

Cameron

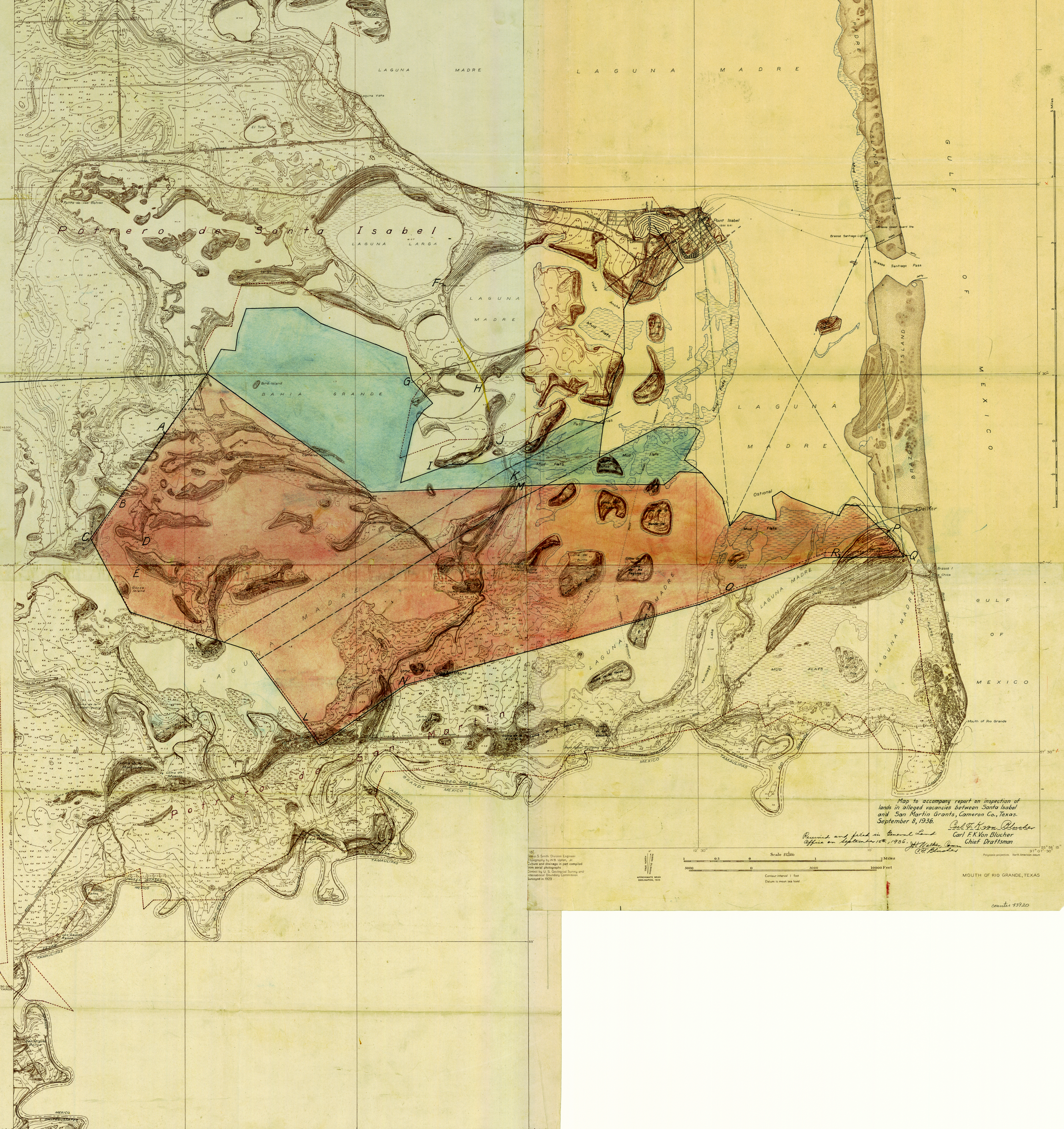
COUNTY ROLLED SKETCH NO. 22

Physiography of Alleged Vacancy between Santa Isabel & San Martin Grants

SURVEYED Aug 25, 1936 BY C.F.K. von Blucher, GLO

18 mi N60E FILED 3-1-76

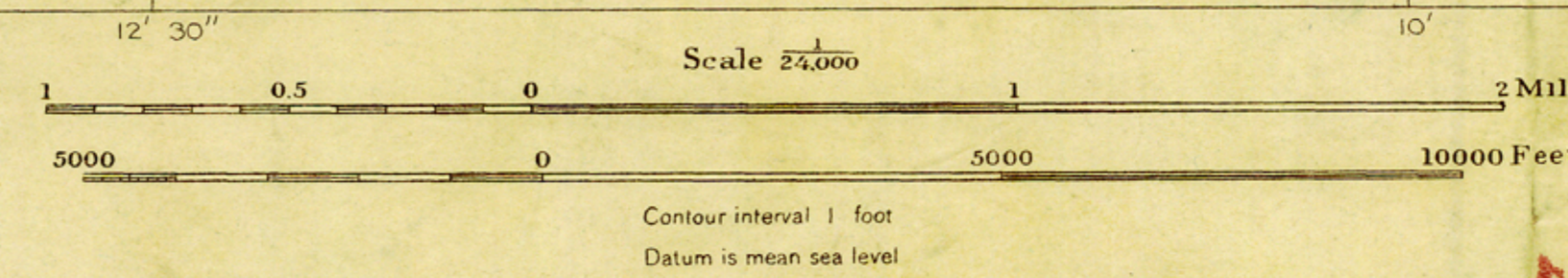
43419



Map to accompany report on inspection of
lands in alleged vacancies between Santa Isabel
and San Martin Grants, Cameron Co., Texas.
September 8, 1936.

Prepared and filed in General Land
Office on September 10, 1936. *H. Walker*
Carl F. Von Blucher
Chief Draftsman

1:25,000
S. Smith Division Engineer
Photography by W. B. Lupton, Jr.
Culture and drainage in part compiled
from aerial photographs
Control by U. S. Geological Survey and
International Boundary Commission
Surveyed in 1929



PROJECTIONS: North American Datum
MOUTH OF RIO GRANDE, TEXAS

13720

~~41~~

41

REPORT ON PHYSIOGRAPHY

ALLEGED VAGANCY BETWEEN SANTA ISABEL AND
SAN MARTIN GRANTS.

CAMERON COUNTY

Cameron Co. P. 161. Sk. 22 (ff)

M22
HAMMERSMITH

counter 43921



J. H. WALKER, COMMISSIONER
J. W. HAWKINS, CHIEF CLERK

General Land Office

State of Texas

Austin

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Honorable J. H. Walker, Commissioner
General Land Office, State of Texas,
Austin, Texas.

Sir:

