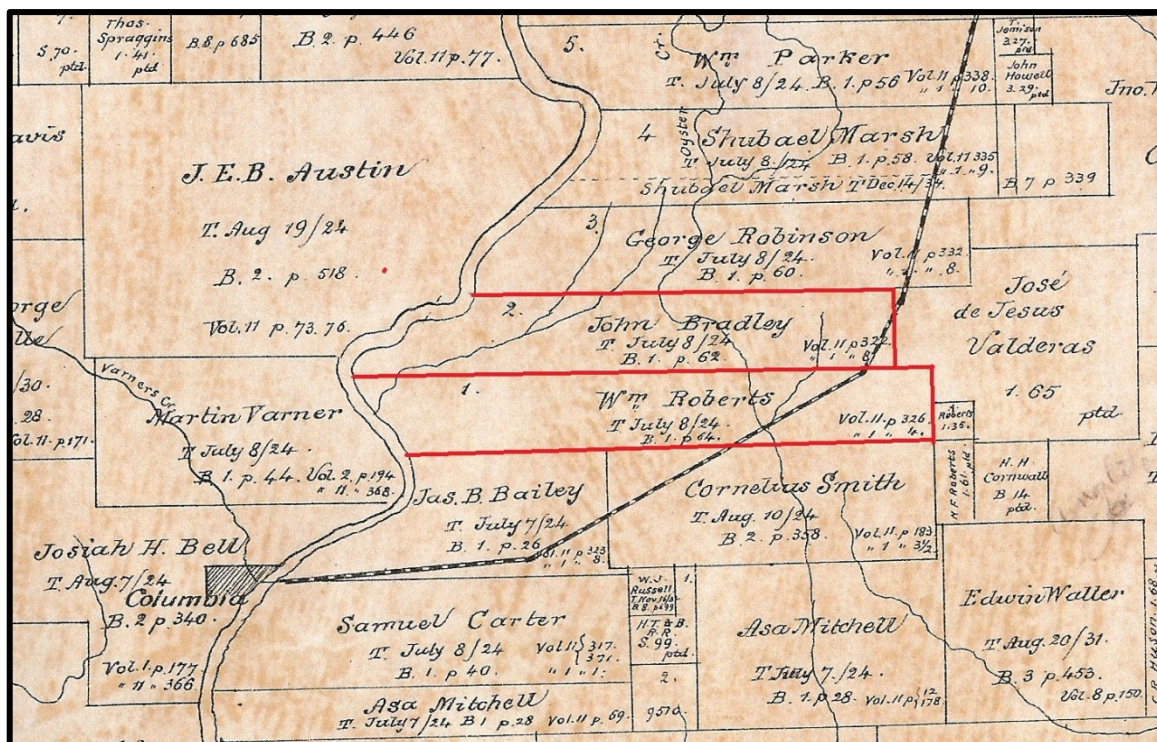


Eli Manadue Justice John H. Jones Plantation  
Brazosport Archaeological Society

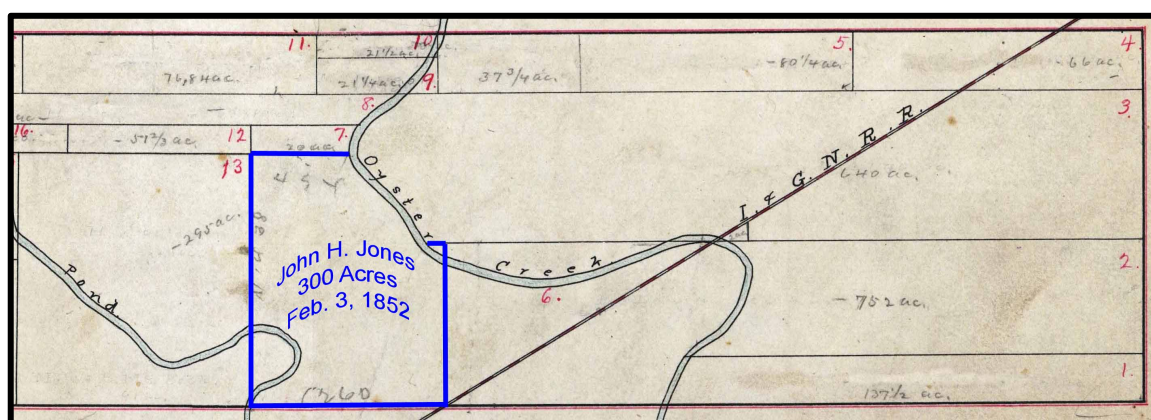


John Bradley & William T. Roberts Leagues Map 1879 The General Land Office of the State of Texas

