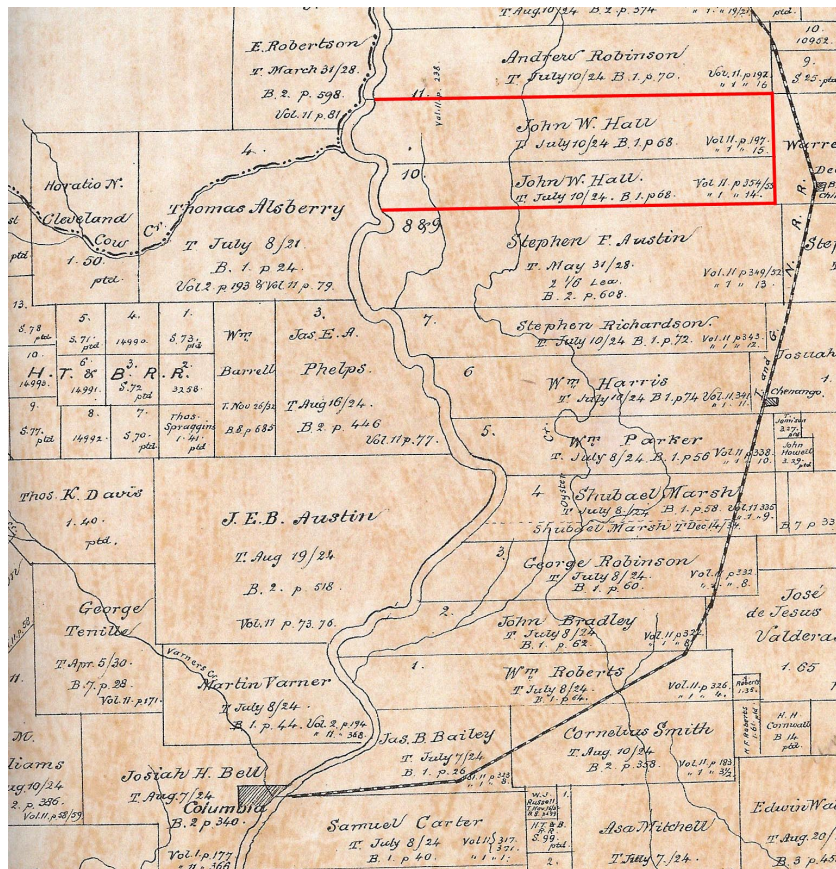


Itawamba

George A. Smith Plantation

Brazosport Archeological Society

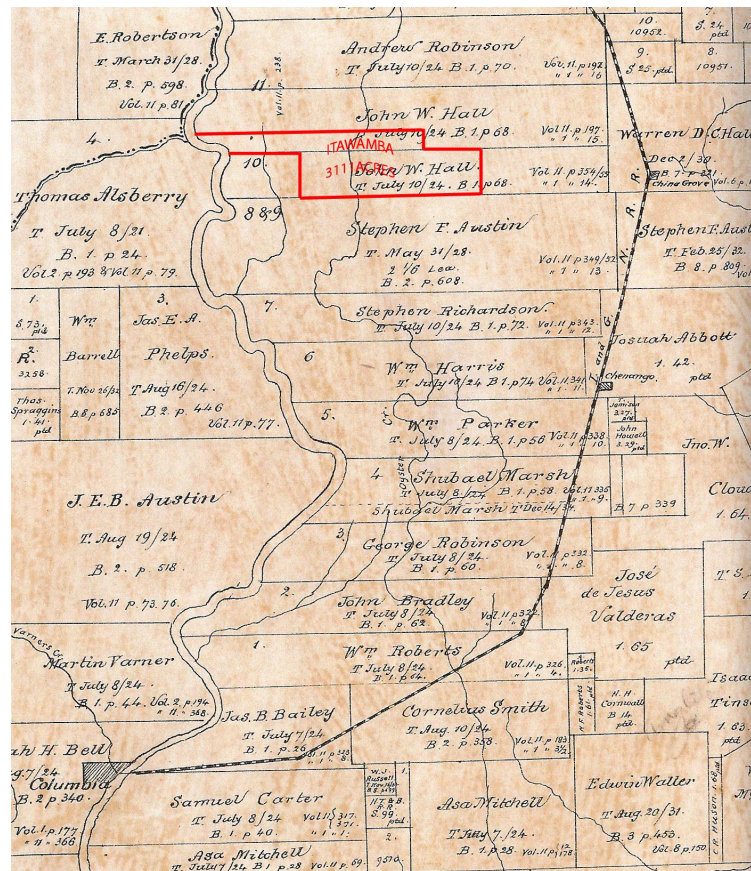
The Itawamba Plantation located above the town of Columbia on the east side of the Brazos River on both sides of Oyster Creek was formed from lands taken from John W. Hall Leagues 10 & 11. Warren D. C. Hall who owned a major portion both leagues after purchasing them from his brother John W. Hall sold 2000 acres from League 10 and 1111 acres from League 11 in February 1837 to George A. Smith from Virginia. Having a large family and lands in Virginia George A. Smith did not bring his family to Texas until ~1857. Abner Strobel recounts that the Smith family “developed a sugar plantation with the usual improvements”. However, cotton was his primary crop in 1859. After the end of the Civil War the financial hardships brought on by the lack of reliable labor and crop failures ended when George A. Smith had to declare bankruptcy in 1869. George A. Smith’s son, James Glassell Smith, managed to hold a portion of the plantation together through the 1870’s. In December 1883 J. Gassell Smith sold the remaining 750 acres he held to William Masterson and Charles H. Day. Branch T. Masterson later owned the plantation lands along with several other tracts in both leagues until December 1917 when he sold ~3900 acres to the Texas Prison Commission. This increased the size of the Ramsey Prison Farm which is still in operation today.