Agreeably to your instructions to me to make an inspection of and report on the physiography of a certain area in Cameron county, alleged to be unsurveyed public school land lying between the Potrero de Santa Isabel grant to the heirs of Rafael Garcia (S. P. 1st class-412) and Potrero de San Martin grant to Jose Ygnacio de Trevino (S. P. 1st class-411), I wish to state that I have made this inspection and now have the honor to transmit herewith my report, accompanied by a United States Geological Survey topographic map showing the area involved, to which reference is hereby made as a part of this report.

Respectfully,

Carl F. K. von Blucher
Carl F. K. von Blucher

Chief Draftsman

Austin, Texas
September 8, 1936

REPORT
INTRODUCTORY

The area referred to has been filed on, in part, at various times for award of mineral lease and for purchase of the surface as follows:

Mineral application No. 8389, Lon C. Hill, filed October 20, 1919;
" " No. 8406, Miss Annie Rooney Hill, filed October 22, 1919;
" " No. 8407, Paul Hill, filed October 22, 1919.

These applications were rejected October 6, 1920, in accordance with written request from applicants: "On account of delays and law suits recently filed affecting these lands...."

Application to purchase, SF 12924, H. M. Skelton, filed May 27, 1926 endorsed "Should be rejected. See Att'y General's opinion herein..." Mr. Skelton died in 1934, I am informed.

Application to purchase, SF 13628, Ralph J. Friedman, filed September 25, 1935 and rejected January 7, 1936.

Application to purchase, SF 13629, Judge T. A. Kinder, filed September 25, 1935. Rejected January 7, 1936.

