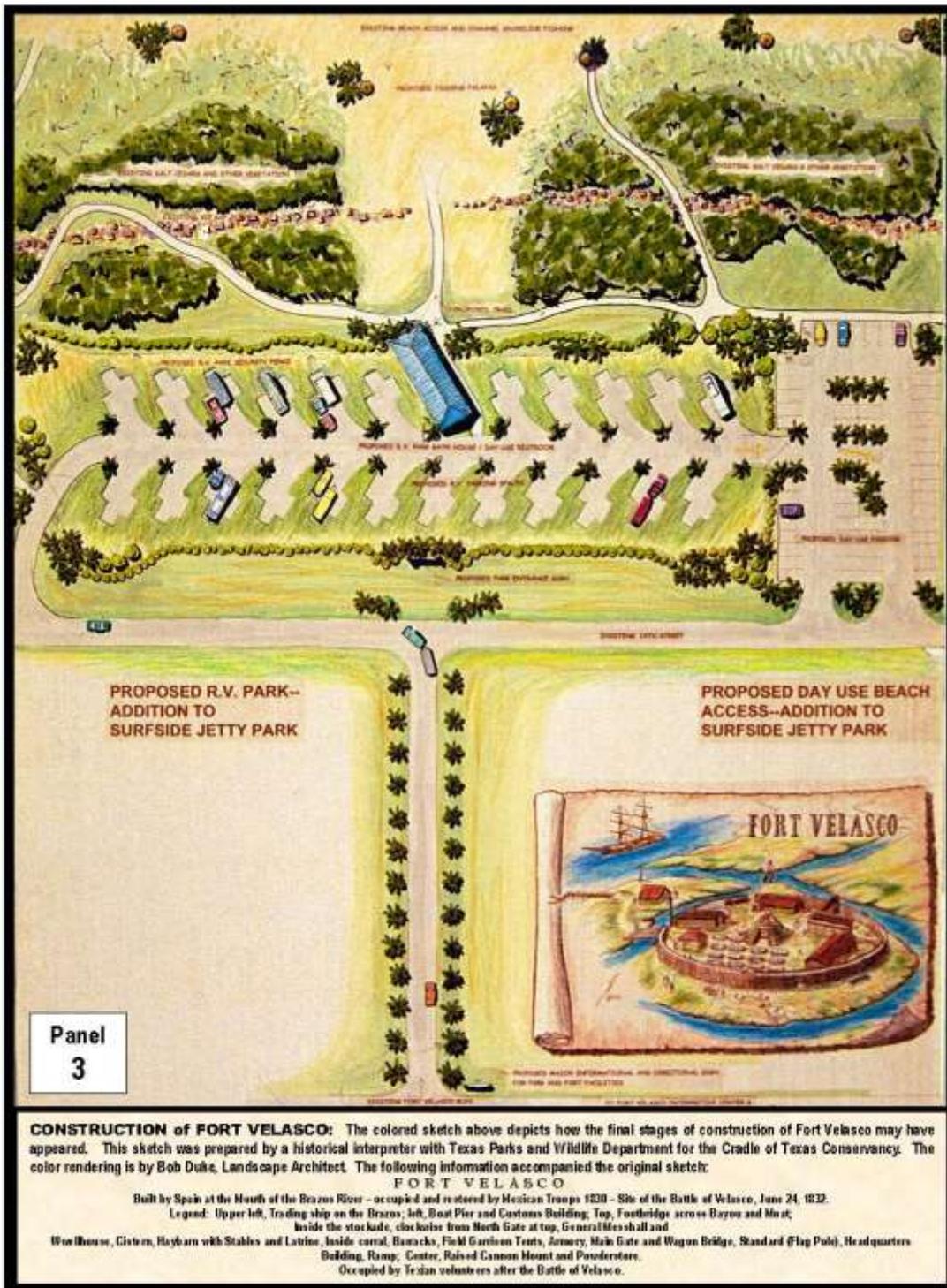
**SURFSIDE JETTY PARK
EXPANSION
PHASE 2
(PANELS 1-5)**