John W. Hall Leagues 10 & 11 Map 1879 The General Land Office of the State of Texas

John W. Hall¹ received title to Leagues 10 & 11 and two labors of land July 10, 1824. The 1826 census lists him as a farmer and stock raiser with a wife Patsy, two young sons, four servants, and twenty slaves. He settled at Washington-on-the-Brazos and established a ferry there. The two leagues of land granted him by the Mexican government, however, lay east of the Brazos River on both sides of Oyster Creek above the town of Columbia. His brother Warren D. C. Hall² with his wife Julietta came to Texas in 1828 and settled on the eastern end of his brother's League 10 building China Grove Plantation.

Warren D. C. Hall initiated a purchase agreement with George A. Smith of Virginia February 15, 1837 to buy 3111 acres of land in Leagues 10 & 11[Brazoria County Deed Records³: A 6]. After concluding his business with Hall, George A. Smith was at Quintana when William Fairfax Gray arrived on February 21st. He sailed back to the United States on the schooner *William Byron* on the 23rd.⁴ Warren D.C. Hall then purchased in March 1837 all of League 10 and portions of League 11 from his brother [BCDR: A 13, 14 & 15]. After several tracts are sold from League 11 it was discovered that it is actually 1 ½ leagues and the remainder unsold tract was bought by Warren D. C. Hall from his brother in May 1837[BCDR D 594/95].



¹ John W. Hall born South Carolina ~1886 and died January 1, 1845.

² Warren D. C. Hall born North Carolina 1788 and died 1867 Galveston Island.

³ Brazoria County Deed Records from this point forward designated by BCDR.

⁴ Gray, William Fairfax, *Diary of Col. Wm. Fairfax Gray From Virginia to Texas 1835-36*, The Fletcher Young Publishing Co., Houston, Texas, 1965, pp.208-211.

John W. Hall Leagues 10 & 11 Map 1879 The General Land Office of the State of Texas
George A. Smith did not immediately move his family to Texas. The 1850 Census lists his family still in Madison County, Virginia:

George A. Smith	45	M	Farmer	Virginia
Julia Smith	41	F		Virginia
Eudora G. Smith	19	F		Virginia
Jane M. Smith	18	F		Virginia
Reuben Smith	16	M	Student	Virginia
Mary S.	14	F		Virginia
James G. Smith	13	M		Virginia
Milly J. Smith	10	F		Virginia
Walter J. Smith	9	M		Virginia
William Smith	7	M		Virginia
Margaret J. Smith	5	F		Virginia
Jeremiah M. Smith	2	M		Virginia
James Neuman	35	M	Overseer	Virginia

The 1857 Tax roll marks the first time George A. Smith is listed in Brazoria County. Along with the 3111 acres of land he has 40 slaves listed on the property. By 1860 he has 54 slaves and 10 slave dwellings on the property. The 1860 Census for Brazoria County lists:

George A. Smith	56	M	Planter	Virginia
Reuben Smith	25	M		Virginia
Walter Smith	20	M		Virginia
S. D. Brown	30	M	Overseer	Ireland

Evidently the plantation home had not been built or was not adequate as the remainder of the family lived at Galveston, Texas at the same time:

George A. Smith	56	M	Plasterer	Virginia
Julia Smith	51	F		Virginia
Glassell Smith	21	M		Virginia
William Smith	19	M		Virginia
Margaret Smith	15	F		Virginia
Morton Smith	13	M		Virginia

According to Abner Strobel "The Smith Plantation on Oyster Creek was developed as a sugar plantation with the usual improvements. George Smith reared a family of cultured boys and girls."⁵ This development of a sugar plantation may have come 1860 or later. The plantation is not listed as producing sugar 1859 or before. In the 1860 Agricultural Census George A. Smith is listed as having 320 improved acres, 2791 unimproved with \$1000 worth of farm equipment. He owned 4 horses, 11 mules, 8 milch cows, 12 oxen, and 70 hogs. In 1859 he produced 800 bushels of corn,

⁵ Strobel, Abner J., The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County, Texas, The Union National Bank, Houston, Texas, 1930, p.37.

