

# History of the Delta Area

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History of Edcouch and Elsa

# Natives – Coahuiltecan Indians

- ❑ Lived mostly in South central Texas
  - Dry, Semi-desert brush land of Texas
- ❑ Nomads
  - Wandered around looking for food
- ❑ Life very difficult for Indians



# Hunters and Gatherers

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- Food Scarce
    - Gathers and hunters
      - Gathered roots, cactus, natural grown beans, pecans
      - Hunted rabbits, rodents, birds, bugs, etc.
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# First Contact

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- In the 1528, Narvaez expedition would stumble
  - Two survivors—Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico
  - Travel most of Texas and lived with the Coahuiltecans for nearly 8 years
  - Lived just north of Roma, Texas for a short while



# Spanish Influence

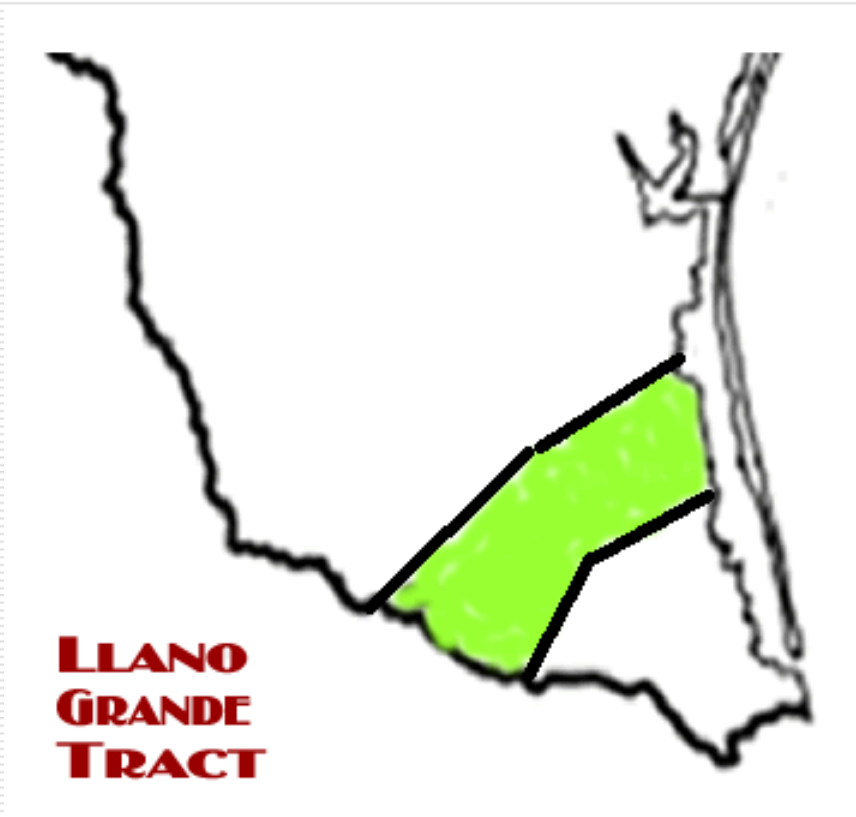
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- Spanish Missions
  - Convert Indians to Catholicism
- Changing way of life
  - Farming
  - Lifestyles
- More Spanish arrivals
  - Indians being forced to settle



# Spanish Land Grants

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- Late 1700s, Spain begins to issue land
  - 1790 – Llano Grande Tract issued to Juan Jose Ynojosa de Balli
- After his death, Land gets divided among his children