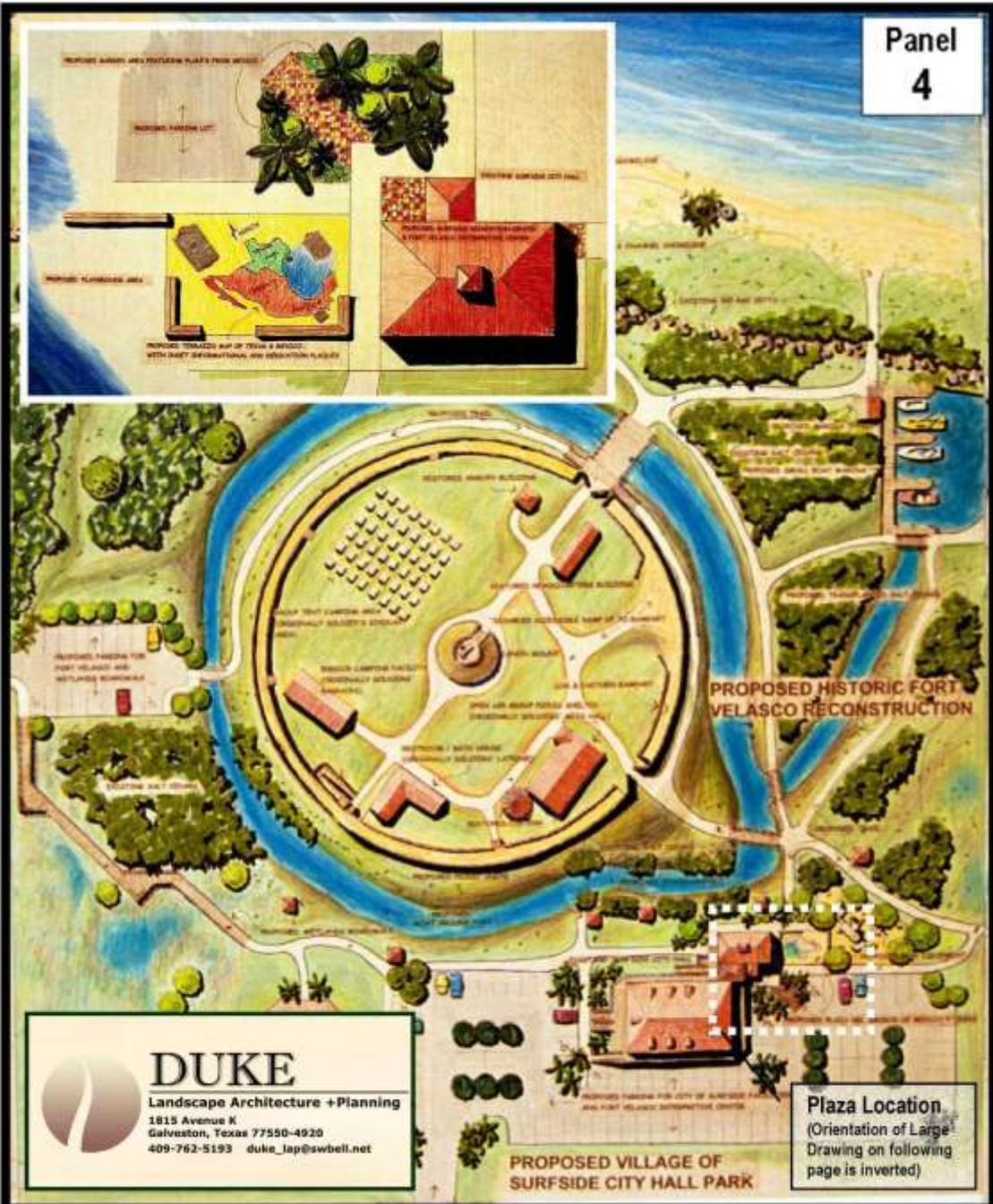
BRAZORIA COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Design and Graphics by
DUKE
 Landscape Architecture + Planning
 1815 Avenue K
 Galveston, Texas 77550-4920
 409-762-5193 duke_lap@swbell.net

