

Historical Overview

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the State of Texas is divided into four judicial districts, which shall be called the northern, the eastern, the southern and the western judicial districts of the State of Texas.”

With these words the 57th Congress of the United States of America created the *Southern Judicial District* of Texas in 1902.

As promised in his campaign platform, President James Polk signed legislation annexing Texas and making it the 28th state on December 29th, 1845. Originally, Congress designated only one judicial district to the new state, granting it the appellate powers of the Circuit Court. However, as the railroad continued to expand and fuel the Texas economy, redistricting legislation was enacted, and on July 1, 1902 the Southern District of Texas was created.

The district's first Congressionally-appointed judge was The Honorable Walter T. Burns, and U. S. Attorney Marcus C. McLemore from the former Eastern District, was reassigned to the same position in the new Southern District. President Theodore Roosevelt then appointed a new U. S. Attorney for the altered Eastern District. In 1906, President Roosevelt named Lodowick “Lock” McDaniel of Grimes County, Texas, as the first presidentially-appointed United States Attorney for the Southern Judicial District of Texas.

At its inception, the Southern District was comprised of 36 counties. The Court and the U.S. Attorney rotated between Galveston, Laredo, Brownsville and Houston. In subsequent years, divisions were added, counties were transferred and divided, additional judges were appointed, and additional U. S. Attorney’s branch offices opened. At its centennial anniversary, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District consists of 6 divisions, covering 43 counties, with approximately 150 attorneys on staff.

United States Attorneys for the Southern District of Texas (Presidentially Appointed)



Marcus Cato McLemore (1899 - 1906)

The federal statute which created the new southern district specified that “The district attorney for the Eastern Judicial District ... shall continue to be the district attorney for the Southern Judicial District.” By this act, Marcus McLemore, who had served as the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, became the first U. S. Attorney for the new Southern District.

Mr. McLemore was born in Galveston, Texas, on November 12, 1867. He attended Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and began his law practice in Galveston in 1889. He served as the Recorder for the City of Galveston from 1897 to 1899, when President William McKinley appointed him to be the United States Attorney for the Eastern Judicial District of Texas.

After his service as U. S. Attorney, McLemore moved to California where he practiced law for eight years. He returned to Texas in 1915 and married Bessie Campbell Carrollton on April 7, 1916. McLemore died on November 7, 1916, and is buried in Galveston.



Lodowick “Lock” McDaniel (1906 - 1914)

Lodowick McDaniel was the Southern District’s first presidentially appointed U. S. Attorney. Although he was born in Bedford County, Virginia, on January 9, 1847, his family moved to Grimes County, Texas, in 1850. McDaniel served as a private under Colonel Walker in the Confederate Army. When the war ended he married Katherine Cawthon.

Mr. McDaniel read law under District Judge J. R. Burnet and was admitted to the Texas Bar in 1879. He served as Grimes County treasurer in 1879, county attorney from 1881-1882, and county judge from 1883-1884. In 1893, Mr. McDaniel moved to Houston and became active with the Republican Party. He received his appointment as U.S. Attorney from President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. He retired from the office in 1914, after which he held the position of Special Master in Bankruptcy and Equity Matters for the Southern District. He died on April 21, 1928 in Houston.



John Edward Green, Jr. (1914 - 1919)

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson appointed John Edward Green, Jr. to succeed Lodowick McDaniel as the U. S. Attorney for the Southern District. Like his predecessor, Mr. Green worked closely with Judge Waller T. Burns in the development of a regional concept in South Texas.

Though Green was born in Selma, Alabama, on December 5, 1880, his family relocated to Houston in his early childhood. Green was a tremendous orator

and an avid competitor in debate competitions in preparatory school. He attended Southwestern University of Texas, in Georgetown, and graduated in 1901. Upon graduation, Green became a reporter for the Houston Chronicle and later the Houston Post. He was eventually named City Editor of the Post and continued in that position until he started law school at the University of Texas in 1909.

After law school, Green began a private practice and built a solid reputation as an attorney. Green resigned from the U. S. Attorney's office in 1919, due to a disagreement with the Attorney General over higher telephone rates in Houston. After his resignation, Green joined Gulf Oil Company, where he served as General Attorney until his death from a horse riding accident on November 8, 1947.



David Edward Simmons (1919 - 1922)

David E. Simmons was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to be the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas in 1919. He was an Assistant Attorney General for the state of Texas between 1898 and 1904.

David Simmons was born in Burlington, Iowa, on June 14, 1868. His parents moved their family to Sherman, Texas, in his infancy. Mr. Simmons received his bachelors degree from the University of Texas in 1891. He went on to earn his law degree from the University of Texas the following year.

David Simmons left the United States Attorney's Office in 1922. He died in Houston, on January 6, 1924, at the age of 55.



Henry Mathews Holden (1922 - 1934)

In 1922, Henry Mathews Holden was appointed by President Warren G. Harding to be the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas. He continued in that position through the administrations of Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover and into the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In total, Henry Holden served for 12 years, the longest term of any U. S. Attorney in the Southern District.

