

# FABULOUS PORT ARANSAS



THE PASS

*G. L. L.*



### THE LOCATION

Port Aransas is located on the north end of Mustang Island, on the south Texas Gulf Coast. Aransas Pass, the waterway, separates Mustang and St. Joseph Islands. Aransas Pass, the town, is situated on the mainland six miles west of Port Aransas. Rockport is also located on the mainland, ten miles north of the town of Aransas Pass, and twelve miles from Port Aransas by water. Corpus Christi lies on the shore of the bay of that name twenty two miles southwest of Port Aransas by water.

Aransas Pass, the waterway, is the channel from the Gulf of Mexico through which vessels destined for Corpus Christi, Aransas, and Copano Bays must sail.



# Fabulous Port Aransas

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### THE DISCOVERY

For thousands of years a mighty land, unrivaled in natural resources, lay quiescent and fallow just as it fell from the hand of the Creator. The surf roared on its endless beaches; the trade winds swirled the grasses of its coastal plains; the clouds drifted endlessly over its hilly midriff; and the smoke of Indian fires blew across its high, level plains and came to rest in circlets about its mountain peaks. Only the savage and the wild beasts lightly trod its boundless expanse.

For centuries it lay waiting, waiting for its cue to enter upon the stage of world history. To paraphrase the poet it seemed to say:

"I am Texas, barren since Time began,  
Yet do I dream of motherhood, when man  
One day at last shall look upon my charms  
And give me towns, like children, for my arms."

And then, in 1519, a tiny ship timidly skirted its virgin shores, found a Pass between two of its outlying islands, and sailed into a great bay with curving shore lines and buttressed on its landward sides with bluffs. For the first time in history a white man looked upon the luscious form of Texas, and Alonso Alvarez de Pineda, of the Spanish Navy, was thereby added to the roll of the world's discoverers. Having entered the bay on the feast day of Corpus Christi, Pineda promptly named it in honor of the day.

Years rolled by and left the Pass through which Pineda sailed in undisputed possession of the porpoise and the tarpon. But in 1534 other Europeans, Cabeza de Vaca and companions, having been shipwrecked near modern Anahuac, were striving to reach a settlement on the Panuco River in Mexico by following the coast line, when they came to Aransas Pass and paddled across it in a canoe.

After this incident, primeval silence again enshrouded the Pass, broken only by the sounds of the sea and of the birds and by occasional savage war whoops. During the seventeenth century several maritime expeditions from Mexico, searching for a colony of Frenchmen which had been founded on the Texas coast, sailed in the Gulf and may have entered Aransas Pass.

### PIONEER COMMERCE

About three hundred years after the visit of Pineda, smugglers and enterprising Mexican merchants found the Pass and the bays for which it is an inlet much to their liking. In August, 1829, John J. Linn, in a small vessel owned by Capt. John Pierce, loaded with tobacco intended for transport by mules to Mexico, sailed through Aransas Pass bound for a point on Corpus Christi Bay.

In the 1830's, there was considerable traffic through Aransas Pass by schooners freighted with goods intended for transport into the interior of Mexico



by Mexican merchants whose mule trains met the vessels at various points on Corpus Christi Bay and on other bays served by the Pass.

One of the first of these trading expeditions was in 1833 when Matamoros merchants landed \$80,000.00 worth of merchandise at a point on Copano Bay where the goods were loaded on mules and transported to Zacatecas and Durango, Mexico. Also during this period, numerous schooners used Aransas Pass for the delivery of goods intended for the Anglo-American colonists at a number of places on Aransas and Copano Bays.

And so, more than a hundred years ago, an increasing number of gallant little schooners beat their precarious passage through the turbulent and lonely waters of Aransas Pass.

Also in 1830 the Irish colonists of the Powers and Hewitson colony of Refugio began coming through the Pass, bound for Copano Bay, and were still coming in 1834. But they came in peril of their lives. There was only about seven feet of water over the bar at the Pass, normally, and when a norther blew the water out into the Gulf the passage was perilous. Consequently, many were the wrecks that littered the bar in early days. This fact is attested by John J. Linn—the same Linn who successfully negotiated the Pass in 1829. Here is his eyewitness account of a passage over the bar in 1834.

