

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker
Jefferson County

ON THE MALL IN THE
CENTER OF WOODWORTH
BLVD ? PROCTER ST.
PORT ARTHUR

SITE OF OLD AURORA*

LAI D OUT IN 1835 ON LAND GRANT
FROM GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO TO
HORATIO M. HANKS. AT LEAST 160
BLOCKS WERE PLANNED. AFTER THE
TEXAS REVOLUTION, HANKS' PARTNER
AND AGENT ALAMAZON HUSTON SOLD
FIRST 15 LOTS ON NOV. 27, 1837.

DEED RECORDS SHOW TOWN EXISTED
LATE AS 1850. BY 1880 THE LAND
WAS SOLD BY STATE FOR ITS TAXES.

HURRICANES, FREEZES AND LACK
OF MEDICAL SERVICES CAUSED THE
AREA TO BE DESERTED BY 1890.

AURORA BLOOMED AND FADED LIKE
THE DAWN, FROM WHICH IT TOOK ITS
NAME, LEAVING SHORELINE OF LAKE
SABINE DESERTED UNTIL 1895,
WHEN PORT ARTHUR WAS FOUNDED.**

(1966)***

*3/4" lettering
**1/2" lettering
***1/4" lettering

APPLICATION FORM
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

County Jefferson Town Port Arthur Date September 17, 1965

This marker is for (Title or Subject) AURORA , a vanished town of the early days
on the site of present Port Arthur, Texas

Marker is to be located on the mall in the center of Woodworth Boulevard and
Procter Streets, Port Arthur. (BE SPECIFIC AS TO ADDRESS, LOCATION OF SITE) this location is on the edge of the site,
Present Owner of Property City of Port Arthur but is heavily travelled and nicely
landscaped.

Address _____

Who is responsible for Marker erection, Property maintenance? County Commissioner U.B Ellison
will erect the marker. Maintenance by county and city of Port Arthur.

Who prepared the history? Mr. F. E. Willcox, county surveyer

Address 2237 Nederland Ave, Nederland, Texas

Attach History with Reference Data for Authenticating this Subject (2-3 Pages)

Attach the Suggested Inscription for the Marker

(Copy must meet State requirements; the Texas State Historical Survey Committee reserves the right to change the suggested inscription.)

If this is an Application for a Building Medallion, enclose Picture of structure.

Do you desire to be contacted Re Final Inscription: Yes No _____ (if changed)

Who is to be recognized as the Sponsor of this marker?

Name Jefferson County Historical Survey Committee

Address _____

This application has been submitted by:

Name Mrs. Will E. Wilson, chairman, Jefferson County Historical Survey
Committee

Address 140 N. Caldwood Drive, Beaumont, Texas

Date 9/17/1965

The recorded history of Jefferson County dates back to July 25, 1543, when survivors of the ill-fated expedition of the Hernando DeSoto, under the leadership of Louis de Mucasso were swept ashore by a hurricane in the vicinity of Lake Sabine.

The inhabitants of the coast prior to the coming of the white man were the Attacapas. Their name of Choctaw origin was Hatak (man) and Apa (eats) meaning cannibal. They told of a deluge which once destroyed the world except for those people who lived on high land. The women of the tribe, using the shoulder blades of buffalo for spades, were made to build great earthen mounds with their hands; and atop these mounds the chiefs had their lodges. The Attacapas believed that their fathers had come out of the sea so they lived beside and upon the water, worshipping gods that dwelled in it. Padre Juan Augustin Morfi wrote concerning these Indians:

"They do not appreciate cultivation of the rich lands they occupy, but abandon themselves to laziness and robbery and to the chase, which does not require too much exertion, being particularly abundant in their forests."

The Attacapas claimed the region north of the mouth of the Neches, and east to the Sabine. They learned early to watch the coast for shipwrecks. Plundering was not their only motive for early historians say they captured the survivors, murdered and devoured them.

In 1690, alarmed by the activities of the French, Spaniards came to eastern Texas. They established a small log mission, San Francisco de los Tejas", near the present town of Weches. Few of the Spaniards reached the region of the lower Neches, though the contemporary

historian Morfi wrote:

"The coast region is not only insufficiently known, but the almost total ignorance concerning it has been detrimental, perhaps, to the best interest of the state."

If the Spaniards had neglected this district, the French had not. Louis Juchereau de St. Denis blazed the King's Highway from Louisiana to the Rio Grande in 1714 and formed a lasting friendship with the natives, becoming the hero of the Red nations west of the Sabine. His mission being to obtain the trade of this rich period for France and, if possible, wrest land itself from Spain. St. Denis succeeded well in the first part of his mission. French traders swarmed in 1718 from the village of New Orleans to the Gulf Coast west of the Sabine River. They usually brought smuggled trade goods, combs, knives, scissors, tobacco and firearms, though the sale of firearms was forbidden to Indians by the French and Spanish law.

