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The Le Grand Survey of the High Plains: Fact or Fancy

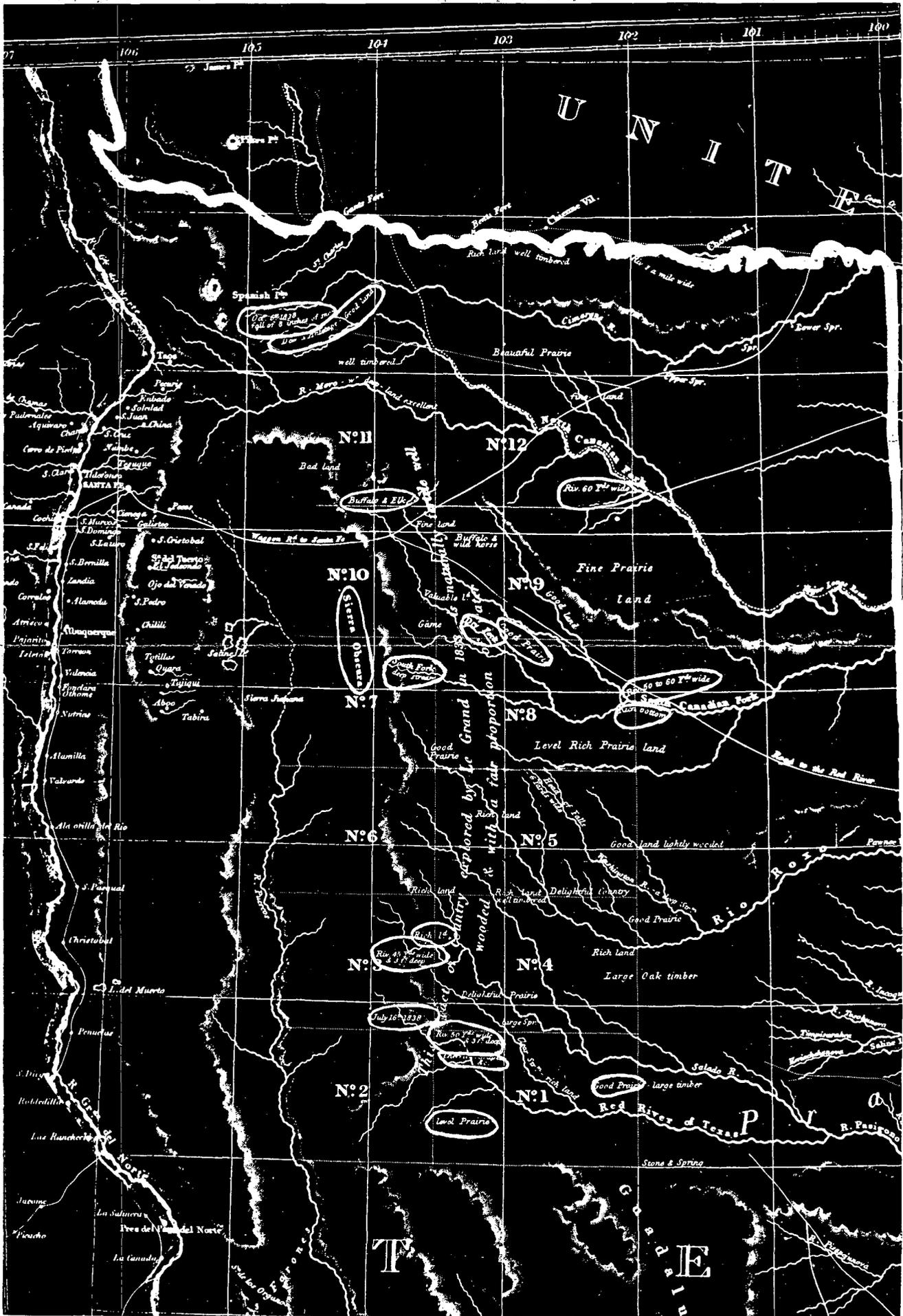
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MAP FROM WILLIAM KENNEDY, TEXAS, FORT WORTH, 1925 (REPRINT)