Overall Master Plan shown below
with panels numbered







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Plaza Location
(Orientation of Large
Drawing on following
page is inverted)

CONCEPT PLAN for FORT VELASCO: The current plan for Fort Velasco, shown above, is based on research by historical interpreters for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and professional and amateur archaeologists who have worked on archeological digs near the original Fort Velasco site. While the location shown on this plan may not be the exact location of the original fortification, it will well serve the purposes of historical reconstruction—to bring to today's society a glimpse into our nation's past. Current plans are for the reconstructed fort to be a place that the visitor can experience from the inside out—camping & picnicking within the fort will be permitted and encouraged. Period tents—for campers—and historical reproductions of buildings will add to the realism of a visit to this facility.



PLAZA del AMIGOS de Mexico y Tejas The idea for the *Plaza of the Friends of Mexico and Texas* (illustrated to the left) came about during the early stages of planning and design work on the overall Master Plan. The story of Fort Velasco will by necessity be the story of both Mexico and Texas. The concept for the plaza is to provide a place for the citizens of Texas and Mexico to display special mementos of those who served valiantly on the frontier here at the mouth of the Brazos River. The plaza with its large map of Mexico and Texas will be easily viewed from the third story interpretive center, complementing the story that is both Texas' and Mexico's.

Panel 5



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Landscape Architecture + Planning

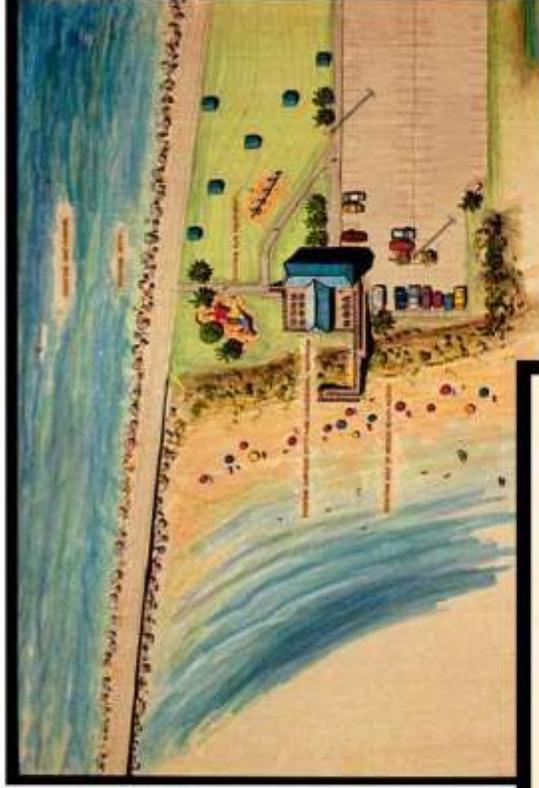
3108 Pine Street
Galveston, Texas 77551
409-356-3503
BDuke@DUKELandscapeArchitecture.com

Project Name: SURFSIDE JETTY PARK and HISTORIC FORT VELASCO
Location: Surfside Beach, Texas
Project Owner: Brazoria County Parks.
Project Description: Brazoria County and the Village of Surfside Beach jointly sought to connect the existing Surfside Jetty Park with the existing city hall (a historic Coast Guard station building) via development of County-owned land and acquisition and development of private and public land. The desired result is to be an expanded recreational palette, including more fishing areas, camping, and the re-creation of the look and feel of historic Fort Velasco, the probable location of the first conflict that resulted in independence from Mexico for Texas.