#### CONTEMPORANEOUS ACCOUNTS OF EARLY PASSAGES OVER THE BAR

"On April 23rd, 1834, I was married in the city of New Orleans to Miss Margaret C. Daniel of that city . . . It was shortly after our marriage that my wife and I took passage on the schooner 'WILD CAT' for Texas. This vessel was destined for Aransas Pass, and, as opportunities for coming to Texas were few in those days, we accepted this one. Without anything unusual occurring on the trip, we arrived at the Pass, which we found stormy and bad. Notwithstanding the dangers of trying to cross this bar, the captain announced his determination to enter the bay at any hazard. As our little schooner reached the bar, a rough sea broke on her, and a heavy swell threw her from the channel and she became unmanageable. The consequence was that she struck heavily on the bar in about five feet of water, where she remained fast aground. We had taken the precaution to shut and fasten the cabin door.

"Another heavy sea struck her and completely washed her decks, those upon deck only saving themselves by clinging desperately to the ropes. This roller lifted the vessel into the shallow water, where she was permanently fixed.

"The doors were then opened, and the passengers within, who had imagined that we had all been swept overboard, congratulated us on our escape, and especially Mrs. Linn in that she had not been left a young widow. Our stanch little craft withstood the warfare of the elements wonderfully well and, though beat up on the bar by angry waves, did not leak at all. But the water had played havoc with our culinary department, and the cook announced that it would be an impossibility to get supper. We therefore contented our-



selves with bread and cheese and passed the night quite comfortably under the circumstances. In the morning it was discovered that the schooner had taken several inches of water in the hold, and that the leak was increasing. The weather remained tempestuous.

"On the following day two vessels were seen approaching the bar. One proved to be the schooner 'CARDENA', loaded with merchandise for San Antonio. The other was a larger vessel and had on board colonists for Powers and Hewitson Colony. The 'CARDENA' headed her course for us. We signaled her to steer to the east of us, as we were on the west side of the bar; but, as the atmosphere was hazy and a heavy sea was running, our signals were disregarded, and the schooner struck with her broadside to the sea and wind. In about two hours the 'CARDENA' succumbed to the surf and gale and went to pieces. The most of her cargo was lost; but little washed ashore.

"The other vessel was handled in a manner indicative of skilful seamanship and stood off and on until late in the afternoon when the captain put on all sails and stood in for the bar. She was steered too far eastward, however, and brought up on the breakers where she thumped tremendously by reason of having all of her canvas unfurled. Each roll of the surf would take her headlong forward, her keel grating on the bar. But in about one hour she fought her way over these formidable obstacles and entered the bay where she ran into a mud-bank with several feet of water in her hold, from which position she was never rescued. Fortunately all of the colonists were landed on the beach in safety.

"Our captain, as agent for the insurance companies, sold the schooner and her cargo, one of the passengers becoming the purchaser. As I was insured to the full amount, I lost nothing. Subsequently, I accepted a proposition from the purchaser and took the purchase off his hands. An inspection of the cargo showed the goods were but slightly damaged. I was fortunate in being able to hail a schooner which had just discharged her cargo at Copano and engaged her to transport my goods to Copano, at which point they were safely landed in a few days.

"The cholera here broke out among the colonists in an epidemic form, and many of the unhappy people died ere transportation could be procured to convey them to their destination."

One of the several bays for which Aransas Pass is an entrance is that of Copano. It was so named by the early Spaniards because its shores were the habitat of the Copanes tribe of Indians. At a point on this bay was established the village of Copano which became a port of entry for the Powers and Hewitson colonists bound for Refugio. It was used, also, by other colonists. On the 10th of November, 1833, fifty nine colonists bound for the Beales and Grant concession on the Rio Grande embarked on the schooner "AMOS WRIGHT" at New York, whose port of destination was Copano. On the 3rd of December land was first sighted near Matagorda Island, and at one o'clock P.M. on the



6th, the schooner crossed the bar at Aransas Pass in nine feet of water, and the ship immediately came to anchor as the wind had veered to the northeast and northwest. She remained at anchor for two days, but at 10 o'clock A.M. on the 8th, she commenced warping up the bay. On the 9th a strong north wind prevented further progress until nine o'clock A.M., on the 10th, when she commenced warping up the channel again until Live Oak Point was reached, where she remained for the night, and on the next day she sailed to Copano, distant about six miles to the westward, where the vessel ran aground. On the 11th of December, Mr. Munroe, the master of the schooner, went ashore and brought off the Mexican coast guard and all his force, consisting of a corporal and two soldiers, and noted in his journal: "Had at supper the pleasure of the officer's company who went ashore at 7 o'clock P.M. completely intoxicated. On coming aboard, the military wished to give us a salute but, unfortunately, only one pistol would go off. We had the mortification of learning, first, that we could not clear the vessel without going to Goliad, a village about fifteen leagues distant; and, second, that nothing could be done until the Collector of the Customs should pay us a visit, and it would be necessary to send an express for him. It was some comfort, however, that the captain of the coast guard very coolly allowed us to disembark everything without the formality of either entering the vessel or receiving a custom house officer.