John H. Jones came to Brazoria County in the 1850's from possibly the California gold rush. He initially bought 300 acres of land on Oyster Creek above Columbia in the John Bradley League in 1852 and started a cotton plantation. Through the 1850's he bought additional tracts of land in the John Bradley and William T. Roberts Leagues until he owned well over 900 acres of land. With a group of 20-25 slaves he produced cotton through the Civil War. After his death in 1870 his estate was forced to sell the plantation at auction to Branch T. Masterson in 1873. Masterson may have had tenant farmers on the property for a while but in 1879 he sold the property to Charles P. Dewey of Ohio. Charles P. Dewey and Albert B. Dewey would remain in the northern states while their older brother Eliphalet Charles Dewey would come to Brazoria County with his family to oversee their interests in the John H. Jones plantation. E. C. Dewey, who had lived in Texas before the Civil War, had been in business with A. J. Ward and Nathan Patton for several years in the 1870's under the state penitentiary prisoner lease program. Having lost the lease with the state Dewey concentrated on the operation of the Lake Jackson plantation with Ward and his brothers' interest in the John H. Jones plantation which he converted to a sugar producer. The Dewey family would control the property until after the turn of the century. Frank F. Niedringhaus of St. Louis for \$11025 acquired the property in 1906. His heirs owned the property for many years thereafter.

John Bradley received one league of land above the town of Columbia on the east side of the Brazos River July 8, 1824 making him one of Stephen F. Austin's 300 Families. In April 1824 he was at the home of James B. Bailey's home taking the oath of allegiance with a large group that was already living in the area.<sup>1</sup> Writing from the Brazos, Bradley wrote Stephen F. Austin requesting an additional labor of land near the mouth of the Brazos June 20, 1826: "On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March last I made settlement on the 12. Labore on the East side of the Brassos. I took the liberty of making this selection..."<sup>2</sup> Evidently he was not granted his request. John Bradley is listed in the 1826 census as a stockraiser 25-40 years of age with his wife Betsey and two male children.

It is not clear as to the improvements John Bradley made on his league but Obediah Pitts was able to obtain a quarter of the league from James Crunk August 1836.<sup>3</sup> Upon the death of Obediah Pitts his estate was divided and his son Levi Pitts sold his tract of 247 acres to Eli Manadue Justice January 1848 for \$1800.<sup>4</sup> Justice, a lawyer, had already been living on the property. According to tax records Justice had 10 slaves on the property so he was also farming.<sup>5</sup> Justice sold to O. Benedict Cecil according to his estimate ~300 acres with improvements in 1851.<sup>6</sup> It is not known if the Benedict Cecil family ever lived on the property. Benedict Cecil and his wife Henrietta sold the land to John H. Jones for \$3500 in 1852 after owning the property for only one year.<sup>7</sup>



East End John Bradley League Courtesy Brazoria County Historical Museum

John H. Jones is something of an enigma. Called Judge John H. Jones by Abner Strobel, it was said that he had killed as many as twenty-seven men during his life. He had been in California during the 1849 gold rush and while he was there he had been in a number of difficulties.<sup>8</sup> All of this, of course, is hard to substantiate as very little information is actually known about John H. Jones before he arrived in Brazoria County other that he was born ~1806 in

<sup>1</sup> Barker, Eugene C. ed., *The Austin Papers*, Vol. II Part 1, Washington Government Printing Office, 1924, p.782-83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. II, Part 2, p. 1365.