# Ranching

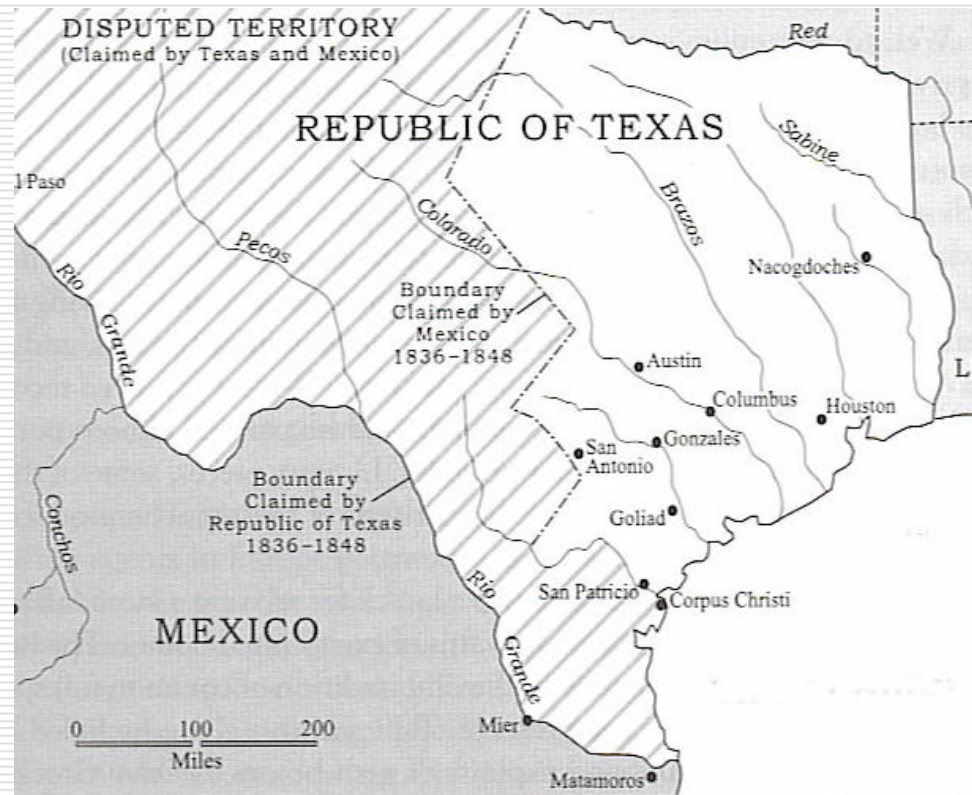
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- The RGV very dry
  - With out proper irrigation, farming was not profitable.
  - Ranching became popular
    - Raising sheep and cattle



# Land Disputes

- After Texas Revolution, questions about land
  - Part of Texas or Mexico?
  - Balli family keeps control of lands until the 1850s
- U.S. - Mexican War
  - Mexico loses war and all claims to land.
  - Many Mexican land owners are stripped of land (could not pay new taxes or land was just taken away)



# Texas Rangers

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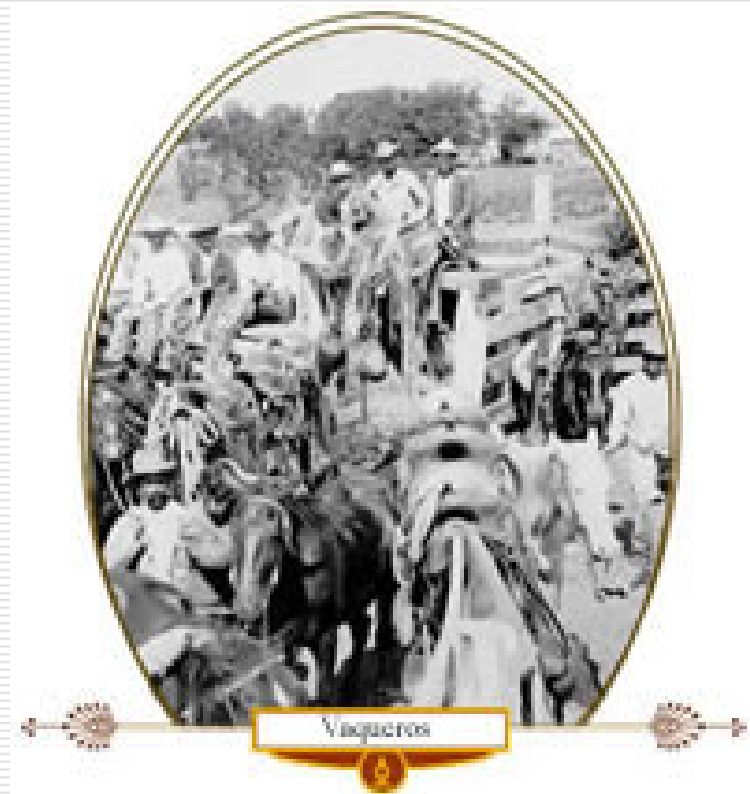