In 1741, the Spanish began a counter movement to establish a presidio on the coast in an effort to halt illicit trade and general French aggression. Four years later Don Joaquin y Basterra, Captain of the garrison at LaBahia, was instructed to explore the coastline to the Sabine. There were rumors that a French settlement was actually being established, and Basterra was ordered to proceed with all haste to expel the invaders. In December, 1745, he started on the Los Adaes Road. He crossed the Trinity and the Neches and questioned the Indians near the coast who fully confirmed the rumors of French activity. Not only did the traders freely come and go, but were preparing to make a settlement the very next year at a site already chosen. During 1751,

Spanish officials investigated French contraband trade in the region. St. Denis was the absolute lord of the tribes of the area and in case of war the Indians could be counted on to "murder and exterminate" every Spaniard.

Occasionally a British merchantman would run the gauntlet of the Spanish main and drop anchor in the Neches. In the summer of 1777, a trader in the coastal area reported to the Spaniard, Gil Ybarbo, that a stranded English ship lay in the mouth of the Neches. Padre Morfi told the story:

"I have already stated how the British have made several attempts to penetrate the Province. The last of these was made in 1777 during the month of July, but because of their ignorance of the coastline they left their ships stranded. . . . The traders from Louisiana who reside among the nations of the coast gave an excellent account of the affair to Gil Ybarbo, Captain of militia at Bucareli, who immediately set out with as many settlers as he was able to make ready to find the English, but in spite of all the haste he could make he found only a recently stranded vessel at the mouth of the Neches River, which could still be seen in January, 1778, and a few huts on the banks of the stream. He learned that the cargo consisted only of bricks, provisions and some articles of trade, seemingly intended to establish some type of settlement; that the English had unloaded the vessel; and that, after putting most of its cargo on their other vessel, they had sailed

in what is now Orange County.

1835 saw the beginning of much real estate activity in the county. On June 4, Arthur Henerie, a surveyor for the Zavalla grant, laid out a 1/4 sito grant for Horatio M. Hanks on the North bank of Sabine Lake.^{2,3} This grant was to become the site of Aurora.⁴

In October of the same year, *Beaumont* was laid out.

No doubt the building activities in both areas were curtailed by the active campaigning of the revolution of 1836.

After the cessation of hostilities and the return to normalacy, Hanks resumed his planning and by October of 1837 was ready to began the sale of lots. In order to accomplish this, he formed a partnership with Alamazon Huston selling him a half interest in the land grant and the City of Aurora and granting to him the power of attorney to represent him in the sales. Certificates entitling the owner to five lots in the City were sold bearing the signature of Huston. One of these certificates is still in existence and is the property of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kendrick of Beaumont, who graciously allowed its reproduction for inclusion in this report.⁵

The sale of fifteen lots was accomplished by November 27, 1837, as reflected by the Deed Records of Jefferson County and tabulated below.

<u>Grantee</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Block</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Page</u>
Jordan C. William Hand				
A. G. Moses	10	160	A	138
	3	122	A	138
	7	28	A	138
	5	77	A	138
	10	116	A	138

<u>Grantee</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Block</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Page</u>
R. H. Foote	1	151	A	140
	4	129	A	140
	6	29	A	140
	7	59	A	140
	8	75	A	140
Christian Nodell	5	1	A	142
	1	73	A	142
	3	82	A	142
	5	75	A	142
	2	10	A	142

Thus the City was born. We can see from the above tabulation that there were at least 160 blocks in the City, and from maps on record in the General Land Office in Austin, and reproduced in this report, we know it was adjacent to Sabine Lake in the Hanks grant.

By assuming that the blocks were laid out similar to those of the contemporary City of Beaumont, we can lay out a possible plan of the City.⁶

How long Aurora survived is questionable. In 1850, Huston sold his one-half interest in the land and the City to Thomas Sidney Ballard of the State of New York, and the deed calls for the tract on which Aurora is situated, an indication that it still existed at that time. Also recorded in the deed records is a deed of August 14, 1855, conveying lands in the adjacent Butler League and calling for adjoiners with the Hanks grant on which Aurora was laid off, perhaps an indication that it had been abandoned.

The writer's search for Aurora began at the request of the Jefferson County Historical Society, ^(Survey Committee) that in his capacity of County Surveyor he assist them in the location of the site of this town whose existence had long been known but whose location was doubtful. In its beginning this search was intended to be a journey down a modern expressway with the destination as a goal to be reached swiftly; but, as the investigation got underway, the search became more as a pleasure trip down the dim back roads turning off here and there to investigate other interesting by-ways. Regretfully now, we must hurry to the destination and leave many more interesting, dim pathways to be explored later.