"December 12th. Went ashore to select a proper place for pitching our tents which we arranged to have immediately on the shore, having an oyster shell beach and protected by a few bushes. At this time we had a plentiful supply of water in the ponds on the prairie, but it must be observed that, in the dry season, there is no water near this place, and it would be necessary to send a boat for it to Live Oak Point. There was a small half-finished frame house on the beach, usually uninhabited, but occupied when there was any vessel in the bay by the captain of the coast guard."

#### IRISH COLONISTS COME THROUGH THE PASS

In 1830 the Irish colonists of the McMullen-McGloin Colony of San Patricio de Hibernia also began coming through Aransas Pass, the first group landing at McGloin's Bluff, located about half way between old Ingleside and Harbor City. Tradition has it that the vessel transporting these colonists ran short of water while still in the Gulf. Whereupon, a Catholic Priest who was a member of the group told the colonists that he had been informed in a vision that water would be found upon the dunes of the landing beach. And it so came to pass. Old-timers say that many years ago there was indeed a seep in McGloin's Bluff.

#### PIONEER PORTS

By 1840, ports had been established at Aransas and Lamar on Aransas Bay, and at Copano on Copano Bay. At that time the town of Aransas was situated on Live Oak Point, and a visitor in 1840 said: "This town is improving



with much spirit, is well located, and enjoys a lucrative trade with Mexico." And of Lamar the same visitor said: "Lamar is situated on the eastern side of the Aransaso (Bay) on Point Lookout, and begins to receive considerable attention, though a very new town."

#### ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF ARANSAS

This visitor, it will be noted, used the name of Aransaso for the bay. Other early travelers referred to the bay and river as the Aranzazu. In regard to this name Z. T. Fulmore, Fellow of the Texas State Historical Association, says: "In 1746 Captain Oribio Basterra made the first recorded Spanish expedition to the lower Trinity River. Passing the Trinity southwestward from Nacogdoches, he named a stream, which seems to be the San Jacinto, in the Orcoquisac (Indian) country, 'El Rio Nombrado Nr'a Senora de Aranzazu (the river named Our Lady of Aranzazu)'. He evidently gave the name himself, and it is apparent that Our Lady of Aranzazu was a saint in whose honor he named the stream. How the name was shifted to the river now known as the Aransas is only a matter of conjecture. Basterra had been Governor of Texas in 1739 and was afterward a captain in the army with a fondness for exploring. He was in Texas for more than twenty years, spending much of his time west of the Guadalupe River."

However it came about, it is certain that the river was first named the Aranzazu, and the same name was later given to the bay and to the Pass, all of which are known now by the name Aransas.

#### THE FOUNDING OF CORPUS CHRISTI

In 1839 Colonel H. L. Kinney selected the west bank of the Nueces River at its mouth for a trading post, and on January 4, 1840, bought ten leagues of land, extending from the Oso to the Nueces River, from their Mexican owner. He then proceeded to build a town whose growth received great impetus upon the arrival of General Zachary Taylor and his army on August 1, 1845. Most of the imports for this new town came through Aransas Pass, as well as supplies for the American army, being lightered from the Pass across the bay in launches.

#### DEEP WATER FIRST CONSIDERED IN 1853

Aransas Pass was being considered as a deep water project as early as 1853, as indicated by a portion of the report made by Captain John C. Oaks of the United State Engineers' Office at Galveston, Texas, dated December 31, 1909, to the Chief of Engineers at Washington, as follows:

"The improvement of Aransas Pass Harbor with a view of obtaining a suitable depth and width has been under consideration by the Government since 1853"

In June, 1880, G. W. Fulton of Fulton, Texas wrote to Major S. M. Mansfield, United States Engineer at Galveston, Texas, in charge of Texas coast improvements, and in this letter gave an interesting description of conditions



around Aransas Pass during the days of the Republic of Texas, as follows:

"The interest evinced by you . . . for the successful prosecution of the improvement of Aransas Pass, now under your charge, induces me to lay before you my views of the importance of that work with regard to local, as well as national, interest. In the years 1837-38 and -39, in the two latter as Collector of Customs for this District, under the Republic of Texas, I became intimately acquainted with its condition at that time when vessels drawing 12 to 14 feet passed over safely, and became fully convinced of its future importance to the commerce of a large area of the country, then almost uninhabited, and the land, except along the river and bay fronts, exclusively the property of the State."