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THE LE GRAND SURVEY OF THE HIGH PLAINS— FACT OR FANCY

By RAYMOND ESTEP*

THE STORY of Alexander Le Grand's adventures on the western frontier will prove among the most interesting and entertaining when the many threads of the fabric of his career are gathered together. After leaving his traces on the frontier in 1824, Le Grand figured briefly in the military and diplomatic activities of the Republic of Texas and became embroiled in a bitter quarrel with Sam Houston during the latter's first months as president of the new nation.¹ His name has been preserved to posterity, however, largely through the efforts of the British writer William Kennedy. In his *Texas: The Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas*, first published in London in 1841, Kennedy used information from many sources, including that gained personally on a boat trip to Texas. To complete his description of the topography of the region, Kennedy, probably with the consent of Charles Edwards, Secretary of the Rio Grande and Texas Land Company, inserted a document titled: "Copy of Field Notes and Journal of Survey," and signed, A. Le Grand.² This "Journal," bearing entries

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1. For this phase of Le Grand's career see Raymond Estep, "The Military and Diplomatic Services of Alexander Le Grand for the Republic of Texas, 1836-1837," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LIV (October, 1950), 169-189.

2. Kennedy, *Texas* (reprint, Fort Worth, 1925), 176-191, 391. An original copy of this document bearing Le Grand's signature is in Archivo General de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico, Expediente H/252 (73:72) /148, Legajo 5-16-8712.

See Notes and Documents for the Le Grand survey journal.

from June 27 through October 30 of an undesignated year, was sufficient to inscribe Le Grand's name indelibly in southwestern history as the first and presumably most careful surveyor of that region known today as the high plains. Thereby hangs the tale.

Concerning this expedition by Le Grand considerable misinformation incorporated in earlier histories has been accepted by more recent historians. Among the most glaring errors have been: (1) the date of the survey, (2) the place from which the expedition set out, (3) the persons for whom the survey was made, and (4), greatest error of all, the acceptance of Le Grand's statements of the area surveyed without examination of their veracity. It is this latter point which has prompted the present study. Most of the errors can be disposed of quickly. Those pertaining to date, contractors, and place of departure probably arose from Kennedy's wording of his narrative. In publishing Le Grand's "Journal," he stated that the document was drawn up for the use of the New Arkansas and Texas Land Company, corporate holder of a grant made in 1832 to Doctor John Charles Beales and José Manuel Royuela by the State of Coahuila and Texas.³ Undoubtedly basing some of their statements on Kennedy's assertion, Brown, writing a half century later,⁴ and others have recorded that Le Grand was dispatched from Santa Fe by Beales in June, 1833, to survey the land granted Beales and Royuela. The facts are quite the contrary. The survey was made in 1827, not 1833; the expedition proceeded from New Orleans via present Texarkana, not by way of Santa Fe; the Le Grand contract for the survey was negotiated by Stephen Julian Wilson and promoted by Richard Exter—Beales did not enter the scene until three years after the completion of the purported survey.

The story of this Le Grand episode had its beginnings on May 27, 1826, when the State of Coahuila and Texas entered into a 200-family *empresario* contract with Stephen

3. Kennedy, *Texas*, 175.

4. John Henry Brown, *History of Texas* (St. Louis, 1892-93), I, 254.

Julian Wilson, a native of the United States.⁵ The vast domain included in the contract (sometimes estimated to contain forty-eight million acres)⁶ in its official description was circumscribed as follows: Beginning at the point of intersection of the 32nd degree of north latitude and the 102nd meridian, thence west on the 32nd parallel to the eastern boundary of New Mexico (not otherwise defined), thence north along that boundary to a point 20 leagues south of the Arkansas River, thence east along a line parallel to and 20 leagues south of the Arkansas to the 102nd meridian, thence south to the point of commencement.⁷

Within the next six months Wilson took two important steps looking to the development of the grant. Prior to November 21, 1826, for a sum estimated at \$10,000,⁸ he contracted with "Alexander Le Grand, a native of the United States of the north . . . to survey, examine, and measure the lands mentioned in the foregoing grant, personally, or by the persons necessary to assist and protect him while so employed."⁹ Wilson's second significant action was the disposal of one-half of his interest in the *empresario* contract to Richard Exter, an English merchant residing in

5. Wilson, in his petition of May 15, 1826, stated that he was "a native of the United States of North America, and an inhabitant of the city of Mexico." See *Documents Relating to Grants of Lands Made to Don Estévan Julian Willson [sic] and Richard Exter in Texas* (New York, 1831). Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 254, erroneously declared that Wilson was an Englishman, naturalized in Mexico.