The accompanying map shows the topography of this region. The contour interval being one foot, the relative elevations are accordingly clearly indicated. On this map the boundaries of the two grants mentioned have been projected from their field notes as patented, and show in red, broken lines. The area in red represents the alleged Friedman vacancy, that in blue the alleged Kinder vacancy.

This investigation concerns the two last mentioned files, in the names of Ralph J. Friedman and T. A. Kinder, which aggregate some 22,000 acres of alleged unsurveyed public school land.

The results of my visit of inspection and investigation follow:

On Tuesday, August 25, 1936, I went to Brownsville, Texas. Wednesday and Thursday were spent in driving over this area in a car. Judge T. A. Kinder, of Brownsville, Mr. E. M. Ridley, County Surveyor, and Mr. E. B. Gore ex-county surveyor and present Deputy County Surveyor and Drainage Engineer, accompanied me the first day and Mr. Ralph J. Friedman joined us the second day. Mr. Gore is nearly 70 years old and has lived in that locality for many years. He appears to be well informed as to the area investigated.

We left Brownsville Wednesday morning at 7:45 o'clock and proceeded to the Southeast corner of the Santa Isabel, which is a northeast corner of the San Martin. Here, I took a picture looking eastward toward Bird Island. See picture below:



S.E. Corner Santa Isabel Looking Eastward

The elevated lands in the distance are the ones along the base of which run the Santa Isabel meanders, as shown by the broken red lines on the map. The corner of these grants is seen near the fence corner. Mr. Kinder appears in the foreground. The shallow water seen, Mr. Gore states, is from the Rancho Viejo Drainage District No. 1 Floodway. This is a typical salt-sand flat without vegetation. Mr. Gore said that water from Laguna Madre does not reach this area except during extremely high hurricane or storm tides. To the westward and southwestward there is a semi-salty vegetation in the low areas and sacahuiste grass in the higher places. Sacahuiste grass does not grow in salt soil.

At point A, near the old Rio Grande railroad dump, the general elevation of the flat to the northwestward was about 4.5 feet. The vegetation is that of semi-salty soils, and weeds.

From point A toward point C, I stopped at point B, and took picture toward point C, (which is a meander corner of the San Martin, as established by Mr. Ridley in 1935).



Point "B" Looking toward Point "C"

Scattered mesquite trees, Spanish daggers, grass and weeds are found on these hills and hillsides. The water shown in the picture is from said drainage floodway, being fresh water, according to Mr. Gore, who appears in the foreground. We could not reach the point C, as the flat between B and C was boggy, so went to point D.

At point D. From here the land to the eastward and northeastward is a low sandy flat with semi-salty vegetation. Mr. Gore says that water from Laguna Madre does not reach this area unless there is more than a four foot tide with a sustained high wind to drive it this far west. This appears true. Conditions may now be different since the ship channel has been dredged, as salt water might find its way in from it. I noticed no salt deposits anywhere around this point.

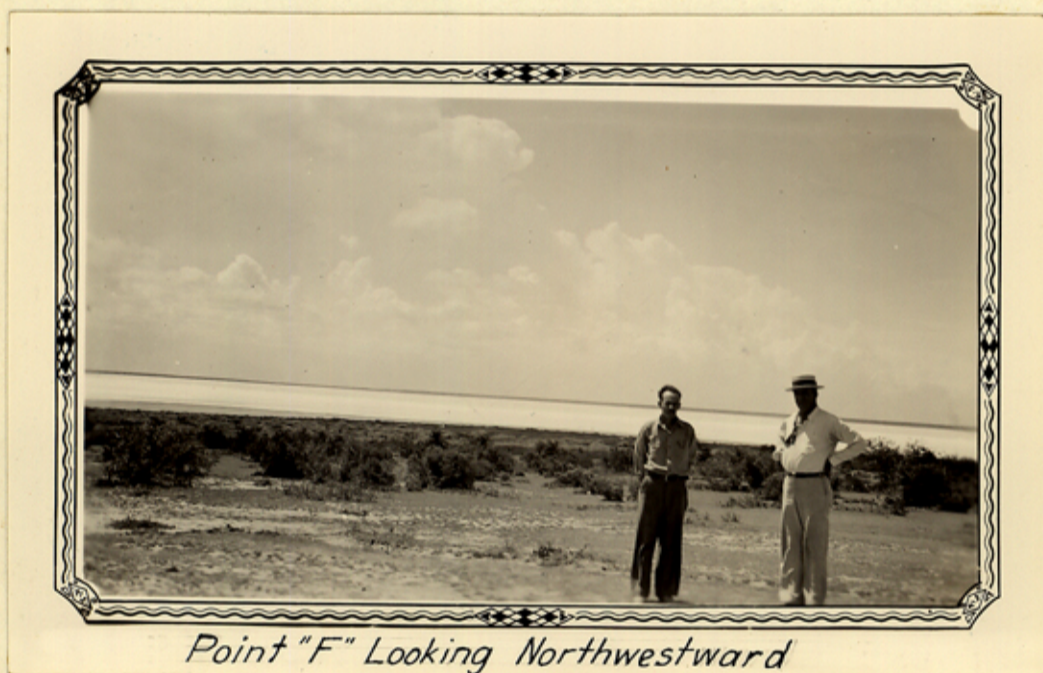
At point E took picture to the southeastward. Goose Island is to the southward.