#### ARANSAS PASS IN THE 1850's

Conditions around the Pass in the 1850's are described by R. L. Mercer, who now lives in the town of Aransas Pass and operates the San Patricio Courts in that place. He states that he was born in Port Aransas before there was any town there. His father was a bar pilot, and his grandparents, lived on St. Joseph Island, having moved there in 1853. His grandfather operated a dock and warehouse at a point about opposite the light house, and much freight that was lightered to Corpus Christi and other places was handled at this dock. He also raised cattle and sheep, pasturing them on both St. Joseph and Mustang Islands.

In the late 1850's Peter A. Johnson built a warehouse on St. Joseph Island with a wharf on the Gulf side of the Island. He owned three schooners and traded with Indianola and Point Isabel, having the mail contract between those places. He transshipped goods also through Aransas Pass to bay points from whence his mule trains carried them into the interior.

, In 1857 there was a Deputy Collector of Customs permanently stationed at the Pass, drawing a salary of \$8.00 per day, and also deputy collectors at Corpus Christi and Copano, the two latter drawing salaries of \$500.00 per annum. In a report from that place in 1857 it is noted: "Aransas Harbor is pretty good, but shoal after getting above the Pass." The report further states: "Aransas light is a fourth order Fresnal Lens—fixed light on a brick tower, sixty feet high, painted dark brown."

#### THE STEAMBOAT APPEARS ON THE SCENE

At about this point in its history, the steamboat appears on the scene at Aransas Pass. In a letter written from Ingleside on June 27, 1859, is found the following statement: "We had a steamboat in here last night who astonished the natives with singing and dancing, and we all had a good time until this morning when she went out of the bay, puffing around the peninsular at daylight." And a subsequent letter written from Ingleside in 1859 says: ". . . take the stage or come by buggy to Indianola and from there then take the steamer direct to my place (Ingle-



side) . . . we have two excellent steamboats, newly built, expressly for this trade, plying regularly between Powderhorn (Indianola) and Corpus Christi, passage \$6.00. Come down on the 'MEXICO'. She is the largest and most comfortable."

The conditions under which these steamboats operated is described in a report of 1859: "Aransas bar has eight to nine feet at present; pilotage \$3.00 per foot. Aransas light usually visible twenty miles. Aransas three miles from the Gulf; Lamar twenty two miles from the Gulf, wharf and warehouse building."

#### FIRST ATTEMPT TO DREDGE A CHANNEL

In referring to construction along the Texas coast in 1861, the following intriguing statement is made by the Texas Almanac: " . . . The Aransas Railroad, . . . commenced at Aransas Pass with the expectation of making its terminus at Mazatlan on the Pacific shore. The roadbed from Corpus Christi Bayou to the mainland—three miles in length across the bay—has been thrown up during the past year, and the dredging machine belonging to the company is engaged in going over the work the second time, embanking it still higher above the water. About one-third of a mile of additional embankment will connect the mainland with Harbor Island on the southeast side of which is Aransas Harbor, having 35 feet of water. Aransas bar has at present about 10 feet of water at high tide."

And this further statement is made: "The Corpus Christi Ship Channel Company are progressing in their work and have already made navigation between Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays 60 feet wide and 8 feet deep. When completed, the work is to be 100 feet wide and 9 feet deep. John M. Moore, Corpus Christi, is president."

#### THE END OF AN ERA

The year 1861 brought to an end an era in the history of the channel of Aransas Pass. For more than thirty years men of many nations had been using the inlet in its natural state. Reckless men of every type, pioneering in commerce, legitimate and illegitimate. Men who lived life to its full with little regard for consequences. Toward the end of this era, this type of men was being replaced with men of different character. Individuals who dared dream of building a railroad from the Pass to the west coast of Mexico; and those who were willing to risk their private capital in constructing a navigable channel between Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays. But these latter activities came to an abrupt end at the outbreak of hostilities of the Civil War.

#### THE CIVIL WAR

In February, 1862, the Federal bark "AFTON" landed a force of soldiers at the Pass and drove off the defending Confederates. They burned several houses and confiscated beef and mutton.

And on April 21, 1862, a Federal bark, under the command of Lieutenant Commander J. W. Kittredge appeared off the Pass with instructions to blockade it. This determination to blockade the Pass was due to the fact that the Confederate



States had been obtaining many necessary supplies from abroad by vessels of shallow draft, using the Pass and landing the goods at Corpus Christi.