Scope: provide an illustrated master plan and estimates for continued development of existing beach park with addition of RV parking spaces, additional day use facilities and re-creation of historic fort

Image description: Existing Surfside Jetty Park
Status: awaiting funding

(Continued on following page)



A Master Plan

For:

- SURFSIDE JETTY PARK EXTENSION
- HISTORIC FORT VELASCO RECONSTRUCTION
- CITY OF SURFSIDE BEACH – CITY HALL PARK
- BOAT RAMP

Panel
1

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Project Description: Brazoria County and the Village of Surfside Beach jointly sought to connect the existing Surfside Jetty Park with the existing city hall (a historic Coast Guard station building) via development of County-owned land and acquisition and development of private and public land. The desired result is to be an expanded recreational palette, including more fishing areas, camping, and the re-creation of the look and feel of historic Fort Velasco, the probable location of the first conflict that resulted in independence from Mexico for Texas.

Scope: provide an illustrated master plan and estimates for continued development of existing beach park with addition of RV parking spaces, additional day use facilities and re-creation of historic fort

Image description: Existing Surfside Jetty Park (left side of drawing) and proposed shelter camping area and new park office (right side of drawing), and new trail connections via existing bridge. At bottom is key to all sheets.

Status: awaiting funding

(Continued on following page)





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Project Name: SURFSIDE JETTY PARK and HISTORIC FORT VELASCO

Location: Surfside Beach, Texas

Project Owner: Brazoria County Parks

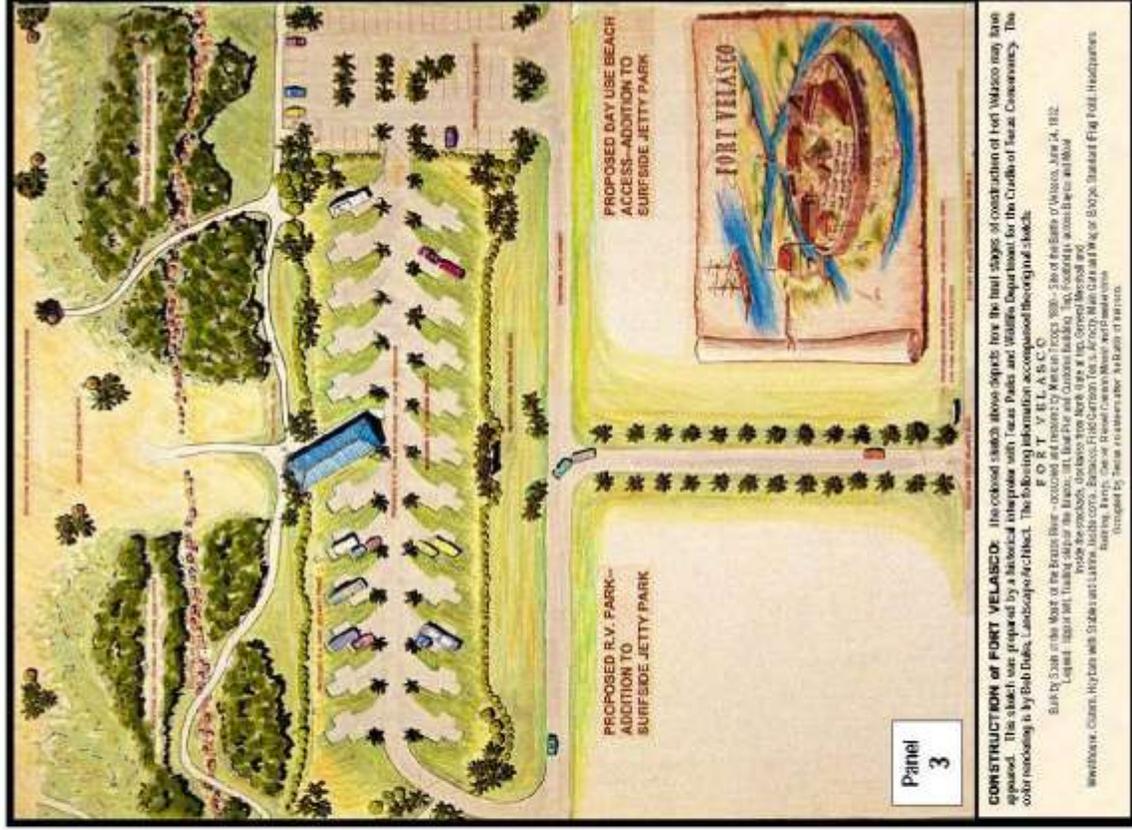
Project Description: Brazoria County and the Village of Surfside Beach jointly sought to connect the existing Surfside Jetty Park with the existing city hall (a historic Coast Guard station building) via development of County-owned land and acquisition and development of private and public land. The desired result is to be an expanded recreational palette, including more fishing areas, camping, and the re-creation of the look and feel of historic Fort Velasco, the probable location of the first conflict that resulted in independence from Mexico for Texas.