50 of Irish potatoes, and 135 bales of cotton. He owned 54 slaves according to the 1860 slave census.

His sons Walter S. and J. Morton were on the plantation in late 1865 gathering stock and branding cattle [BCDR: K 534/35]. After the Civil War George A. Smith's brother, Dr. William R. Smith moved to Galveston. The 1111 acres of land in League 11 were transferred to Dr. Smith in January 1866 [BCDR: K 623/24]. James Glassell Smith immediately purchased the land back from his uncle for \$8000 [BCDR: K 624].

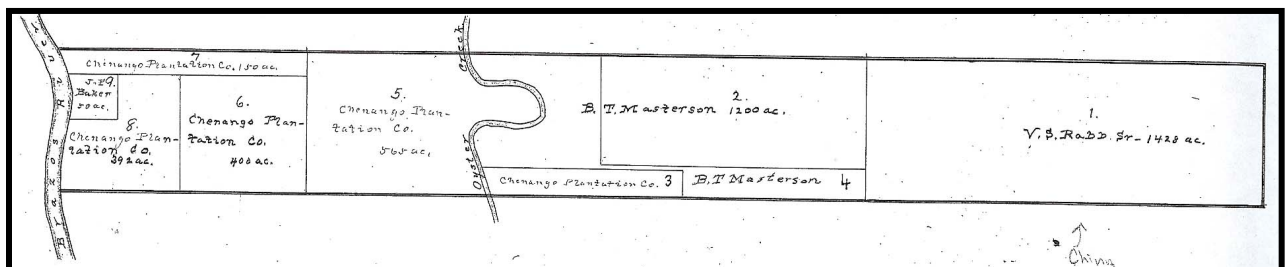
George A. Smith probably realized the financial burden of running the plantation was beginning to reach a point of insolvency. April 1867 he deeded over 346 acres of land which included the houses and residence and a great part of the homestead of the Itawamba Plantation to his wife Julia as her separate property. According to deed records this was in consideration of moneys loaned by Julia to George to purchase slaves in 1859 which he never repaid [BCDR: L 33/34].

Shortly thereafter George A. Smith lost a suit brought against him by the Estate of Peter McMahan for \$502.68. In the foreclosure sale that ensued the remaining ~1640 acres of the plantation was sold to Richard Garnett for \$100 in March 1869 [BCDR: L 422/23]. The Estate of Peter McMahan was handled by his brother H. T. Garnett so the Smith family immediately cried foul and entered into bankruptcy court.

The Bankruptcy Court in Galveston set aside the sale to Richard Garnett and another sale took place in November 1869 with the same tracts of 1654 acres sold to Daniel L. Russell for \$400 [BCDR: M 275/78]. George A. Smith had been able to declare a 200 acre homestead exemption from his creditors and also the 346 acres he had previously deeded to his wife.

J. Glassell Smith purchased half the 1654 acres back in August 1870 [BCDR: M 294/95]. In February 1872 the Texas Supreme Court had to settle the case brought by M. W. Garnett concerning his original purchase by Richard Garnett. Garnett held that the purchase was made prior to George A. Smith receiving his claim of bankruptcy and was legal since no fraud had been proven. The Texas Supreme Court sided with Garnett and forced something of a compromise [BCDR: N 606/12]. George A. and Julia Smith had moved to Bell County by 1870 and sold the 346 acres with the residence and improvements on it to their son J. Glassell Smith in October 1872 [BCDR: N 325/26]. March 1873 the court stipulated 800 acres were to be deeded to M. W. Garnett: "part of the tract of land in controversy in the above enlisted cause being to the west of Mrs. Julia Smith's 346 acre tract, and west of the main road leading from the old Bridge across Oyster Creek near where the old gin House on Mrs. Smith's said tract burned last year" [BCDR: Q 572/73].