Kittredge determined to raid Aransas Bay, so he launched two boats from his ship, the "ARTHUR", in the Gulf and found a passage into the bay through Cedar Bayou where he was surprised to find several Confederate vessels used as blockade runners. He seized them, and loading his men and prisoners in two of them tried to run through the Pass. But Major W. O. Yager, Confederate commander of a military camp at Aransas, loaded two sloops with soldiers and bore down on Kittredge in the bay. The latter took to his small boats and tried to escape by rowing into Blind Bayou where he found no passage to the Gulf; so he and his men took to their heels and raced along the beach of St. Joseph Island to a point opposite the "ARTHUR" in the Gulf where he was rescued. This was the beginning of a number of engagements on St. Joseph and Mustang Islands which lasted off and on during the war.

Kittredge was reinforced with men and ships and established an effective blockade on the bays and ports served by the Pass. He moved into Corpus Christi Bay and on August 16, 1862, ineffectively bombarded the town of that name and again bombarded it on August 18, 1862, but with little effect.

R. L. Mercer, previously quoted in this sketch, states that in 1863 several Federal gunboats anchored off the bar at Aransas Pass and sent three cutters through the Pass to the anchorage inside. The soldiers aboard then proceeded to go ashore and kill sheep and load them onto the boats. They then returned to the flotilla outside. The next day they came again with 12 cutters and took all of Mercer's grandfather's sheep and cattle and burned his home and its contents. The entire family was visiting near the present site of Portland at the time of this incident.

#### THE DECADE FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE CIVIL WAR

At the close of the Civil War, traffic seems to have been resumed through Aransas Pass. On December 23, 1869, a citizens committee of Corpus Christi was able to report: "... first, that Aransas bar had seven feet, six inches at ordinary tide; second, that since January 1, 1869, the exports of Corpus Christi have been: 1,726,507 lbs. of wool; 1,108,254 lbs. of dry hides and skins; 1,183,298 lbs. of wet salted hides; 33,000 lbs. of bones; 158,254 lbs. of lead."

A steamship company ran the following advertisement in the Texas Almanac for 1869: "Morgan Lines, U. S. mail steamers. New Orleans to Galveston, Indianola, Lavacca, Corpus Christi and Brazos Santiago, Texas." These boats however, merely delivered goods to lighters in the Pass for transport to Corpus Christi.

Around 1870 small packing plants were springing up about the shores of Aransas Bay, and the Morgan Line boats were entering that Bay on regular schedules, the water in the channel there being much deeper than in Corpus Christi Channel. Following are excerpts from the report of Thos. Kearney, Collector of Customs for the District of Corpus Christi, for the year ending



Aug. 31, 1872, the District including the ports of Corpus Christi, Rockport, and Aransas: "38 side-wheel steamers, 73 schooners, and one sloop cleared the Pass." And the principal items of export were: "wool, dry hides, wet salted hides, skins, horned cattle, beef, horses, tallow, bones, and lead."

#### BEGINNING OF THE MODERN ERA

The year 1874 marked the beginning of the modern era in the history of Aransas Pass. It has been previously noted that the Pass had been used in its natural state since its discovery in 1519 until the Civil War period. Only one attempt had been made to dredge a channel to Corpus Christi, and its operation was halted before its completion by the war.

There has always been a shallow, narrow channel connecting the Pass with Corpus Christi. General Zachary Taylor moved his army to Corpus Christi from the Pass in light draft boats through this channel which leads off from the Rockport channel in Aransas Bay westward near the light house, thus passing three sides of Harbor Island, the east side of Hog Island, and continues along the east side of Stedman Island into the upper reaches of Corpus Christi Bay. The present causeway crosses this channel at Stedman Island, and a drawbridge is operated there. Later this narrow channel was deepened by private parties as indicated in the following paragraph from a Government Report: "A narrow irregular channel ran through this shallow stretch but was in places badly obstructed by shoals. It was deepened by private parties about 1874 and has since been known as Morris & Cummins Cut."

But Aransas Pass, itself, was in no condition to handle deep sea boats. In fact the channel was constantly shifting southward as indicated by an engineer's Government Report dated Dec. 30, 1878: "The head of Mustang Island is constantly receding toward the southwest and Aransas Pass follows with it. A comparison of coast survey charts of 1858 and 1868 with each other and with Lieutenant Woodruff's report of 1871, and the last survey of 1878, shows an annual rate of wear of 210 to 260 feet."