Point "E" Looking Southeastward

The elevations in the extreme background are the spoil banks along the ship channel. The ridges and hills to the eastward of this point appear similar to those already described. The low flat area is typical of these mentioned, covered with semi-salty vegetation. At the foot of these hills and along the slopes and extending out into the flat a thousand feet in many instances, wire grass is found. This grass does not grow in an entirely salty soil. We could not go to the eastward in the car, because of mucky soil, so took road to westward and southward and went around to Point Isabel for lunch.

At point F. Took picture to the northwestward. Note in the picture the salt deposits, which extend out about 1000 feet from the shore. Messrs Kinder and Ridley in the foreground.



Point "F" Looking Northwestward

At point G, near old Rio Grande railroad dump. Flat is covered with semi-salty vegetation, but no salt deposits here. Do not believe ordinary high tide gets in here. I noticed old rotten barnacles on the stumps of the old trestle posts, which Mr. Gore said grew there after the high storm floods of 1933. Water from said drainage floodway reaches this area at times.

At point H. Mr. Gore stated that this is the first place that high water from Laguna Madre can pass through to reach points westward. There is a small bridge at this point, but no sign of recent salt water is visible at this time. Salty vegetation, but no wire grass.

At point I, all of Bahia Grande appears to be a salty boggy flat, -muck. I am told by Mr. Gore that a large amount of spoil from the ship channel dredging was washed into this immediate area.

At point J. There is a small bridge at this point. Mr. Gore stated that Laguna Madre water at extremely high tide might come in at this opening from the northeast, though he was not sure of this. From present appearance it does not appear to me that this is probable, except at storm or hurricane periods.

Point K is on the northwestern margin of the ship channel. Note the picture, which shows Judge Kinder standing at a point about 1/2 foot above water in the channel.



Point "K" on Ship Channel

The bank elevation is about 4 feet. Across the channel at point M the bank is only about 1.3 feet above water.

We then had to return to the westward to get around the ship channel, going to point L.

To the northwestward from point L, vegetation, which is that of semi-salty soil, extends at least $2/3$ the distance to the ship channel. I do not believe ordinary high tide ever gets into this area; at least the vegetation does not indicate it. The nearby meander corner of San Martin, (as established by Mr. Ridley in 1935), is on high ground. Near where this meander line crosses Boca Chica Highway there is a government bench mark showing elevation of 31.06 feet.

At point M, on southeast bank of ship channel, bank is 1.3 feet above present water level. The flats to the eastward have salt water on them in places, which apparently comes from the ship channel. On the map these areas are shown as mud flats. To the southwestward the vegetation is semi-salty and the ground is covered with a thin coat or film of alkali. I know it was not salt as I tasted it.

Quit at 6:30 and returned to Brownsville.

Thursday morning left Brownsville at 7:45, going first to

Point N. The vegetation here, which is semi-salty, covers the ground in all directions. It does not appear that water at ordinary high tide from Laguna Madre has been on this area, which is shown on the map as having an elevation of approximately 3 feet, unless it was in the remote past. Mr. Gore says that water from the Rio Grande covers this area during flood periods.

From point N, we went eastward to Loma del Macho. This hill, as others visited, is of firm sandy loam with possibly some clay. They are referred to by some of the natives as "clay hills". Some are covered with a good growth of grass and weeds, mesquite, granjeno, guayacan, daggers and prickly pear and some low shrub with huisache-like foliage.