6. The estimate of 48,000,000 acres certainly originated with Le Grand. See Richard Exter to Dennis A. Smith, Mexico City, [October 6], 1827, in *National Intelligencer* (Washington), July 8, 1829.

7. This delineation is given in many sources. It is repeated a number of times in *Documents Relating to Grants of Lands*. See also José María Tornel, *Breve Reseña Historica* (Mexico, 1852), 156; Archivo de Museo Nacional de Mexico, "Papeles de Texas," Legajo 59, Expediente 9, No. 70-4, p. 145a; Mary Virginia Henderson, "Minor Empresario Contracts for the Colonization of Texas, 1825-1834," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXXII (July, 1928), 22-23.

8. A writer in *The Albion*, a New York paper, gives the figure, but he makes Exter, not Wilson, the bearer of the expense, and in error gives the year as 1829. Referring to the grant, he wrote: "An exploring and surveying party was sent thither in 1829 [sic] by Mr. Exter, at the expense of \$10,000." This extract from *The Albion* is from *The Bee* (New Orleans), November 6, 1834, p. 2. A contemporary later reported that Le Grand left Mexico City "well supplied with money. . . ." See William Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Glimpses of the Past* (Missouri Historical Society), V, 89.

9. The date and the place of the signing of this contract have not been ascertained, but Wilson's deposition confirming the contract's existence was notarized in Mexico City on November 21, 1826. See *Documents Relating to Grants of Lands*, 7.

Mexico City. On November 27, six days after notarizing the Le Grand contract, Wilson made his partnership agreement with Exter a matter of record.¹⁰ Although no additional contract between Le Grand and the Wilson-Exter partnership has been discovered, later events were to prove that Le Grand had also been commissioned to act as an agent in the settling of the land grant.

The time and the manner of Le Grand's arrival in Mexico City have not been ascertained. His first recorded appearance on the western frontier occurred in April, 1824, at Franklin, Missouri, when he took the lead in organizing a trading expedition to Santa Fe. Subsequently elected captain by the expedition's members, Le Grand at the head of 83 traders, teamsters, and others, with 2 road wagons, 20 dearborns, 2 carts, 200 horses and mules, and goods to the value of \$30,000, departed the Missouri settlements on May 24. Proceeding by the Cimarron cutoff and San Miguel, Le Grand led the expedition into Santa Fe on July 31, sixty-eight days out from Missouri, without the loss of a man and without unusual incident. All suffered from a shortage of water in the arid sand dunes and plains between the Arkansas and the Cimarron, but Le Grand's successful expedition gave the first large-scale proof that the Santa Fe Trail could be negotiated by wheeled vehicles.¹¹

With his arrival in Santa Fe at the end of July, 1824, Le Grand drops from sight for more than two years. It may be that he proceeded south with some of the traders to Chihuahua and Sonora¹² and eventually reached Mexico City by an overland route. Regardless of the time and the

10. The date of the Wilson-Exter agreement is not revealed in the available records; the document establishing the partnership was notarized on November 27, 1826. See *Documents Relating to Grants of Lands*, 7-9.

11. "The Santa Fe Trail: M. M. Marmaduke Journal," in *The Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 6 (October, 1911), 1-10; *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 3 and June 5, 1824; Hiram M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York, 1902), II, 505; R. E. Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (Cedar Rapids, 1912), II, 106-107.

12. Le Grand's assertion in November, 1827, that he had "certain knowledge" of the price of buffalo robes in Sonora seems to imply that he had personally visited the region. See Le Grand to Exter, Santa Fe, November 15, 1827, in John Enrico and W. H. Egerton, *Emigration to Texas: Proposals for Colonizing Certain Extensive Tracts of Land in the Republic of Mexico* (Bath, 1832), 16.

way, it is clearly evident that Le Grand arrived in the Mexican capital prior to the middle of November, 1826, and entered into the contract with Wilson. Soon thereafter he said good-by to his new employer, an event anticipated on November 15, when Joel R. Poinsett, the United States Minister to Mexico, issued Passport No. 112 to "Alexander Le Grand, Merchant."¹³ In the succeeding weeks the Santa Fe trader made the miserable journey from the Valley of Mexico to the miasmatic lowlands of the Mexican gulf coast. Departing from Vera Cruz on board the sloop *Boston Packet* on December 13,¹⁴ he arrived in New Orleans on December 26, 1826.¹⁵ From the Crescent City, Le Grand proceeded up the Mississippi to the frontier settlements on the Missouri. There, as he hastened to inform Exter, he received "applications from more persons than would colonize the grant, agreeable to the cession, and ready to enter upon their labours."¹⁶ No further information relative to Le Grand's attempts to colonize the grant has been found and it is presumed that he devoted little time to the matter. A larger task, the primary one in his relations with Wilson, was at hand and to this he devoted his efforts.

