

### III. THE BORDER

The recorded history of the extensive border country, through which the Rio Grande makes its final way, begins just twenty-seven years after Columbus' voyage of 1492, though the touch of European feet on the soil of this vast region was light indeed. Following the explorations of Alonzo de Pineda at the mouth of the river in 1519, came Cabeza de Vaca, probably during the years of 1530 to 1535, as he wandered over this territory on his epic journey which ended in western Mexico. Nearly fifty years later, Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva pushed northwest from the Tampico area to a location ~~nor far~~ from the river, where in 1583 he established the first European settlement in the entire valley of the Rio Grande, a settlement known at that time as Leon, first capital of Nuevo Reino de Leon. The records of those earliest explorers show that the region was inhabited by Indians of various tribes, who later were slowly but relentlessly pushed aside, some retiring into remote districts in Mexico, many finally ~~being~~ being herded into reservations in the United States.

In 1685 a French ship, carrying supplies to found a new colony, was wrecked in Matagorda Bay about mid-way between the present cities of Corpus Christi and Galveston. The survivors, under the leadership of Sieur de La Salle and Robert Cavelier, built Fort Saint Louis near their point of landing, thus establishing the first French foothold in this unexplored region. It ~~did~~ did not last, for the Frenchmen were driven out by attacking Indians and the fort was abandoned.

Colonization of this new province proceeded slowly, and it was a number of years before another important immigration came into the river country. Following an exploratory trip, Jose de Escandon returned with a large contingent of followers in 1746, and during the ensuing ten years he established twenty-three towns on or near the Rio Grande.

At the time of the Florida purchase, in 1819, the United States relinquished all claim to the Southwestern Province. The next year, however, Moses Austin, from Joplin, Missouri, secured permission from the Spanish government to take a colony of three hundred families into Texas.

As the Mexican revolution followed within a year, when Mexico freed itself from European domination, little attention was paid to the remote territory by the struggling new government of Mexico. Relations between the national government and the province became strained. It was inevitable that disputes over the boundary and over civil rights should follow, although some settlers tried to remain loyal to Mexico and to prevent civil strife. During the next few years talk of an independent Texas grew, and the flames of revolution spread.

In 1835, Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, president of the youthful Mexican Republic, determined to crush the Texas rebels. On the 6th of March, 1836, the famous battle of the Alamo ended when the gallant defenders had fought to the last man against the overwhelming force of Santa Ana's army of three thousand. ~~For~~ For forty days General Houston skillfully maneuvered his forces and with a surprise attack he defeated Santa Ana's superior numbers in the Battle of San Jacinto, a battle lasting but eighteen minutes, capturing the Mexican general and a large part of his army.

Texas now stood independent, although it was voted at the first election to seek annexation to the United States. For nearly ten years the Lone Star flag waved over Texas soil, as many difficulties beset the young republic.

In October, 1845, the Congress of the United States voted to admit Texas to the Union and the march of westward colonization moved onward.

Mexico had threatened to regard the annexation of Texas as a declaration of war and the year of 1846 brought the Army of the United States into the Valley of the Rio Grande, where the first battle of the Mexican War was fought. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, peace came ~~was~~ once more to the land of the Rio Grande. For thirteen years constructive ~~in~~ enterprises progressed as Brownsville was built and commerce moved across the river to and from Mexico.

But the War Between the States again brought activity of a military nature as the mouth of the Rio Grande became of increasing importance to the ~~Confederacy~~ Confederacy. With the tightening of the blockade around the South, Brownsville and nearby Port Isabel were the only remaining ports for foreign shipping. In 1861 the Rio Grande was navigable for two hundred miles, and Texas-grown cotton was brought to the mouth of the river by small boats for the transfer to ocean-going ~~vessels~~ vessels in the Gulf of Mexico. Down the coast in small boats and across the land by wagon came ~~cotton~~ cotton to be sold to Europe. Up the coast and back across the land went supplies for the Confederate Army, as these were imported from England, France, and Mexico. The Battle of Palmito Hill, the last battle of the Civil War, was fought on the north bank of the Rio Grande near the mouth of the river on May 12-13, 1865, thirty-four days after the signing of peace, for news traveled slowly in those days.

El Paso-Juarez Valley - Flowing through the pass between the Franklin Mountains in Texas and the Sierra Madre in Mexico, the Rio Grande attains a new significance as it becomes the dividing line between the United States and Mexico. Beyond the pass the river reaches a new landscape and the life along its banks changes abruptly.