From Loma del Macho we went eastward in the car toward Loma de Lena Seca along meander line of San Martin, as shown on map, passing over wire grass for 1/4 mile. After that it appears intermittently till the mud flats, as shown on map, are reached. From here, eastward, it was too muddy or soft to travel in the car - bare, boggy flats. We went therefore, from here to Loma del Burro to better inspect this area. To the northward is an area shown on the map to approximate 3 feet in elevation, which is covered with semi-salty vegetation. All the other bare, blank area is salt mud flat and while a few cattle trails crossed it in places, it had the appearance of being boggy or muck. This whole area is subject to overflow from the Rio Grande.

Thence had to go back to west and south, and thence over Boca Chica Highway to point O. From here, took picture to westward, toward Loma Lena Seca; Messrs Friedman and Kinder in foreground. See picture below.



Semi-salty vegetation throughout this area except in the salt mud flats. Showers overtook us here and we had to go to Loma Plata on foot, as the ground was too slippery to travel in the car. The areas shown as mud flats were covered with a shallow depth of water. Mr. Gore and Mr. Kinder say that the Rio Grande floods cover this area about one foot in depth. I noticed drift along the foot or base of this hill, which seems to indicate that water gets all over these flats at some time.

At point P, on the southwestern margin of Boca Chica Pass. The shore line along here, Mesa del Gavilan, is well defined. From drift, debris and seaweed, the ordinary high tide line would appear to be 1.5 feet above present water level in this channel. From this I judge that ordinary high tide does not reach the low flats in the western part of this whole area.

Point Q is on land, at apparent ordinary high tide line. To the westward the land is higher, with sacahuiste grass in abundance. Thence we went westward through sacahuiste grass to point R.

At point R. The flats to the westward and northwestward show little or no vegetation where mud flats are indicated on the map. Elsewhere the soil appears black to a great extent. Apparently, it has been a good while since salt water covered this area for any extended period of time. This area also is subject to overflow from the Rio Grande.

Quit at 3:00 and went to Del Mar, on Brazos Island, for lunch. On our return I stopped at Boca Chica bridge. This is a trestle bridge which was built several years ago. It has acted as a barrier to catch and hold the sand which has now completely closed the pass to an elevation of about 3 or 4 feet above sea level. The following picture was taken from the western side, near the north abutment. I am told that this Pass was opened once, during a storm, when high water came in through Brazos Santiago Pass and a high northwest wind drove it through Boca Chica Pass, opening it. But it has since filled in again, so that Brazos Island at this time really joins the mainland.



Boca Chica Bridge

Next, we visited the mouth of the Rio Grande. The picture below was taken looking southeast. The River at its mouth flows the northward. In the background is a sandy point over in Mexico, and beyond is the Gulf of Mexico. Thence we returned to Brownsville, arriving at 6:15 P. M. This completed my trip of inspection.



Mouth of Rio Grande Looking Southeastward

CONCLUSIONS

Laguna Madre is the Spanish equivalent for the word mother sea, or high sea. It is the name applied to the stretch of salt water lying between the main land on the west and Brazos, Padre and Mustang Islands on the east. I do not believe the Laguna Madre covered these western low areas at the time surveys were made and field notes for patent written. If it had reached this far west, there would be visible signs of its presence attested by old shore lines, marine shells, salt deposits, etc.

My investigations lead me to believe that sea water at ordinary high tide does not reach even as far west as the yellow line on the map, but this can only be determined positively by observation when Laguna Madre is at ordinary high tide. However, these lands are subject to inundation by waters from the Rio Grande and from the large drainage floodway referred to. Consequently, these flats are of a boggy or mucky nature during a large part of the year.

The hills or lomas are of sand dune origin. They, together with their slopes, are now covered with vegetation and trees, evidencing the fact that many years have elapsed since Laguna Madre covered these western low areas.

These lands, in my opinion, could not be classified as fit for agricultural or grazing purposes.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl F. K. von Blucher
Carl F. K. von Blucher

Chief Draftsman, General Land Office

Austin, Texas.
September 8, 1936

Received and filed in General Land Office on September 15th, 1936. J. H. Walker, Comm. C. F. K. von Blucher
counter 43930