In the first four months of 1827 Le Grand recruited and organized a large expedition for the making of his contracted survey. Whether his force was assembled in Missouri or wholly in New Orleans is not revealed, but the point of departure and time—New Orleans, April, 1827—are clearly established.¹⁷ From the metropolis of the Lower Mississippi,

13. Diplomatic Despatches, Mexico, Vol. 3, May 7, 1827-April 23, 1828 (MSS.), Department of State Records Section, National Archives, Washington.

14. The *Boston Packet* cleared on December 12th and sailed on the 13th. See Consular Letters, Vera Cruz, 1822-1831 (MSS.), Department of State Records Section, National Archives, Washington.

15. Philip Nolan was with Le Grand on the vessel. See *The Courier* (New Orleans), December 26, 1826, p. 3; and "Passenger Lists Taken from Manifests of the Customs Service, Port of New Orleans" (Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, Works Project Administration of Louisiana), Book 1, 1813-1837, p. 103. The latter source gives December 27 as the date of clearing the customs in New Orleans.

16. Exter to Dennis A. Smith, Mexico City, October 6, 1827, in Enrico and Egerton, *Emigration to Texas*, 15. The version of this letter printed in the *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829, does not contain this quotation.

17. Exter later wrote: "Mr. Le Grand was dispatched from New Orleans, in April last, and I have already read intelligence of his having passed the frontiers with his surveying party . . . to enter upon his labors. The like intelligence has also been

Le Grand may have transported his expedition by steamer up the Mississippi and Red Rivers to a point near present Natchitoches.¹⁸ Beyond, he most probably proceeded on horseback. Irrespective of the manner and the means of movement, the Maryland adventurer arrived in Miller County, the southwestern county in Arkansas Territory, about the middle of June, 1827.

The size and the purpose of the expedition were the cause of much speculation and gave rise to many conflicting and romantic reports. Exter learned that the party consisted of "about thirty, and a parcel of Indians. . . ."¹⁹ A resident on the line of march reported:

An armed body of men, fifty-six in number, from New Orleans, left our settlement yesterday, on their way towards Santa Fee [sic], for the purpose, they say, of surveying a large grant of land in that quarter, belonging to a company in London; but that such is their object is entirely doubtful. I am induced to think they are on a mining expedition, or some wilder scheme. The party is commanded by Capt. Legrand [sic], who, it is said, has a passport from our Government.²⁰

A contemporary, writing long afterwards, asserted that Le Grand "hired and fitted out eighty or a hundred men" in New Orleans who believed that Le Grand "proposed, by means of the numerous Indian tribes then covering the plains and mountains, east, north and south of Santa Fe, to wrest this vast territory from the feeble revolutionary government of Mexico, and build up an independent republic of which Le Grand was to be President."²¹

transmitted to his Excellency, Mr. POINSETT, from the Consular Departments in that quarter." Exter to Smith, Mexico City, [October 6], 1827, *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829, p. 3. This portion of the letter was omitted in the copy printed in Enrico and Egerton, *Emigration to Texas*, 15.

18. The steamboat *Planter* and other vessels were in regular service between New Orleans and Natchitoches. See advertisements by Pavie & Constantzi in the *Natchitoches Courier*, May 29, June 12, and July 3, 1827.

19. Exter to Smith, Mexico City, [October 6], 1827, *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829. Enrico and Egerton, *Emigration to Texas*, 14, reported that the expedition included "about 30 persons from the United States and a few Indians. . . ."

20. *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), July 24, 1827, p. 3. The passport referred to probably was that issued to Le Grand by Poinsett in Mexico City on November 15, 1826.

21. Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Glimpses of the Past*, V, 89-90.

