GUIDE

BURGESS LAND PATENT
1888

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION 81

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ALPINE, TEXAS
BURGESS LAND PATENT
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This document is a Letter Patent for 518.3 acres in Presidio County, Texas issued by Texas governor Lawrence Sullivan Ross on May 22, 1888 to John B. Burgess, farmer, merchant, and freighter at El Fortin on the Rio Grande in Presidio County. The name of the donor of the Patent is unknown, but it is thought that the Patent was part of the holdings of the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society, which organization collected documents and artifacts of historical significance in the area and donated its collections to Sul Ross State University in 1968.

John B. Burgess was the son of John D. Burgess, early settler, freighter and merchant, headquartered at El Fortin on the Chihuahua trade route between San Antonio and Mexico. Burgess Water Hole [present-day Kokemot Springs in Alpine, TX] was named for the senior Burgess, who stood off an Indian raid there in his freighting days. The period of Burgess control of the fort/home (formerly and subsequently Fort Leaton, TX) essentially spans the lifetime of John B. (Juan) Burgess, the note in the family Bible of his birth at El Fortin on August 15, 1853 being the first record of their occupation and his death (February 15) and burial there in 1927 marking their departure.

John B. Burgess was twenty-two when his father was murdered at Fort Davis on Christmas Day, 1875. His mother, Tomasa (Tomasita) Baiza (spelled Valleza in one source) died a few weeks later, on January 21, 1876. According to one account, his older brother Vidal pursued a former employee to Ojinaga and avenged their father's death. Vidal, the freighter for the business, was killed at El Fortin in 1900 in an exchange of gunfire with law officers called in by the family for the protection of his wife. Sources consulted do not mention the other brother, Thomas/Tomas, except to note that he is dead, probably before Juan's death in 1927 as the family vacated El Fortin then, possibly before their father's death.

According to family sources, John D. Burgess (b. 1827) held twelve patents, dated 1862, on lands in the county. The John B. Burgess Land Patent of 1888 records the addition of more than 500 acres. At his death, John B. Burgess left six living children of his marriage to Paz Landrum Burgess (b. January 24, 1856, d. February 12, 1929). One of these children was Lizzie Burgess Thain Riggs (b. 1882 or 1883, d. 1946), for many years a photographer in Alpine, TX with husband J. C. Thain and later a rancher in Chihuahua (MX) with husband Frank S. Riggs. There are a number of her photographs in the Archives.

One oversize document.

Gaylan Corbin
Archival Assistant
December 17, 1997
BURGESS LAND PATENT

Sources:

Davenport, Dorothy. "John Burgess," unpublished manuscript, Clifford B. Casey Collection, Box 1, Folder 25, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

Gregg, B. A. The History of Presidio County, thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1933.


Lowry, Mabel, Fort Leaton State Historic Park, Presidio County, Texas, Park Services Division, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, Texas, 1969.