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New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas
(review)

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Historic Texas from the Air deserves a place on the bookshelves of teachers and students of Texas history, as well as those with a general interest in the subject. It is both a work of scholarship and art, and it offers a rare and important perspective.

League City, Texas

ELIZABETH CHAPMAN

New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas. Compiled by Galen D. Greaser. (Austin: Texas General Land Office, 2009. Pp. 344. Illustrations, figures, glossary, bibliography, index. \$15.00 paper.)

Don't let the title mislead you. This *New Guide* is much more than just a revamping of the 1988 index to the Spanish and Mexican land grants available from the Texas General Land Office. Based on Virginia H. Taylor's 1976 *Index to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants* and on the 1988 guide written by William Todd IV under the direction of Jesús F. de la Teja, this *New Guide* is written by Galen D. Greaser, a 25-year veteran of the General Land Office. In this work Greaser provides the best and most extensive overview of the history of land grants in South Texas from 1740 to the twentieth century. The history, titled "Once Upon a River" encompasses the first half of the book, more than 150 pages, and includes four appendices, while the second half provides a far more detailed and complete list of the land grant records.

Galen Greaser's keen interest in the history of Hispanics in Texas has led him to research South Texas land grants. His scholarship is amply evident in the many footnotes and in the in-depth research into the materials available from the historic archives in Saltillo, Monterrey, Mexico City, and Seville. He begins by addressing the questions he is most frequently asked at the GLO relating to the sensitive issues of land loss and mineral rights raised by the descendants of early Tejano settlers. His history of the first settlements by José de Escandón is admirably complete and he covers in detail the foundation of the *villas* and the *porciones* grants made along the Rio Grande. He includes excellent maps of both the grants and the *porciones* with the names of the original owners. Greaser does a masterful job of explaining the many problems faced by landowners during the years of upheaval as Spanish control gave way to Mexican independence, the Texas Revolution, and finally annexation to the United States.

As Greaser points out, the Spanish and Mexican land grants of South Texas have produced "prolonged controversy, confusion, mistrust, bitterness and litigation" (3) between the descendants of the original Spanish settlers and the newer Anglo arrivals. Greaser addresses the conflicts with dispassion and objectivity, providing facts from the records to support his arguments. He concludes his historical essay with a look to the future, hoping that new arrivals from south of the Rio Grande "will find the historical bridges of opportunity Texas once offered the honest and industrious individual." (149)

Particularly fascinating are Greaser's four appendices. These four studies provide the details of the arguments over individual land grants, the problems of accurate surveys, the difficulties associated with mineral rights, and the complexi-

ties of Mexican land laws. Appendix II reveals that the original records from San Luis Potosí discovered by John G. Kenedy show a survey of the La Barreta tract which “differed materially from the location claimed by Kenedy and the other owners” (159). Kenedy did not reveal his discovery and acquired thousands of additional acres as a result of the subsequent court cases.

This *New Guide*, with its carefully researched history and its fascinating appendices, is an essential source of information for anyone interested in early Texas. Galen Greaser has done an outstanding job of providing us with a more detailed view of a complex subject. This inexpensive book should be part of every Texas historian’s library.

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CAROLINA CASTILLO CRIMM

Journey to Goliad. By Melodie A. Cuate. (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2009. Pp. 182. Illustrations, maps, list of characters, glossary, notes. ISBN 9780896726499, \$17.95 cloth.)

Yet again, Ms. Cuate has taken the reader on an action-packed field trip into the past with the fourth installment of the Mr. Barrington’s Mysterious Trunk Series. In this adventure, *Journey to Goliad*, Hannah, Nick, and Jackie are on a class field trip to the Presidio La Bahía in Goliad, the sight of the Goliad Massacre in 1836. While they are touring the museum at the Presidio, they find Mr. Barrington’s trunk just before spotting a strange woman in odd clothing. The trunk and the unknown woman draw them onto a dangerous and frightening journey. And though they try not to go back in time, there are lessons to learn, people to meet, and battles to survive.

In *Journey to Goliad*, Hannah, Jackie, and Nick face a new challenge. The strange woman they saw in the present day turns out to be Francita Alavez, the Angel of Goliad. She approaches them in the museum and asks for help. When the kids are careless with the trunk, it pulls them back in time to the day the men at Fort Defiance learned that the Mexican Army is in San Antonio. Nick and the girls meet many of the men in the fort and learn of the difficulties of frontier life. They find the trunk quickly this time and open it again in hopes that it will send them home. They have not yet learned what they needed to nor helped Señora Alavez, so the trunk sends them ahead in time to the Battle of Coletto Creek. They are in the Mexican lines during the battle and watch in horror as the battle and Texian surrender unfolds. After the battle, the trunk is found and opened. Again, they are only sent ahead a few days and find themselves in the Presidio under Mexican control just a short time before the massacre. Here is where the lessons are learned, the help given, and lives saved. Here at Goliad, our trio becomes, more than ever before, heroes of the Texas Revolution.

This adventure is the most intricate and exciting of the series so far. The characters are fully developed, are easily understood, and completely captivating. The timeline, cast of characters, glossary, Spanish to English translation, illustrations, and maps all give the reader a deeper understanding of the story and the characters. Ms. Cuate’s writing, though, draws the reader into a page-turner of a story