How long Le Grand tarried in Miller County has not been determined, but on June 20 he bade farewell to the Arkansas settlements,²² and began his westward trek along Red River. From that date until his arrival in Santa Fe on November 15, 1827, Le Grand's movements are shrouded in mystery. According to his own accounts, Le Grand was employed from June 27 through October 30 in carefully plotting a survey of the Wilson-Exter grant on the high plains. These declarations apparently will not bear the test of analysis. If Le Grand was not at the places he alleged and therefore was not making the survey he recorded, what then was he doing and where? Half a century later a contemporary, in recalling the event as he had heard it, repeated this account of Le Grand's expedition:

He reached Red River, I forget in what manner, and traveled up that river for several hundred miles, thus far all went well. But he soon left the stream where water could be obtained as needed, and set out over an unknown and unexplored wilderness. Here their difficulties began. Often, for several days together no water could be found: again no game, their only dependence for food, could be killed: thus they wandered on for months.²³

Le Grand, however, asserted that he reached the initial point of the survey, the intersection of the 102nd meridian and the 32nd parallel of north latitude, on June 27. The particular point of departure in Miller County is not known, but for purposes of examination if it be assumed that the place was in the vicinity of present Texarkana, then in order for the group to have reached the designated point near present Midland, Texas, on June 27, it would have had to travel some 600 statute miles in less than eight days. With the large number of men in the party it would have been almost impossible to have accomplished the long overland

22. *The Arkansas Gazette*, July 24, 1827, p. 3. In publishing the information relative to the Le Grand expedition, the editor prefaced it as follows: "A letter to the Editor, from a respectable gentleman in Miller county, under date of 21st ult., contains the following interesting news." From this it seems certain that "21st ultimo" could mean only June 21; if July had been intended then "21st instant" would have been proper. That June was the correct month is partially established by the fact that in the same column appears another letter from Miller County, dated June 21, 1827.

23. Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Glimpses of the Past*, V, 90.

journey in the time indicated. Assuming that the group traveled on horseback, it would have been more likely that a day's journey did not exceed 30 statute miles. If this deduction is anywhere near correct then the expedition, at the end of eight days, had attained a point some 240 statute miles to the west of Miller County. Thus the surveyors would have approached the vicinity of the 98th meridian, or even have reached the area of present Throckmorton County, Texas, as averred by some.²⁴

Le Grand's plan, as revealed in his "Journal," was to divide the tract into 12 sections, each approximately 50 miles north and south by 100 miles east and west, to run a survey along these sectional boundaries, and to fix the sectional corners. (See map.) It is evident from the entries in his "Journal" that he was instructed to keep detailed notes on soil, terrain, vegetation, rainfall, and game. According to Le Grand's notes, his party traveled 1957 miles (probably nautical), in the 126 days between June 27 and October 30, in surveying 1305 miles of sectional boundaries. In the process the surveyors allegedly measured four sides of Sections 4, 5, 8, and 12, and three sides of Sections 1 and 9, all in the eastern tier. In addition they reportedly surveyed considerable portions of the east-west boundaries of Sections 6, 7, 10, and 11 in the western tier.

From many points of view Le Grand's "Journal" will not bear close inspection. In the first place, as previously shown, it was well nigh impossible for a large expedition to have made the long overland trip in the time indicated. This, together with the data and descriptions recorded, suffices to raise serious doubts as to the accuracy of the "Journal." If Le Grand began the survey at the designated point near present Midland, then the region visited overlapped the existing Texas-New Mexico boundary from the 32nd

24. The latter deduction is that of a pioneer West Texas surveyor, Judge O. W. Williams of Fort Stockton, who concluded from a study of the terrain that Le Grand began his reported survey in Throckmorton County rather than at a point in present Midland County as Le Grand avers. See Lucy Lee Dickson, "Speculation of John Charles Beales in Texas Lands" (M.A. Thesis, The University of Texas, 1941), 10-11, citing letter from Judge O. W. Williams, Fort Stockton, Texas, to Miss Dickson, July 1, 1941.

parallel of north latitude to the Arkansas River, an area including eastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado, and the Panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma. Through much of that region, especially in the south, the surveyors would have traversed in the heat of summer the broad, arid expanse of the high plains. But scant are Le Grand's references to that vast, untimbered, endless plain known to the Spaniard as the *llano estacado*. His party, although encountering bad water on occasion and infrequently making night camp without wood or water, for the most part found plenty of wood and abundant water in the midst of summer! The prairies were alive with game and the hunters rarely failed in their chore; river courses abounded with grapes, plums, currants, and cherries. Yet, fifteen years later the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition suffered all of the agonies attendant upon starvation and thirst in its ill-fated crossing of the area.