#### FIRST ATTEMPT BY U. S. GOVERNMENT TO DEEPEN CHANNEL

The original project for improvement at Aransas Pass was adopted by the United States Congress on March 3, 1879, and provided for the construction of two jetties, several groins and revetment work along the north shore of Mustang Island. Work under this authorization continued until 1885. Several of the groins were completed and a portion of the revetment along the north shore of Mustang Island was placed, and a portion of the south jetty was constructed. This jetty was designed by Colonel Mansfield and bears his name. It consisted of brush weighted with stone. (The present south jetty, built several years later of a stone core and big cap rocks, is located a little distance south of the old Mansfield jetty.)

While this work was going on, and shortly prior thereto, Corpus Christi had regular lines of shallow draft boats operating through Morris & Cummings Cut.



The latter, however, was so difficult of operation that as soon as the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Ry. built into Corpus Christi in 1884 this water traffic ceased.

#### PIONEER INDUSTRIES

Also about this time the Boston Beef Packing Co. established a packing plant at Fulton, four miles north of Rockport, and in 1879-80 they exported through Aransas Pass by Morgan Line paddle wheel steamers, a total of beef products of 5,981,807 lbs. and 41,000 horns. It is said that salt created by evaporation along the shores of Laguna Madre was brought up in shallow draft boats and used in this packing plant. In the Report of the Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History, to Governor Roberts on December 1, 1882, the following statement in regard to Aransas Pass is made:

"The United States Government, recognizing the advantage of a good harbor at this point on the Gulf, is endeavoring to deepen the channel at Aransas Pass, with every prospect of ultimate success. The Pass lies between St. Joseph and Mustang Islands and constitutes the entrance to the two spacious land-locked harbors of Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays. The natural channel across the bar at present varies from 7 to 8 feet, and it is proposed to increase this to 12 feet at mean low tide. It is estimated that the work will cost \$760,000.00 for deepening the Pass, and \$440,000 for dredging out the bay channel to Rockport and Corpus Christi. About \$150,000 has been expended, and larger appropriations by Congress may safely be counted on, as the beneficial effects of the system adopted are manifest. There is already a sufficient depth of water to permit the Morgan Line of Gulf steamships to come up to the wharfs at Rockport and Fulton, towns of Aransas Bay. The former is the county seat; contains a population of 700 and does an annual business of about \$1,500,000, chiefly in the shipment of beeves to eastern markets. Fulton, a few miles further up the bay, is noted for its beef packeries, its bone mill, where bones are ground into fertilizers, and its ice factory, counting up an aggregate trade of \$500,000 annually."

With the establishment of these industries and the expansion of cattle raising in the southwest Texas coast country, the demand for a deep water port became urgent to serve the area, and resulted in the initial appropriation by Congress for that purpose. This urgency is pointed up by a further quotation from the letter of Fulton to Mansfield written in 1880:

" . . . there is scarcely an acre of public land within an area of 200 miles from this point (Aransas Pass) as a center, and the country is rapidly settling beyond toward the upper Rio Grande which, from its mouth in lat. 26 deg. to a point due west from here in lat. 28 deg., does not vary 20 miles from the quadrant of a circle of 200 miles radius. Beyond that point the Rio Grande stretches toward the northwest and the Gulf coast to the southeast, whereby Aransas Pass remains the focal point of the vast region to El Paso and beyond. Aransas is the central point of the great cattle producing country of west Texas. Between 1868, at



which time the writer returned to Texas, and the closing of the bar in 1878, at least a half million cattle, either alive or slaughtered, passed over the bar; also great numbers of horses, sheep and hogs, as well as the large wool clip of west Texas; and the hides, wool, lead etc. from Mexico and return cargoes for the market. Also a large lumber trade and general supplies for the surrounding country for a hundred miles north and west of the Rio Grande."

In this letter Fulton makes the prediction that the large pastures of the area would be cut up into farms as the soil was rich and adapted to producing most any crops.

In the letter just quoted Fulton refers to "the closing of the bar in 1878." Immediately prior to this event occurred what was probably the last wreck on the bar before the Government made it safe for traffic.

#### THE LAST WRECK ON THE BAR

In January of 1876 Mrs. S. G. Miller, of Nueces County, with her father, returned from a visit to Louisiana on board the steamer "MARY" bound for Rockport. A rough sea put Mrs. Miller to bed with seasickness. The Gulf was choppy, the cargo was heavy, and the vessel was so old that it was unfit for