Unmarried J. Glassell Smith remained on the 750 acres he owned which contained the original residence and improvements. In April 1878 J. Glassell Smith entered a deed of trust with Branch T. Masterson on a debt of \$1000 to Masterson's wife Annie secured by the 750 acres [BCDR: Q 656/58]. Glassell sold the property "with all buildings, machinery and improvements" December 1883 to William Masterson and Charles H. Day for \$7000 [BCDR: V 648/49].



John W. Hall League 10 ~ Circa1900

Branch T. Masterson later acquired several tracts from William Masterson in both leagues of land and in December 1917 sold ~3900 acres (1416.6 acres in League 10) to the Texas Prison Commission for \$136,500 [BCDR: 145 304/06]. This acreage was added the Ramsey Prison Farm which is still in operation today.

Appendix A

Deed Records Itawamba Plantation

GRANTORS	GRANTEES	Kind of Instrument	Book	Page	Month	Day	Year	Acres	Description
Mexican Government	John W. Hall	Deed	SR		July	10	1824		2 Leagues 10 & 11
Warren D. C. Hall	George A. Smith of Virginia	Bond	A	6	Feb	15	1837	3111	Agreement to purchase 3111 acres
John W. Hall	Warren D. C. Hall	Deed	A	13	March	3	1837	4428	To his brother League 10 \$5000 on which W.D.C. Hall resides
John W. Hall	Warren D. C. Hall	Deed	A	14	March	3	1837	1111	\$1000 acreage in League 11
John W. Hall	Warren D. C. Hall	Deed	A	15	March	3	1837	1000	\$2000 acreage just east of 1111 acre tract
John W. Hall	Warren D. C. Hall	Deed	D	594/95	May	4	1837	2400	\$13500 remainder of League 11 which hadn't been sold the league is actually 1 ½ leagues
Warren D. C. Hall	George A. Smith	Deed	C	88	Dec	2	1837	3111	1111 acres League 11 2000 acres League 10
George A. Smith	Waller S. & J. Morton Smith	Deed	K	534/35	Dec	10	1865		Colts gathered 7 branded by sons & 324 head cattle
George A. Smith	DR. W. R. Smith	Deed	K	622/24	Jan	5	1866	1111	1111 acres to his brother
Dr. W. R. Smith	James G. Smith	Deed	K	624	Jan	8	1866	1111	1111 acres \$8000
George A. Smith	Julia Smith	Deed	L	33/34	April	16	1867	346	346 acres Itawamba Plantation for money used of wife's inheritance
J. W. Yerby Sheriff	Richard Garnett	Deed	L	422/23	March	2	1869	~1640	\$100 1640 acres foreclosure sale
Bankruptcy Court Galveston, Texas	Richard Garnett	Judgment	L	489/92	June	10	1869	1654	Case 227 Bankruptcy Court Set aside 1654 acres less 200 acre homestead
Bankruptcy Court	Daniel L. Russell	Deed	M	275/78	Nov	5	1869	1654	Set aside sale to Garnett and resold for \$400 1654 acres less 200 acre homestead
Daniel L. Russell	James Glassell Smith	Deed	M	294/95	Aug	27	1870	~800	\$500 ½ 1654 acres east side Oyster Creek
Julia Smith of Bell County	James Glassell Smith	Deed	N	325/26	Oct	1	1872	346	346 acres \$3000 with improvements
J. Glassell Smith	A. C. Amerine	Deed	N	451/52	Feb	5	1873	~300	Part of 1111 acres east of Oyster Creek \$1500
George A. Smith	M. W. Garnett	Decree	N	606/12	Feb	28	1872	1640	Texas Supreme Court Case 811 M. W. Garnett v George A. Smith owed \$502.63 reversed decision again and established compromise
George A. & Julia Smith	M. W. Garnett	Deed	Q	572/73	March	21	1873	~800	800 acres west of 346 acre tract on which cotton gin burned in 1872
J. Glassell Smith	Branch T. Masterson	DT	Q	656/58	April	10	1878	750	2 Tracts 400 & 350 acres of Itawamba Plantation & 200 acres in Bell County \$1000 owed Annie Masterson
E. N. Wilson Sheriff	William Masterson	Deed	V	293	July	3	1883	~300	Foreclosure Sale \$500 of A. C. Amerine tract League 11
J. Glassell Smith	William Masterson & Charles H. Day	Deed	V	648/49	Dec		1883	750	\$7000 Plantation Land with all buildings & machinery
William Masterson	Branch T. Masterson	Deed			Jan	7	1896	1200	League 10
Branch T. Masterson	Texas Prison Commission	Deed	145	304/06	Dec	31	1917		\$136,500 2473.3 Acres J. W. Hall League 11 & 1426.6 Acres J. W. Hall League 10

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