It is of interest to examine the accuracy of Le Grand's assertions with regard to the survey. He records that after measuring six sections, each 50 miles north and south (or 300 total miles), he was at a point 55 miles south of the Arkansas River. At first glance it seems amazing that his purported measurement from Midland north along the 102nd meridian to the Arkansas River was so nearly accurate—it is almost exactly 355 nautical miles from the intersection of the 102nd meridian and the 32nd parallel to the point where the 102nd meridian crosses the Arkansas River! This distance of 355 miles, however, might have been easily determined. Since the geographical coordinates of the Upper Arkansas had been established and published a number of years before, and the Santa Fe Trail had been plotted by a United States government survey begun in 1825,²⁵ the distance from a fixed point on the Arkansas to

25. The Long Expedition in 1820 took three readings on the Arkansas River between 103° and 106° west longitude, each showing a north latitude between 38° and 39°. See Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland, 1905), XVII, 262. (The original account of this expedition was published in London and Philadelphia in 1823.) It should be noted that the Arkansas in its present course between the 101st and the 104th meridians is never more than ten miles north or south of the 38th parallel. From a point on the Arkansas 5 miles south of the 38th

the 32nd meridian could have been readily calculated by formula. This, Le Grand may have done.

This deduction seems supported by the fact that it is impossible to correlate Le Grand's location of the major streams of the region with their present position. For the most part he located those in the southern part of the grant a hundred or more miles too far to the south. Thus, 16 miles north of the 32nd parallel he crossed the "Red River of Texas," with a bottom nearly a mile in width and timbered with cottonwood, black locust, and boxwood. Northward, through occasional groves of oak timber, after 23 miles, he reached the "South Fork of Red River," 45 yards wide in a cottonwood bottom. Another 35 miles to the north, through rough and timbered country, brought him to the main branch of Red River, here 50 to 60 yards wide "with a large and extensive bottom, timber'd with Oak, Hackberry &c," and having a dense undergrowth of plum bushes and grapevines. Some 40 miles to the north of this stream Le Grand came to the False Washita, "a deep and bold stream, with a good bottom, timber'd with Oak, &c." Another 60 miles brought him to the Canadian. The 23-mile area to the south of this river was partly forested with hackberry and oak. The stream itself was "large and bold . . . 50 or 60 yds wide, with a rich and extensive bottom, well timber'd with Hackberry Oak &c." Eighty-four miles to the north of the main Canadian, Le Grand reached the North Fork of that stream which he described in language almost identical with that used in his report on the main Canadian. North another 93 miles he pushed to the banks of the Arkansas, here half a mile wide "with a very large bottom and well timbered with Oak, Hackberry, and Elm."²⁶

Even a casual reading of Le Grand's description of the route along this eastern boundary suffices to indicate that

parallel it is 355 nautical miles to the 32nd parallel. For the survey of the Santa Fe Trail, see Joseph C. Brown, "Field Notes of the Santa Fe Trail Survey," *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Board of Directors of the Kansas State Historical Society* (Topeka, 1913), 117-125.

26. Quoted material above is from Le Grand's manuscript "Journal" cited in note 2.

if he actually encountered rough terrain broken by hills and free-flowing streams he must needs have been to the east of the "Cap Rock." It is only here that the rivers have the width, the volume of water, and the timbered bottoms he mentioned so frequently. By this reasoning it becomes easier to accept the possibility that Le Grand actually began his survey much farther east and north than he alleged. Thus, it is necessary to examine the probability that he may have actually initiated the survey in Throckmorton County, Texas, as has been indicated by some, or in the vicinity of the 98th meridian as suggested above. In neither location do the water courses occupy positions that correspond with those indicated by Le Grand, and, too, in either instance the running of a line 355 miles to the north would have carried the survey beyond the Arkansas. Further refutation of the possibility of the survey having been begun near the 98th meridian is the complete lack of reference to either the Arbuckle or Wichita Mountains, one or the other of which would have been traversed or described. The major ground on which to refute the suggestion of either the Throckmorton or 98th meridian areas as the initial point of the survey is that from either place it is impossible to correlate Le Grand's statement of the distances traversed with the actual distances to the northwestern and western borders of the grant.