<sup>3</sup> BCDR: C 307/08

<sup>4</sup> BCDR: D 528/29

<sup>5</sup> Eli Manadue Justice died at the home of October 30, 1857, *Civilian and Gazette*, Galveston, Texas

<sup>6</sup> BD|CDR: F 54/55

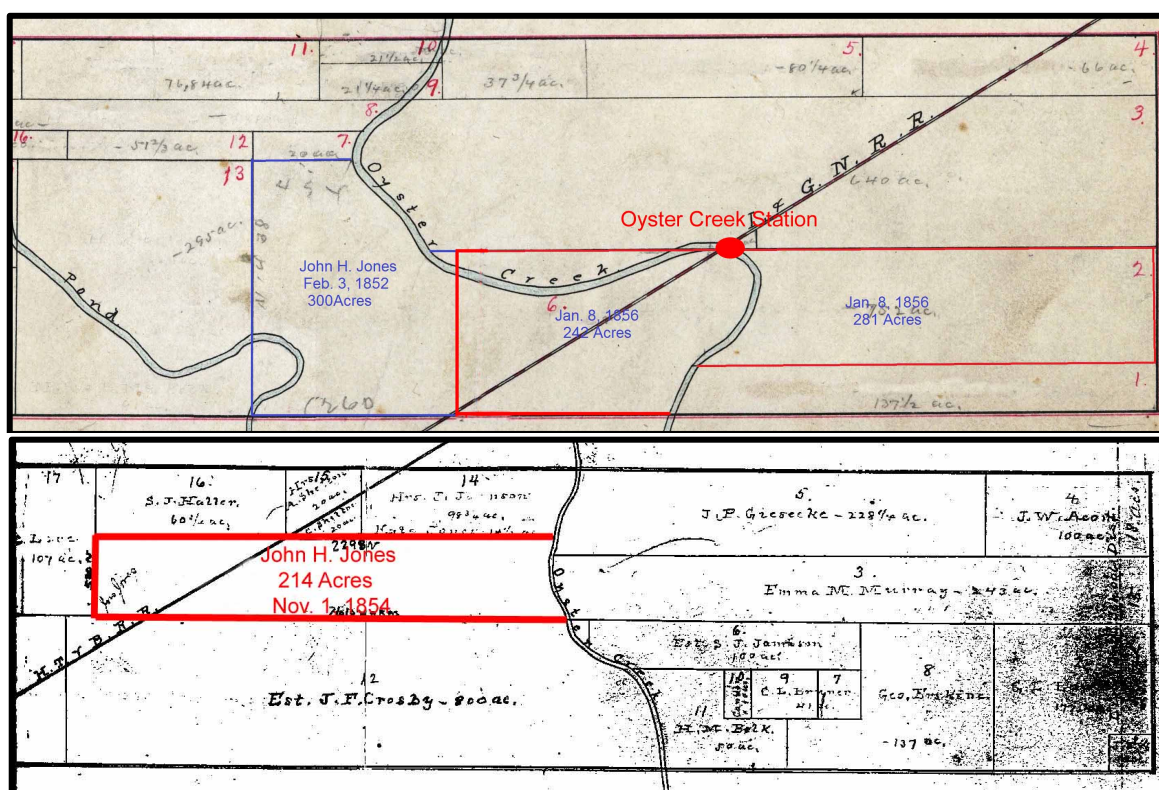
<sup>7</sup> BCDR: F 225/26

<sup>8</sup> Strobel, Abner J., *The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County, Texas*, Lake Jackson Historical Association, 2006, p. 61



South Carolina. Tax records for 1852 reveal that he already owned 10 slaves and 228 acres, less than the 300 estimated in the sale.

During the course of the years as he developed his cotton plantation he increased the size of his land holdings by purchasing 214 acres out of the William T. Roberts league which was to the south of his main holdings and not adjacent to his property from Levi and Lucretia Pitts in 1854 for \$1200.<sup>9</sup> An additional 523 acres in two tracts adjacent to his property were purchased from James and Mary Ann Williams<sup>10</sup> in 1856 for \$2618.25 giving him land on both sides of Oyster Creek.<sup>11</sup> By 1858 tax records indicate he owned 750 acres in the John Bradley league and 214 acres in the William T. Roberts league and 14 slaves. During this time he had only borrowed \$1920 from Sarah C. Jones. It is not known for sure if her husband was related to John H. Jones. Her husband was John Jones born in North Carolina in 1823.