Scope: provide an illustrated master plan and estimates for continued development of existing beach park with addition of RV parking spaces, additional day use facilities and re-creation of historic fort

Image description: Proposed entrance, RV Park and fishing access into ship channel/former mouth of Brazos River.

Status: awaiting funding

(Continued on following page)



CONSTRUCTION of FORT VELASCO: The colored sketch above depicts how the final stages of construction of Fort Velasco may have appeared. This sketch was prepared by a historical illustrator with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the Coastal Heritage Conservancy. The color rendering is by Bob Dole, Landscape Architect. The illustration is based on the sketch by F. O. T. V. H. C. C.

Sketch by S. J. Smith of the Brazos River - occurred and recorded by M. J. Smith in 1830 - Site of the State of Velasco, June 24, 1832.

Sketch by S. J. Smith of the Brazos River - occurred and recorded by M. J. Smith in 1830 - Site of the State of Velasco, June 24, 1832.

Legend: 1830-1831, 1831-1832, 1832-1833, 1833-1834, 1834-1835, 1835-1836, 1836-1837, 1837-1838, 1838-1839, 1839-1840, 1840-1841, 1841-1842, 1842-1843, 1843-1844, 1844-1845, 1845-1846, 1846-1847, 1847-1848, 1848-1849, 1849-1850, 1850-1851, 1851-1852, 1852-1853, 1853-1854, 1854-1855, 1855-1856, 1856-1857, 1857-1858, 1858-1859, 1859-1860, 1860-1861, 1861-1862, 1862-1863, 1863-1864, 1864-1865, 1865-1866, 1866-1867, 1867-1868, 1868-1869, 1869-1870, 1870-1871, 1871-1872, 1872-1873, 1873-1874, 1874-1875, 1875-1876, 1876-1877, 1877-1878, 1878-1879, 1879-1880, 1880-1881, 1881-1882, 1882-1883, 1883-1884, 1884-1885, 1885-1886, 1886-1887, 1887-1888, 1888-1889, 1889-1890, 1890-1891, 1891-1892, 1892-1893, 1893-1894, 1894-1895, 1895-1896, 1896-1897, 1897-1898, 1898-1899, 1899-1900, 1900-1901, 1901-1902, 1902-1903, 1903-1904, 1904-1905, 1905-1906, 1906-1907, 1907-1908, 1908-1909, 1909-1910, 1910-1911, 1911-1912, 1912-1913, 1913-1914, 1914-1915, 1915-1916, 1916-1917, 1917-1918, 1918-1919, 1919-1920, 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Project Name: SURFSIDE JETTY PARK and HISTORIC FORT VELASCO
Location: Surfside Beach, Texas
Project Owner: Brazoria County Parks.
Project Description: Brazoria County and the Village of Surfside Beach jointly sought to connect the existing Surfside Jetty Park with the existing city hall (a historic Coast Guard station building) via development of County-owned land and acquisition and development of private and public land. The desired result is to be an expanded recreational palette, including more fishing areas, camping, and the re-creation of the look and feel of historic Fort Velasco, the probable location of the first conflict that resulted in independence from Mexico for Texas.