F. E. Willcox, Jr.
County Surveyor
Jefferson County, Texas

Beaumont, Texas
July 13, 1964

CLASS 3.

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS,

JACKSON COUNTY.

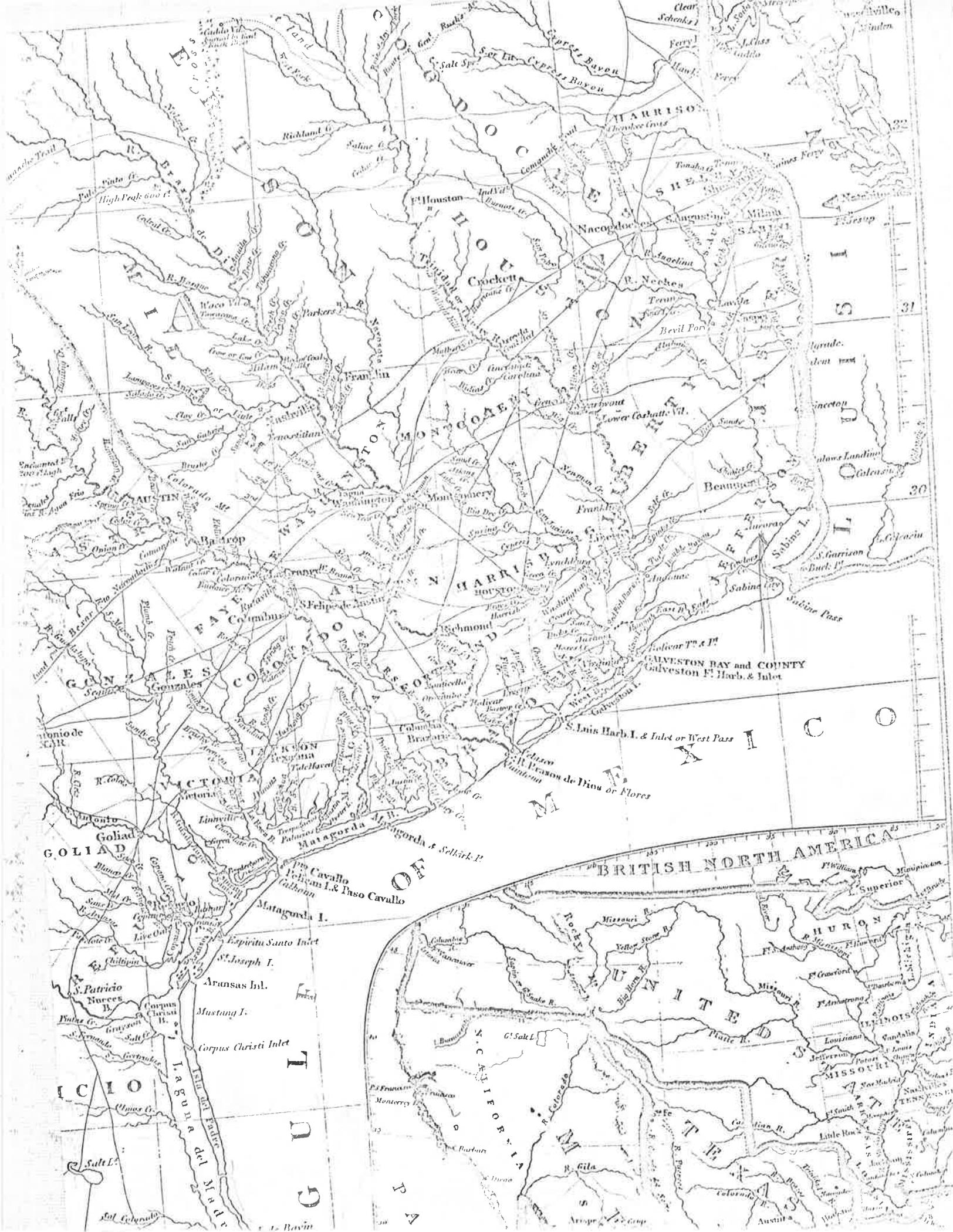
**CERTIFICATE OF STOCK IN THE
CITY OF AURORA.**

THIS CERTIFICATE entitles the holder to FIVE LOTS in the City of
AURORA, and we, HORATIO M. HANKS and A. HUSTON, the original
Proprietors of said City, do agree to make, or cause to be made, to the legal holder of
this Certificate a good and sufficient Warranty Deed to the FIVE LOTS which were
drawn to the number of this certificate, by its being presented to either of the Proprie-
tors or their authorized Agent.