Every attempt to reconcile Le Grand's descriptions with the actual terrain can be refuted with such plausibility that it seems apparent his "Journal" is grossly in error. How or why these errors were recorded is difficult to determine and with the available evidence can only be the subject of speculation. That he was in the general area is unquestioned; that he made the purported survey is doubtful. In his favor it must be admitted that the natural vegetation differs in many respects today from that of a century and a quarter ago. In the interval there may have been considerable piracy of streams; certain it is that timber is no longer found as it was in the early 1800's. On the other hand, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Le Grand prepared a map

(the original of which is as yet unlocated)²⁷ on which he outlined the terrain features and then prepared a "Journal," the entries of which he made to correspond to the map. If this was done, he could have relied on information from Indians, trappers, traders, on existing maps, and on personal knowledge acquired during that summer of 1827. Le Grand, as seen earlier, was already familiar with the region traversed by the Santa Fe Trail and it is in his description of this, the northern, portion of the supposed survey that his "Journal" places the rivers in their best approximate present location. It is only here that it is possible to locate the South Canadian, the North Canadian, and the Arkansas Rivers in their approximate juxtaposition. In this region, too, his accounts of terrain and distances on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains are reasonably accurate. But even here a discrepancy appears to exist. The "Sierra Obscura" of that period was the eastern range of the Rockies immediately to the east of Santa Fe. Le Grand, however, locates these mountains, as nearly as can be determined from his "Journal," much farther to the east. His party, which for four months had allegedly negotiated distances approximating 20 miles per day, required the two weeks from October 30 to November 15 to cover the distance from "Sierra Obscura" to Santa Fe. If a 20-mile-per-day rate was maintained during this interval then the "Sierra Obscura" mentioned by Le Grand was some 300 miles from Santa Fe, not a range of mountains immediately to the east.²⁸

Regardless of the accuracy of Le Grand's reports, it should not be forgotten that he was employed by *empresarios* more interested in realizing a quick return from their hold-

27. Information taken from that map or from Le Grand's "Journal" was incorporated in an Arrowsmith map of Texas, published in London, April 17, 1841, and reproduced as the frontispiece to the 1925 reprint of Kennedy's *Texas*. See map. Le Grand mentioned his "plat or survey" in a letter to Richard Exter from Santa Fe on November 15, 1827. See *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829. The map and the "Journal" enjoyed a wide circulation. See *The Bee*, November 6, 1834, p. 2, quoting from *The Albion*.

28. The date of October 30 is recorded in Le Grand's "Journal;" the November 15 date is contained in his letter to Exter announcing his arrival in Santa Fe on that date. See *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829.

ings than in actually following Stephen F. Austin's plan of encouraging settlement. By the very nature of his mission it seems apparent that Le Grand was expected, if not obligated, to present the facts about the terrain in the land grant in the best possible light. Exter and Wilson were interested in disposing of the grant; obviously they could not sell a desert. This may account for Le Grand's crossing of larger and more numerous streams, with more timber and water than have been observed in recent years!

Not content with his description of the "promised land" recorded in his "Journal," Le Grand enlarged upon the assets inherent in the grant. Immediately upon arrival in Santa Fe, he hastened to inform his employers:

As far as regards the character of the country that we have surveyed, I can say of it generally, and without exaggeration, that it is at least *as good as any I have ever seen*. The grant affords every advantage for trade with the Indians. I think from five to eight thousand Beaver Skins, and any number of Buffaloe Robes, may be purchased annually, and at a price to admit of a profit of at least 1,000 per cent. The Indians here are as needy of every article of their trade as they can possibly be. [I make the foregoing estimate on the certain knowledge I have of the price of beaver in the city of Mexico, and that of Buffalo robes in the state of Sonora.]

On the subject of precious metals I can say but little. My time permitted me to give but a superficial examination of the mountainous tracts. However, they have every appearance I have heretofore observed in localities productive of minerals. We found in another part of the principal mountain, and within the grant, mineral which appears to be composed principally of gold, with some silver. I have not yet had it analyzed, but by the next mail I will be able to give you more satisfaction on the subject. The Governor of this territory informs me that in the archives of his office are many evidences of mines embraced within the grant. These discoveries were made in former times by persons who were not permitted to work them. [Before the departure of the next mail I will give them an examination, and advise you of the result.]

On the grant were pastured annually not less than 300,000 sheep and a large number of cattle, horses, &c. They belong to [a] few proprietors, who are consequently wealthy.

