

Port of Brownsville documents, 1854 and 1875
Finding Aid

Compiled by
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Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives
Edinburg, Texas

2014



*Founded in 1967 as the
Hidalgo County Historical Museum*

CONTENTS OF INVENTORY

Summary	# 3
Biographical/Historical Note	# 4-5
Scope and Content	# 5

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SUMMARY

Size	2 folders
Geographic Locations	Port Isabel, Texas; Brownsville, Texas; Rio Grande City, Texas
Inclusive Dates	February 1, 1854 and November 6, 1875
Languages	English
Summary	A resolution of the Legislature of Texas and a steamboat bill of lading pertaining to the port of Brownsville are found in this collection.
Access Restrictions	The collection is open for research. If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 to make an appointment to visit the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives (MHMMA) reading room.
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Related Collections	<i>S.B. John Scott</i> bill of lading, 1875. SMC 40, RGDOC 2, B:1
Citation	Port of Brownsville documents, 1854 and 1875. Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.
Stack Location(s)	SMC 4, RGDOC 2, B:1

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

On April 28, 1828 the Mexican congress granted a navigation concession on the Rio Grande to John Davis Bradburn and Stephen H.C.L. Staples. The concession allowed them to use boats propelled by steam or horsepower. That was the beginning of steamboat use on the river.

During the Mexican War, Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King were hired by the U.S. Army to captain the steamboats used to transport troops and supplies up and down the Rio Grande. After the war in 1850, Kenedy and King partnered with James O'Donnell and Charles Stillman to form M. Kenedy & Company in Brownsville, Texas. The company and its steamboats dominated river trade until it was dissolved in 1874.

S.B. John Scott was a stern wheel steamboat that was brought to the Rio Grande by M. Kenedy & Company sometime after 1850. It is undetermined who owned the steamboat in 1875, the year after M. Kenedy & Company disbanded. However, it is recorded that she sank in the Rio Grande opposite Brownsville on the night of August 12, 1880 during a hurricane.

Lafargue and Lacaze was an enterprise in Rio Grande City, Texas owned by two merchants, which used the steamboats on the Rio Grande to transport merchandise. MOSTH Registrar Lisa Adam held a telephone conversation with Joel Guerrero, great-grandson of Lacaze, on September 27, 2011. Guerrero revealed that Julian Lacaze was born February 1846 in France. He emigrated from Toulouse, France to Rio Grande City, Texas in 1861 where he became a naturalized citizen. Lacaze was a merchant who partnered with Lafargue.

Many Jewish-Mexican families immigrated to Rio Grande City, Texas in 1865 after the Battle of Santa Gertudis during Mexico's struggle to overthrow Emperor Maximilian. The Mexicans threatened to kill French Jews who came to Mexico with the emperor. Among these merchants were families who would be instrumental in the development of the city during the latter half of the 1800s. The families include La Borde, Beraheim, Block, Mernitz, Lacaze, and Lagargue.

Bibliography:

John Ashton, "KENEDY, MIFFLIN," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fke23>), accessed August 15, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Brownsville Herald, OCR Text, March 11, 1948, page 3. Newspapers.com. (<http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/23328248/>), accessed August 15, 2014.

Frank Cushman Pierce. *A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, Second edition, revised. (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 1998), 122-123.

“RIO GRANDE CITY DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT: RIO GRANDE CITY, STARR COUNTY, TEXAS,” National Register of Historic Places (http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/hispanic/2009/rio_grande.html), accessed August 22, 2014.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

A resolution of the Legislature of Texas and a steamboat bill of lading pertaining to the port of Brownsville are found in this collection. The one-page resolution of the Legislature of Texas declares that body's decision to change the port of entry for the collection district of Brazos de Santiago, from Port Isabel to Brownsville. The resolution was referred to the Committee of Commerce (33rd Congress, 1st Session: Mrs. Doc. No.33) on March 13, 1854. The Legislature resolution was signed in Austin, Texas, by Ed. Clark, Secretary of State, on February 1, 1854.

A bill of lading dated November 6, 1875 from *S.B. John Scott* plying the Rio Grande is also in the collection. The document indicates that Charles Best is the master of the boat which was traveling from Rio Grande City, Texas, to Brownsville, Texas. No shipping company is indicated. The freight transported was going to Adolfe Marche and Bros. and consisted of six packages containing three thousand dollars in specie. The sender was Lafarge and Lacaze. The document is signed by Charles Best.

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