Aurora, June 1st, 1840.

Agent for Proprietors.







APPENDIX NO. 6

SCALE 1:24000

AMERICAN ENGINEERING COMPANY



J. DE CORDOBA'S
 (STATE)
 OF THE
TEXAS

Computed from the records of the General Land Office of the State by

ROBERT CREUZBAUR,

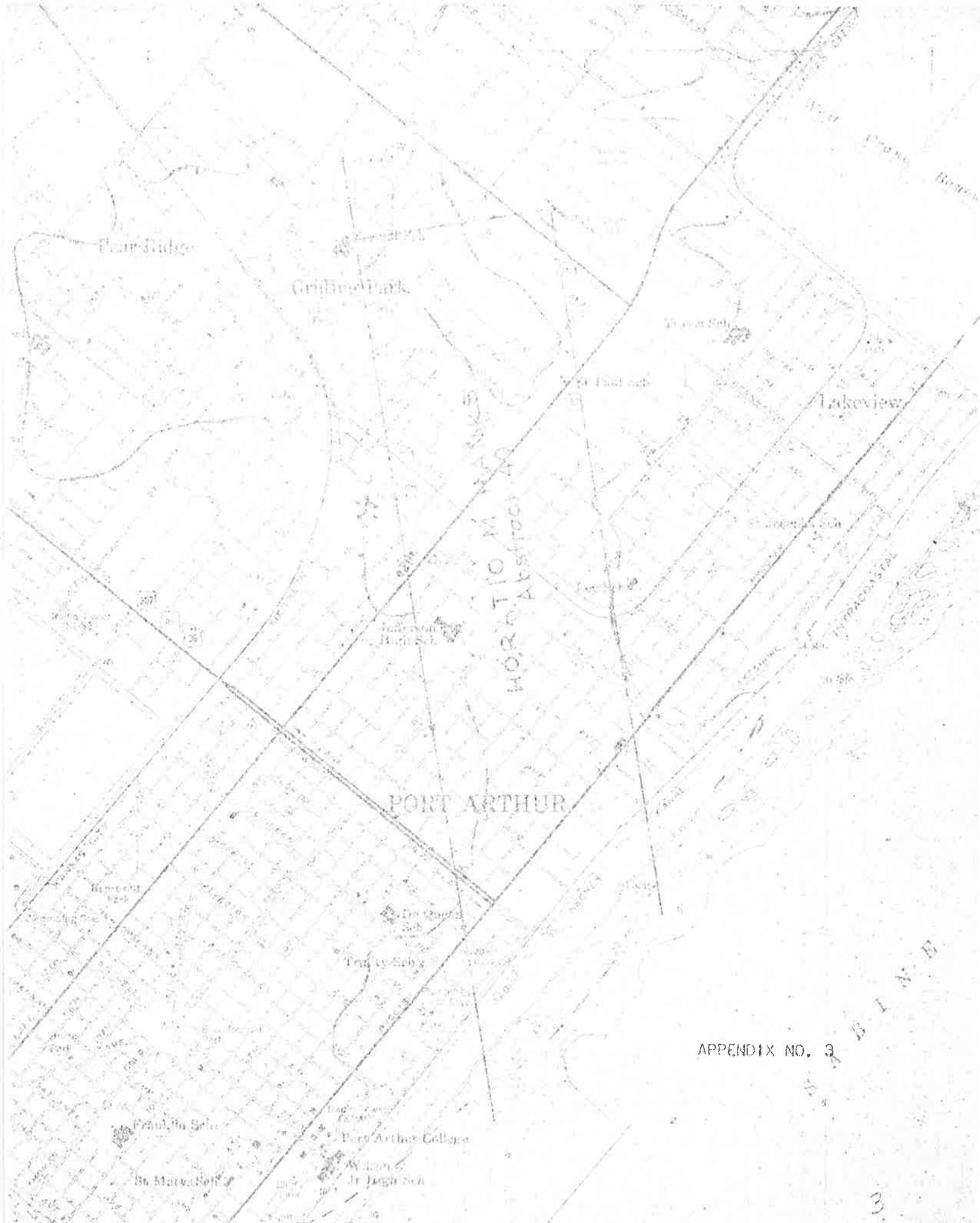
HOUSTON, APPENDIX NO. 4

1849.

Engraved by J. H. Atwood, New York.

SCALE OF STATUTE MILES





HORATIO M. WALKER
ABSTRACT 40

PORT ARTHUR

APPENDIX NO. 3

W. A. B. I. A. E.

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