I will here remark that the prospect of the settlement of a Foreign Colony so near this Territory appears to give universal satisfaction to the inhabitants.²⁹

The survey report Le Grand authored figured prominently in grandiose land schemes designed to attract the attention of speculators in Baltimore, Washington, New York, and England. The extent to which potential settlers were mulcted is not known, but there was no dearth of attempts to use the land grant as the springboard to fortune. Le Grand's reports furnished the descriptions for the painting of a rosy picture of the region for the prospective English investor and settler. In truth, the *llano estacado* was portrayed as the land flowing with milk and honey; here wild fruits grew in profusion, corn, wheat, and other grains would yield abundantly, large areas were adapted to the growth of cotton, the mountains were reported rich in ores, and suitable for the growing of sheep.³⁰

Fictional his "Journal" may have been, but it is undisputed that Le Grand did enter the general region of the Wilson and Exter grant from Arkansas Territory near the end of June, 1827, and did not reach Santa Fe until the middle of the following November. Accompanying him was an expedition variously estimated to number from 30 to 100 men, both American and Indian. The number reaching Santa Fe is not revealed but one writer asserted that "half his command . . . perished on the deserts by thirst, and starvation."³¹ Le Grand himself declared that the early advent of wintry weather caused the surveyors to present an ultimatum demanding their pay and refusing to continue the survey pending remuneration. "I knew it was fruitless to oppose any objection whatever to their determinations,"

29. Le Grand to Exter, Santa Fe, November 15, 1827. This letter is basically that published in the *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1829. The material enclosed in brackets appeared in the version published in Enrico and Egerton, *Emigration to Texas*, 16.

30. Enrico and Egerton, *Emigration to Texas*, 1-18. The authors also used information from David G. Burnet and from published documents of the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. *The Albion* carried a glowing description of the area borrowed from Le Grand's reports. See *The Bee*, November 6, 1834, p. 2. It should be noted that in the present century parts of the region have fulfilled the earlier glowing predictions.

31. Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Glimpses of the Past*, V, 90.

Le Grand concluded his "Journal," "and consequently determined on going to Santa Fe to report progress."³² Of the men who accompanied him the names of only eleven have been preserved. On the night of September 10, so Le Grand recorded, Kemble, Bois, Casebolt, Boring, and Ryan stole all of the horses except four and deserted the expedition. He also reported that Crummin, Weathers, and Jouy were killed and Thompson was slightly wounded by Snake Indians in a midnight assault on the night of September 27.³³ In addition to these, two other members have been identified. A youthful lawyer named Mitchell, talented but dissipated, died during the summer. John Black, later United States Consul in Mexico City, was also a member of the expedition.³⁴

For almost nine years after his arrival in Santa Fe—in the middle of November, 1827—Le Grand escaped the attention of frontier chroniclers. A contemporary later declared that Le Grand spent his time in Santa Fe and the surrounding country until the outbreak of the Texas Revolution.³⁵ It is more probable that he traveled widely during the intervening period. He may have been the "A. Legrand" who arrived in New Orleans from Vera Cruz aboard the brig *Ohio* on February 27, 1833.³⁶ Prior to April, 1836, he spent enough time among the different tribes of plains Indians to become an authority on their total numbers, military strength, customs, and tribal alliances. A tribute to this knowledge was paid by Major P. L. Chouteau, the United States Indian Agent to the Osages, when he copied Le Grand's reports in their entirety in his official correspondence.³⁷

32. Le Grand's original "Journal" cited in note 2.

33. The spelling of the names is from Le Grand's manuscript "Journal," cited in note 2. Kennedy, *Texas*, 185 and 187, gives Kimble, Caseboth, Ryou, McCrummins, and Jones. He agrees on the other spellings.

34. Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Glimpses of the Past*, V, 90.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *The Courier*, February 27, 1833, p. 3. The ship's arrival date is given as March 1, 1833, in "Passenger Lists Taken from Manifests of the Customs Service, Port of New Orleans," Book 1, 1813-1837, p. 235.

37. See Chouteau to Governor M[ontfort] Stokes and Brigadier General M[atthew] Arbuckle, Fort Gibson, April 25, 1836 (MS.), in Bureau of Indian Affairs Records, Western Superintendency, National Archives, Washington.

Although posterity may challenge the accuracy of the report Le Grand preserved, it cannot deny him the distinction of being among the earliest of United States citizens to traverse the high plains. His adventures in the region in 1827 were of minor importance in the settlement of the West, but to the literature of the era they contribute an interesting chapter.