East End John Bradley & William T. Roberts Leagues Courtesy Brazoria County Historical Museum

In the 1860 Federal Census John H. Jones is listed as living alone:

John H. Jones	Planter	54M	South Carolina
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The 1860 Agricultural Census lists John H. Jones as having 150 improved acres and owning another 816 acres with \$500 worth of farm machinery. He owned 5 horses, 6 mules, 12

<sup>9</sup> Brazoria County Deed Records: G 100/01

<sup>10</sup> Mary Ann Williams was a daughter of Obediah Pitts.

<sup>11</sup> BCDR: G 524/26

milch cows, 60 head of cattle, and 100 hogs. The plantation produced in 1859 1200 bushels of corn, 95 bales of cotton, and 30 tons of hay. There were 24 slaves on the property living in 5 dwellings.

On the eve of the Civil War John H. Jones appeared to be doing well. After the Civil War he seemed to have his troubles. According to Abner Strobel:

...after the freeing of the negroes, was always in difficulties with the Federal authorities...During the days of Reconstruction, Judge Jones had the misfortune to kill a negro. He was arrested by the Federal authorities and placed in jail in Houston. After lying in jail awhile, he sent for a man who had influence with the Negro Bureau Agent to see what could be done to get him out of jail. The go-between wanted ten thousand dollars. It was finally agreed that Judge Jones was to pay three thousand dollars. Judge Jones sent for Wm. D. Cleveland, the father of the two brothers now composing the firm of that name, who paid the three thousand dollars for the Judge. He never paid the note, neither did the parties try to collect. Once when in Houston, Judge Jones tried to get the Negro Bureau Agent in a saloon to drink with him. The saloon was on Congress Avenue and Main Street. A number of Brazorians were there who knew Judge Jones, and asked why he wanted the agent to drink with him. Judge Jones replied that if he had ever gotten him in the saloon he intended to kill him.<sup>12</sup>

Apparently John H. Jones died during the first couple of months of 1870 in Galveston County. John S. Jones of Galveston was named as his executor. Again the kinship of John S. Jones is not clear. He had been born 1811 in Louisiana and lived in Galveston with his wife Teresa. His will only leaves more questions. To Samuel C. Jones, son of Samuel W. Jones and Mary C. Jones of Beaufort, South Carolina he left 2/3 of his estate. There was a stipulation, however: "Said Samuel C. Jones to have the choice and selection of such of my estate as he may wish to the extent of this bequest. Subject, however, to the charge and cost of the tuition, care, medical attention, and other necessary expenses that may be incurred in the proper rearing and education of Robert O. Jones, a free boy of color now with me, until he may attain his majority, said Robert now being about eight years of age." The remaining 1/3 of his estate was to be divided equally between Joseph M. Jones, formerly of New Orleans, and Robert O. Jones. He also directed Samuel C. Jones or his executor to "take personal charge of the said minor Robert O. Jones, put him to school and have him taught to read, and write at least; and when he arrives at a proper age have him bound out to some good humane man to learn the carpenter's or blacksmith's trade, as Robert may choose: but I do not wish him bound to a trade until he is at least fourteen years of age."<sup>13</sup> Is Samuel C. Jones a nephew of John H. Jones? Are Joseph M. Jones and Robert O. Jones his illegitimate children? According to the Galveston County Clerk's office there are no further probate records other than his will. Were John H. Jones' wishes carried out for Robert O. Jones? Who was he accused of killing? One would like to know. The ENIGMA of John H. Jones continues.

