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Brief history of Brownsville and Matamoros

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Brief History of Brownsville and Matamoros

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS:

- The area of Brownsville-Matamoros is explored in the seventeenth century.
- [Matamoros](#) is established In 1774 (then known as San Juan de los Esteros).
- Spanish authorities grant rancher [José Salvador de la Garza](#) fifty-nine leagues of land on the northern bank of the river in 1781.
- Squatters from Matamoros construct huts on the north bank of the river in the early nineteenth century.
- In 1826 Villa del Rufugio is renamed [Villa de Matamoros](#).
- General Zachary Taylor's troops build Fort Texas in early 1846 across the river from Matamoros (the fort is renamed [Fort Brown](#) in honor of Major Jacob Brown, killed in a Mexican attack).
- The area of Brownsville becomes [part of the state of Texas](#) after the Mexican War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.
- In 1848 [Charles Stillman](#) purchases a section of the Garza grant.
- Stillman and Samuel Belden lay out a town that they called [Brownsville](#) and begin to sell lots in 1848.
- Brownsville is made county seat of Cameron County in 1849, and a new post office opens.
- At this time Brownsville's population grows with refugees from Matamoros and "Forty-niners" on their way to gold in California.
- A cholera epidemic in 1849 reportedly kills nearly half of Brownsville's population.
- Matamoros receives the letter "H" before its for "heroic" defense against the perpetrators of the [Plan de la Loba](#).
- In the 1850s Matamoros is replaced by Brownsville as the leading trade center for northern Mexico.
- Brownsville's city market opens in 1850
- Brownsville's *Sentinel* begins publication in 1850.
- Brownsville is incorporated in 1850, but because of a series of legal battles over the ownership of the land between the Stillman and Cavazo heirs, the title issue is not completely settled until a U.S. Supreme rules in favor of the Stillman group in 1879.
- [Juan Cortina](#) rebels against the state of Texas in 1859.
- The first Catholic church in Brownsville is founded by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1854.
- The first school in Brownsville, Villa Marķa School for girls, is opened by in 1853.
- In Brownsville [Melinda Rankin](#) establishes the Rio Grande Female Institute with Presbyterian support in 1854.
- Brownsville's first public school is established in 1855.
- Brownsville and Matamoros prosper during the Civil War as an open port for Southern cotton trade with Europe.
- Matamoros is made a free trade zone in 1858.
- In 1865 the Confederate and Union soldiers fight the last battle of the Civil at [Palmito Ranch](#).
- [La Casamata](#) located in Matamoros is inaugurated in 1865.
- Also in the same year Matamoros's El Teatro Reforma is completed.
- Matamoros is hit by a hurricane in 1867.
- The narrow-gauge [Rio Grande Railroad](#) is constructed from Brownsville to Port Isabel in 1872.
- The port of [Bagdad](#) is destroyed by a cyclone in 1889.
- In 1892 the *Cosmopolitan* is purchased by Jesse O. Wheeler, and renamed the *Brownsville Herald*.
- In 1904 the [St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway](#) reaches Brownsville.
- In 1904 H. G. Stillwell, Sr. plants the first commercial citrus orchard in 1904.
- In 1908 construction of Brownsville owned electric-lighting system, waterworks, and sewerage system is begun.
- A railroad bridge is constructed between Brownsville and Matamoros in 1910.
- In 1910 the first international car bridge between Brownsville and Matamoros is completed.
- Troops stationed at Fort Brown go on a rampage in the [Brownsville Raid](#) of 1906.
- [James B. Wells, Jr.](#), attorney of Brownsville, Texas, and leading figure in South Texas Democratic politics losses control of Brownsville in 1910.
- The 1920s see the height of the land boom in Brownsville.
- The first airport is constructed in Brownsville in the 1920s.
- During Prohibition in the 1930s Matamoros attracts tourists seeking a drink.
- Illegal liquor is smuggled into Brownsville from Matamoros during Prohibition.
- The [Port of Brownsville](#) is officially opened on May 15, 1936.
- Fort Brown serves as training base for the 124th Cavalry during W.W.II.
- Fort Brown is deactivated in 1945.
- In 1949 the [Gulf Intracoastal Waterway](#) is extended to Brownsville and the ship channel is expanded to accommodate larger vessels.
- Brownsville becomes known for its shrimp industry, as well as cotton growing in the 1940s and 1950s.
- Union Carbide begins construction of a plant near Brownsville in 1959.
- Also in 1959 an immigration and customs building is constructed at the [International Gateway Bridge](#).
- [Maquiladoras](#) are initiated by the Mexican government in the 1960s.
- The Industrial Development Council is formed in 1966 to encouraged new industries.
- In 1967 the Border Industrialization Program was instituted by the Mexican government to attract Mexican businesses and laborers to the border area.
- In 1989 the University of Texas System takes over Pan American University at Brownsville and it becomes the University of Texas-Pan American-Brownsville.
- In September 1991 the University's name is changed to the [University of Texas at Brownsville](#).
- At same time the University begins a partnership with Texas Southmost College.