8X10 page 162 IT WAS DON JUAN DE ONATE WHO CROSSED THE RIVER AT A POINT NEAR THE PLACE WHERE THE BRIDGES OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD NOW STANDS

8X10 ~~1624~~ page 163 AT TWILIGHT, FROM HIGH ON THE SHOULDER OF THE FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS, THE TWINKLING LIGHTS OF BOTH EL PASO AND JUAREZ GLEAM IN THE ~~SEMI~~ SEMI-DARKNESS, THOUGH THE RIO GRANDE, FLOWING BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES, IS HIDDEN FROM VIEW.

.. Big Bend Country - The Big Bend of the Rio Grande lies some fifty miles below Presidio, where it makes a great dip to the south in a sweeping curve. Here, in a region of spectacular scenery, is Big Bend National Park. This region is a geologist's paradise, for here may be seen nearly everything that can happen in geology, with tilted and folded strata, uplifts, volcanic action, and mountains seeming upside down. Great fossil beds have been found in the Big Bend, yielding shells of gigantic size. Skirting the Chisos Mountains, which rise in the center of the Big Bend, dry arroyos wind across the land--arroyos which occasionally run deep with water from a torrential rain. ✓ 3

16X20 page 174 THE RIO CONCHOS BRINGS RENEWED LIFE AND ENERGY TO THE SOMEWHAT DEPLETED RIO GRANDE AS IT JOINS THE RIVER JUST ABOVE THE BORDER TOWNS OF PRESIDIO, TEXAS, AND OJINAGA, MEXICO

change



8X10 page 175 OJINAGA, THE PORT OF ENTRY ON THE MEXICAN SIDE OF THE RIO GRANDE, OPPOSITE THE TEXAS TOWN OF PRESIDIO, IS TYPICAL OF SMALL MEXICAN TOWNS IN THE INTERIOR, RATHER THAN THOSE ALONG THE BORDER

11X14 00 page 181 BETWEEN THE ROLLING PRAIRIES AND THE RIO GRANDE, THERE IS A SHARP ESCARPMENT WHERE THE LAND DROPS AWAY TO THE RIVER LEVEL. BELOW THE SUMMIT OF THIS BREAK IN THE CONTOUR OF THE LAND LIES A VALLEY OF INCREDIBLE BEAUTY, PARADISE VALLEY. ITS ERODED, SAFFRON HILLS MELT INTO THE DISTANT HORIZON, WHERE MOUNTAINS IN MEXICO ARE DIMLY VISIBLE AND THE PRESENCE OF THE RIO GRANDE IS FELT RATHER THAN SEEN.

8X10 02 11X14 page 182 THE PRAIRIES SWEEP IS IMMENSE, AND THE SKY INFINITE, DWARFING ALL MAN-MADE OBJECTS

16X20 page 193 IN BIG BEND, THE RIO GRANDE HAS CARVED THREE GREAT CANYONS. THOUGH SHORT IN LENGTH, AND WITH ARID STRETCHES OF TWENTY OR THIRTY MILES SEPARATING THE CANYONS, THEY ATTAIN A DEPTH OF FROM TWELVE HUNDRED TO FIFTEEN HUNDRED FEET. THE FIRST IS SANTA ELENA CANYON

16X14 8X10 page 192 THE RIO GRANDE EMERGING FROM SANTA ELENA CANYON

8X10 page 194 LEAVING MARISCAL CANYON, THE RIVER WINDS LAZILY THROUGH HOT, DRY, FOSSIL-FILLED BANKS

11X14 page 196 THROUGH THIS PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK, THE COMANCHE TRAIL CROSSED INTO MEXICO

11X14 page 197 THE CANYON THROUGH THE SIERRA DEL CARMEN IS CALLED BOQUILLAS

Hill Country - As the river leaves the Big Bend country, the Pecos River, rising in New Mexico, ~~adds~~ adds its water to the Rio Grande. The Pecos and the Devil's River, nearby, are the only major tributaries from the eastern and northern side of the Rio Grande. Extending from the Pecos River to San Angelo and almost to San Antonio, then dropping off to the south into the Rio Grande Valley, lies the far-reaching Edwards Plateau.