- ❑ Established 1820s
  - ❑ Official Law enforcing agency in Texas by 1830s
  - ❑ Notorious for brutality and violence
    - General dislike of Mexicans, Blacks, and Indians
    - Made life for non-whites more difficult
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# New Ownership

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- Balli Family
  - U.S. Mexican War and tough Texas Rangers
    - Family loses control of lands in S. Texas or are forced to sell
  
- Kenedy Family
  - Move to purchase most of the Rio Grande Valley
  - Sells Delta Area to wealthy ranchers
    - Macedenio Vela
      - Laguna Seca
    - Miguel Fernandez
      - La Bota



# Ranch-life dwindles

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- Rancher's problems
    - Drought strikes
      - Hits many ranchers hard
    - Cattle Rustlers
      - Thieves steal cattle
    - Better Irrigation
      - Farming more appealing
  - Prospectors
    - People looking to buy cheap land to develop and sell off for more
    - Buy off rancher's land
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# Attract New People –1900s

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- Called a “Valley”
  - Attract people to a tropical paradise
- Adventure
  - Pancho Villa and Mexican Revolution
  - Penny novels – depict the exciting, rugged, cowboy, wild-west lifestyle
- Cheap land
  - Sold to anyone with money



# New Arrivals

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- Many new white settlers begin to arrive
  - Cities grow
    - Weslaco, McAllen, Edinburg, Harlingen
  - Need access to bigger cities
    - Railroads
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# Railroad Expansion

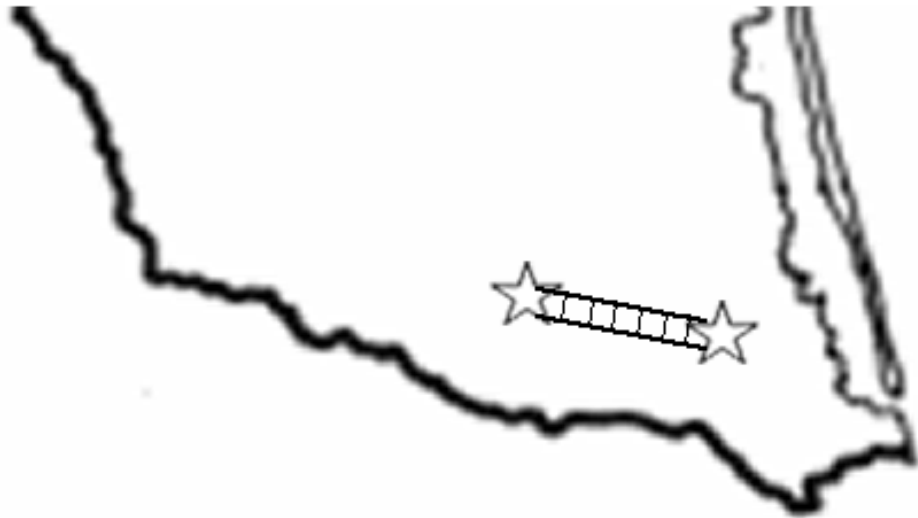
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- ❑ Two biggest cities in Valley
  - Laredo and Brownsville
    - ❑ Ship out by sea at Brownsville port
    - ❑ Ship out by train at Laredo depot
- ❑ Many miles away
  - Smaller rail lines built



# New Rail Lines -- 1920s

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- Southern Pacific Company to build new lines
  - Edinburg to Harlingen
- Two land owners convince company to build rail line through their land
  - William George
  - Edward Couch