Sarah C. Jones sued the John H. Jones estate to collect on the \$1960 owed her plus interest. The probate court ordered the property seized and sold. Sheriff J. Bell Copes auctioned off the plantation for \$1000 to Branch T. Masterson October 16, 1873.<sup>14</sup>

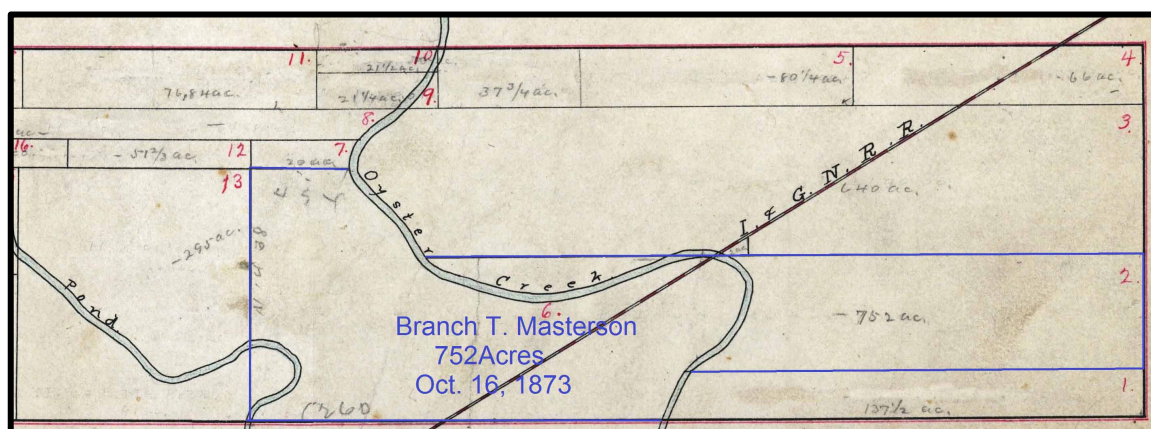
Branch T. Masterson may have had tenant farmers on the property for a few years but in 1879 he sold the 752 acres in the John Bradley league for \$5500 to Charles Paulson Dewey of Ohio. C.P Dewey, his brother Albert B. Dewey and their father Chauncey Dewey were wealthy industrialists.<sup>15</sup> Their tie to Texas was Chauncey Dewey's oldest son, Eliphalet C. Dewey.

<sup>12</sup> Strobel, Abner J., *The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County, Texas*, Lake Jackson Historical Association, 2006, pp. 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> BCDR: 70 236/40

<sup>14</sup> BCDR: O 185/86, 70 241/42 & 70 242/45

<sup>15</sup> BCDR: S 174/75 & S 583/85



East End John Bradley League Courtesy Brazoria County Historical Museum

E. C. Dewey, who had been a wholesale grocer in Bridgeport, Ohio, lost his first wife Virginia Afflick in 1848. They had one child, Kate Virginia Dewey born in 1846. He moved to Wheeling, Virginia in 1848, and erected the first wire mills west of New England.<sup>16</sup> In 1850 he married Sarah G. Knox and they started their family.

Being mechanically inclined, E. C. Dewey erected the Eagle Rolling Mill at the head of Twenty-fourth Street, and conducted the plant very profitably until the hard times existing from 1855 to 1857 carried him down. He turned over his mill to his father (who, being his endorser, assumed his liabilities). The E. C. Dewey family moved to Texas and settled in San Antonio where he became the city postmaster. The 1860 Federal Census lists their family:

E. C. Dewey Farmer	37M	Ohio
Sarah Dewey	34F	Kentucky
Kate Dewey	13F	Ohio
Anna Dewey [Annie Knox]	8F	Virginia
Mary Dewey [Minnie Clemens]	1F	Texas

They would have another daughter Sallie Dora Dewey born in 1861.