11X14 page 204 ALONG THE BORDER THE MEXICANS HAVE ALWAYS CALLED IT THE RIO BRAVO

8X10 page 205 LAREDO IS THE PRINCIPAL GATEWAY TO MEXICO ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE

11X14 page 207 THE LITTLE TOWN OF GUERRERO ON THE BANKS OF THE RIO ~~XX~~ SALADO SLEEPS PEACEFULLY, WITH ITS WHITE HOUSES GLISTENING IN THE NOONDAY SUN. (THIS TOWN IS NOW SUBMERGED BENEATH THE WATER OF FALCON DAM.)

8X10 page 214 AT THE EDGE OF CERRALVO, ~~WKK~~ WHERE THE GREAT SPRING GUSHES FORTH, A MARSHY AREA HAS BEEN FORMED BY THE SPRING WATER. HERE GROW SWAMP CYPRESS TREES (SABINOS) OF MAGNIFICENT PROPORTIONS, PROVIDING AN UNEXPECTED SIGHT IN THIS ARID REGION OF LOW MESQUITE AND PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS.

Delta - Following the close of the Civil War and with the quieting of the troublesome frontier, commerce moved at a steady pace. With the building of the railroad into the delta in 1904, the first farming land was cleared and it was not long until the great ~~agricultural~~ agricultural boom was under way. Today there are over a million acres of land under cultivation on the Texas side of the river, with nearly half of that acreage irrigated by the Rio Grande. The rapidly growing towns seem to merge into one another, as canning factories, ice plants, packing houses, and the smaller buildings of community life spring into being. The character of the new towns, as well as the people in them, is totally different from the Western and Mexican flavor of the old towns along the river.

Countless winding depressions, called resacas, vein the delta. These are old beds of the river abandoned by that mighty stream when floods rushing to the sea have made short cuts across the narrow necks of ~~a~~ land between great loops of the meandering river. The portions of land, called bancos, thus transferred from one country to the other by the rivers become a problem for the International Boundary Commission.

8X10 page 224 (top) ON THE TEXAS SIDE OF THE RIVER, THE COMBINED PUMPS, TOGETHER WITH THE FEW DITCHES WHICH ARE ABLE TO OPERATE BY GRAVITY, LIFT APPROXIMATELY ONE MILLION ACRE-FEET OF WATER A YEAR TO SPREAD UPON THIS FERTILE SOIL.

11X14 page 226 CLOSE TO THE PRESENT RIVER CHANNEL, ON THE BANK OF AN OLD RESACA, IS FORT BROWN. BUILT BY GENERAL ZACHARY TAYLOR AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEXICAN WAR IN 1846, IT WAS CALLED FORT TAYLOR, BUT THE NAME WAS SOON CHANGED TO FORT BROWN IN MEMORY OF COLONEL ~~XXX~~ JACOB BROWN, WHO DIED IN ITS DEFENSE.

8X10 page 228 THE RECENT CHANNEL OF THE PORT OF BROWNSVILLE IS 17 MILES LONG, HAS PROTECTING JETTIES AT THE MOUTH, AND A TURNING BASIN TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY FEET WIDE. THIS ENABLES OCEAN-GOING COMMERCE TO REACH THE CITY.

8X10 page 229 LINKED BY THE LAST BRIDGE TO SPAN THE RIVER, BROWNSVILLE AND MATAMOROS HAVE GROWN UP SIDE BY SIDE, THOUGH MATAMOROS IS THE OLDER CITY.

11X14 or 16X20 page 230 DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE IRRIGATION SEASON, THE RIVER DWINDLES TO A MERE TRICKLE AND CATTLE COOL THEMSELVES IN A QUIET POOL

11X14 page 233 THE TRANSITION OF THE NATURAL GROWTH ALL ALONG THE RIVER'S BANKS, FROM THE SHARP-POINTED ENGLEMANN SPRUCE OF THE HIGH COUNTRY, TO THE SEDATE, WAVING PALMS OF THE DELTA, IS VERY GREAT.

16X20 page 237 FINALLY THE RIO GRANDE, ENDING ITS FLOW OF EIGHTEEN HUNDRED MILES THROUGH EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE AND WITH ITS SERVICE TO THE SOIL COMPLETE, YIELDS ~~XXXX~~ ITS ~~XXXXXX~~ SURPLUS TO THE SEA.

11X14 page 244 NO CAPTION

"A river, like truth, will flow on forever and have no end."