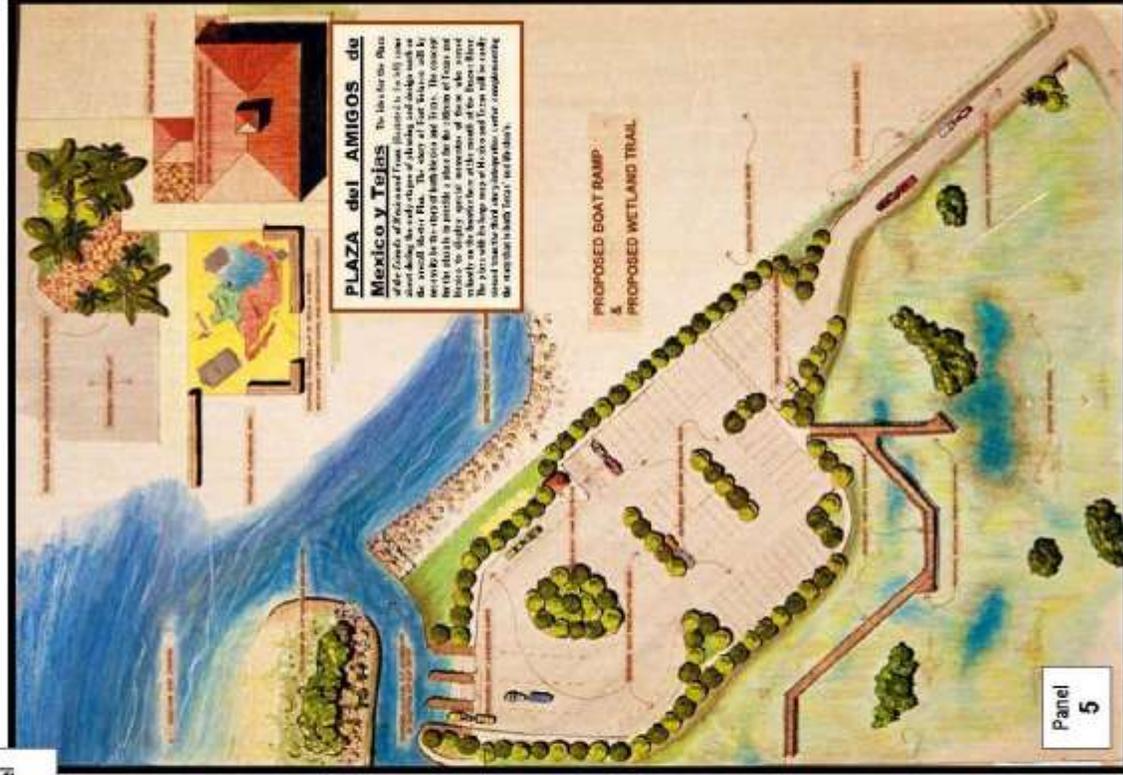
Scope: provide an illustrated master plan and estimates for continued development of existing beach park with addition of RV parking spaces, additional day use facilities and re-creation of historic fort

Image description: Proposed boat ramp and wetlands boardwalk.

Status: awaiting funding

(Continued on following page)

Panel
4





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Project Name: SURFSIDE JETTY PARK and HISTORIC FORT VELASCO

Location: Surfside Beach, Texas

Project Owner: Brazoria County Parks

Project Description: Brazoria County and the Village of Surfside Beach jointly sought to connect the existing Surfside Jetty Park with the existing city hall (a historic Coast Guard station building) via development of County-owned land and acquisition and development of private and public land. The desired result is to be an expanded recreational palette, including more fishing areas, camping, and the re-creation of the look and feel of historic Fort Velasco, the probable location of the first conflict that resulted in independence from Mexico for Texas.

Scope: provide an illustrated master plan and estimates for continued development of existing beach park with addition of RV parking spaces, additional day use facilities and re-creation of historic fort

Image description: Proposed Fort Velasco re-construction, City Hall / Visitors' Center (bottom center and inset), and connection to small marina and boat ramp.

Status: awaiting funding

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