After the Civil War E. C. Dewey became partners with A. J. Ward and Nathan Patton forming Ward, Dewey and Co. On April 29, 1871, state officials entered into a contract with Ward, Dewey and Co. which gave them full use of all prison facilities and property, including inmates, for a period of fifteen years. Ward, Dewey and Co. agreed to assume financial responsibility for all costs necessary for the support and maintenance of the prison system. These would include food, clothing, and medical care for the prisoners, as well as salaries for guards and prison officials. For the first few months of the lease all parties to the lease seemed pleased. By 1873 reports of abuse and neglect of prisoners were reported. Ward, Dewey and Co. also began to experience financial problems. The lease by Ward, Dewey and Co. was voided by both parties and the state resumed control of the penitentiary in early 1877.<sup>17</sup>

A. J. Ward and E. C. Dewey had bought the Lake Jackson sugar plantation in 1873 and had used convict labor on the plantation for the term of their lease. E. C. Dewey was familiar

<sup>16</sup> *Men of West Virginia*, Biographical Publishing Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1903, p. 646.

<sup>17</sup> Donald R. Walker, "Convict Lease System," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jnc01>), accessed February 26, 2015

with Brazoria County. It was probably on his recommendation that his brother A. B. Dewey acquired the John H. Jones plantation. E. C. Dewey would convert the plantation from cotton to sugar production.

E. C. Dewey named the new tract the “Esparanza Plantation”. His second wife Sarah G. Dewey had died in 1876. By 1880 he had married Louise Carpenter Scott. The family was living in Brazoria County in 1880:

E. C. Dewey	Farmer	56M	Ohio
Louisa Dewey		50F	Louisiana
Minnie C. Dewey		22F	Texas
Sallie K. Dewey		19f	Texas

By 1882 E. C. Dewey was accumulating bills from Wiggins & Simpson Engineers, Founders & Machinists for mechanic’s work on his sugar mill indicating he was in the sugar business.<sup>18</sup> He had borrowed \$3500 from his brothers by September 1880. Then he borrowed another \$4500 to keep things running until 1883. He entered into a deed of trust with his brothers May 1883 using his personal property on the plantation as security:

...entire crop of cane and corn...cane 140 acres and corn 125 acres... 2 Mules, 10 Plows, 1 Avery gangplank, 6 Shovel plows, 6 Walking cultivators, 20 sets of plow gears, 15 sets of double and single trees, 2 horse wagons, 1000 bushels of corn in the crib and all other wagons, carts, and farming implements on the said Esparanza Plantation...<sup>19</sup>

E. C. Dewey died in San Antonio February 28, 1889. He was buried in Cadiz, Ohio. How long he managed the Esparanza Plantation is unclear. The Dewey family sold out to E. L. Perry August 9, 1906 for \$8820<sup>20</sup> Perry was ready to make a quick profit by selling to Frank F. Niedringhaus of St. Louis for \$11025 the next month.<sup>21</sup> Heirs of Frank F. Niedringhaus continued to own the property past 1960. The area has never been surveyed archeologically.

The community of Oyster Creek Station, which was a railroad stop on the old Columbia Tap, grew up on part of the property but was a ghost town not long afterward. A post office was established as Oyster Creek in 1852, was discontinued in 1854, and reopened in 1871; it was renamed Oystercreek in 1894 and operated until 1899. In 1884 Oyster Creek shipped cotton and had a post office, a general store, several cotton gins, three steam sugar mills, and a population of 150. Thirty residents remained in 1890, and in 1896 the local school had nine pupils and one teacher. By 1914, however, the town no longer appeared in state gazetteers, and population estimates were unavailable.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mechanic Lien 1 6/7

<sup>19</sup> BCDR: DT A 133/34

<sup>20</sup> BCDR: 70 247/79

<sup>21</sup> BCDR: 70 256/57

<sup>22</sup> Creighton, James A., *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*, Angleton, Texas: Brazoria County Historical Commission, 1975



Appendix A  
Deed Record John H. Jones Plantation

GRANTORS	GRANTEES	Kind of Instrument	Book	Page	Month	Day	Year	Acres	Description
Mexican Government	John Bradley	Deed			July	8	1824	4428	1 League on the east side of the Brazos River
John Bradley	James Crunk	Affidavit	C	307/08	June	18	1825		Quarter of league in southeast corner
James Crunk	Obediah Pitts	Affidavit	C	307/08	Aug	17	1836		Quarter of league
James Crunk	Reuben Shelby	Affidavit	C	307/08	Aug	17	1836	127	SE Corner of the Quarter league
Obediah Pitts Estate	Levi Pitts	Probate	ROW A	157/59	June	25	1838	247	Tract 2 Partition among heirs
Levi Pitts	Eli M. Justice	Deed	D	528/29	Jan	17	1848	247	\$1800 Justice was living on the property
Eli M. Justice	Benedict Cecil	Deed	F	54/55	Feb	11	1851	300	\$3300 land west side of Oyster Creek Bradley League + \$550 for livestock and farming utensils
Owen Benedict Henrietta Cecil	John H. Jones	Deed	F	225/26	Feb	3	1852	300	\$3500 on Oyster Creek Bradley League
Levi Lucretia Pitts	John H. Jones	Deed	G	100/01	Nov	1	1854	214	\$1200 West side Oyster Creek Wm. Roberts League
James Mary Ann Williams Washington Co.	John H. Jones	Deed	G	524/27	Jan	8	1856	281 242	\$2618.25 on Oyster Creek Bradley League
J. W. Yerby Sheriff	Thomas H. Smith	Deed	N	52/53	Oct	6	1868	752	\$552.60 foreclosure sale
Thomas H. Smith	John H. Jones	Deed	N	40/41	Oct	12	1869	752	\$600
John H. Jones		Will	70	236			1870		Last Will & Testament
J. Bell Copes Sheriff	Branch T. Archer	Deed	O	185/86	Oct	16	1873	752	\$1000 at foreclosure sale
Branch T. Masterson	Gram Charlotte Addison	Mortgage	O	16/17	Nov	17	1873	20	2 Bales Cotton 1874 crop on 20 acres as tenants farmers
J. B. Copes Sheriff	Branch T. Masterson	Deed	70	242/45			1873	752	Seized & sold at auction for \$1000
Samuel C. Jones	Branch T. Masterson	Deed	O	124/25	Feb	2	1874	752	\$300 his interest in land
John S. Jones	Branch T. Masterson	Deed	O	125/26	Feb	8	1874	752	
Branch T. Annie W. Masterson	Charles P. Dewey Ohio	Deed	S	174/76	July	1	1879	732	\$8500 land includes Oyster Creek Station Depot on Columbia Tap
Charles P. Dewey	Branch T. Masterson	DT	S	583/85	July	1	1879	732	\$5500
Branch T. Masterson	Charles P. Dewey	Release	S	585/87	Dec	23	1879	732	Paid in full released DT
John H. Jones		Probate Court	70	236/40					Will of John H. Jones Probated 7 March 1870 Galveston County
Sarah C. Jones	John S. Jones Administrator	Probate Decree	70	241/42	Dec	3	1872		\$2238.60 due on her note ordered to pay by court

Wiggins & Simpson Engineers, Founders & Machinists	C. E. Dewey	Mechanic Lien	1	6/7	March	9	1883		1882 mechanic bills for Esparanza Plantation Sugar house & machinery
C. E. Dewey	C.P. & A. B. Dewey	DT	A	133/34	May	22	1883		\$3500 loaned previous to Sept 1, 1880 & \$4500 to be loaned for present crop Entire crop of 140 acres cane, 125 acres corn, all livestock & machinery as security
Chauncey Dewey Charles T. Killen Mary J. Killen	E. L. Perry	Deed	70	247/49	Aug	9	1906	735	\$8820
Albert B. Dewey	E. L. Perry Velasco	Quit Claim	70	388/89	Sept	29	1906	735	
E. L. Perry	Henry F. Niedringhaus St. Louis, Mo.	Deed	70	256/57	Aug	13	1906	735	\$11,025 All in John Bradley League no mention of equipment
Albert B. Dewey		Probate	70	372/79					Will of Albert B. Dewey



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"Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in the County of Brazoria, Texas"

Federal Population Schedule, Eighth Census of the United States.

1860 The State of Texas, Brazoria County

"Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in the County of Brazoria, Texas"

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1870

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1880

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