Born in Covington, Kentucky, in 1877, Holden moved to Texas early in his youth. He learned the law by clerking in law offices and was admitted to the bar in 1903. Holden lived and practiced in Corpus Christi, from 1908 to 1922. During that time he served as a City Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem of Corpus Christi.

After leaving the United States Attorney's Office in 1934, Holden returned to private practice in Houston. He retired in 1952. Henry M. Holden died on September 21, 1964, at the age of 87.



Douglas Wear McGregor (1934 - 1944)

Douglas Wear McGregor was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District in 1934. He held that position until 1944, when he moved to Washington D. C., to become an

Assistant Attorney General. In 1947, he returned to private practice in Houston until his retirement in 1961.

Douglas McGregor was born in Springfield, Missouri in 1902. He attended the University of Texas where he received his bachelors and law degrees and was admitted to the Texas bar in 1926. Douglas McGregor died in Houston, on December 28, 1986, at the age of 84.



Brian Sylvester Odem (1944 - 1954)

Brian Odem served as an Assistant United States Attorney for ten years before he was appointed U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Mr. Odem was born in Sinton, Texas in 1897. He attended Saint Edwards College in Austin and studied law at the University of Notre Dame. Odem was admitted to the Texas Bar in 1917.

When his tenure as U.S. Attorney ended in 1954, Brian Odem returned to private practice in Houston. He and his wife, Wilbert, had one daughter and six sons. He died in Houston on June 5, 1963, at the age of 66.



Malcolm Richard Wilkey (1954 - 1957)

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Malcolm Richard Wilkey to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District. Mr. Wilkey went on to become an Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Affairs, and an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice.

Malcolm Wilkey was born in 1918, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He graduated from Harvard University in 1940, and promptly accepted a commission in the U.S. Army. During the second World War, Wilkey fought at Bastogne and the Battle of the Bulge. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U. S. Army Reserve, in 1953. Wilkey graduated from Harvard Law School in 1948, and moved to Houston. There he established a private practice and taught at the University of Houston School of Law.

After leaving the Department in 1961, Mr. Wilkey accepted a position at Kennecott Copper Corporation in New York. In 1970, he was nominated by President Richard M. Nixon to the U. S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, where he sat until he assumed senior status, at the end of 1984. In 1985, Mr. Wilkey accepted a nomination from President Ronald Reagan to be the United States Ambassador to Uruguay.

When Ambassador Wilkey retired in 1990, he and his wife, Emma Secul, returned to her homeland of Santiago, Chile, where they currently reside.



William B. Butler (1957 - 1961)

In 1957 President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed William B. Butler to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District. His leadership led to the opening of the United States Attorney's Office in Brownsville in 1961.

William Butler was born in 1916, in Hillsboro, Texas, sixty miles south of Dallas. He attended law school at the University of Texas, receiving his degree in 1938. He practiced law with Jones, Donahue & Butler in Houston, from 1953 until

his appointment.

After his tenure as the U. S. Attorney, Mr. Butler worked at the Treasury Department in Washington D.C. from 1970 to 1979. He returned to private practice in Houston until his retirement in 1985. He died two years later on December 17, 1987.



Woodrow Bradley Seals (1961 - 1966)

Woodrow Bradley Seals was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to serve as the U. S. Attorney in 1961. On June 28, 1966, Seals was nominated by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the district court for the Southern District.

Woodrow Seals was born in Bogalusa, Louisiana, on December 24, 1917. He was a Major in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII, and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. Judge Seals attended the University of Texas School of Law, earning his LL.B. in 1949, and practiced law in Houston until his appointment.

Judge Woodrow Seals took senior status in the Southern District on December 25, 1982. He served in this capacity until his death in 1990.



Morton Lee Susman (1966 - 1969)

Upon the appointment of Woodrow Seals to the federal bench in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Morton Lee Susman to be the new United States Attorney for the District. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Susman had served as an Assistant U. S. Attorney in the office since 1961, and had been named the Chief of the Criminal Division in 1964.

Mr. Susman and his family moved from Detroit to San Antonio in 1935. He attended college and law school at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, earning his law degree in 1958. After law school, Susman enlisted in the U. S. Navy and served as a naval officer until 1961.

Mr. Susman has been in private practice since leaving the U. S. Attorney's Office,. He is a member of the bar in several states and has been a fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers since 1981. Mr. Susman is currently semi-retired, and lives with his wife in Houston.



Anthony Joseph Perez Farris (1969 - 1974)

Anthony Joseph Perez Farris was appointed as the United States Attorney in 1969 by President Richard M. Nixon. He served until 1974, when he returned to private practice. Mr. Farris was elected State Judge for the 151st Civil District of Texas in 1980, and was re-elected in 1984.

Anthony Farris was born in El Paso, on October 3, 1920. He joined the United States Marine Corps during World War II and received 9 individual decorations. He graduated from the University of Houston Law School in 1956. He served as a judge until his death on September 29, 1986.



Edward B. McDonough, Jr. (1974 - 1977)

President Gerald Ford appointed Edward McDonough to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District in 1974. Prior to his appointment,

McDonough was as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for five years, progressing to the position of chief of the criminal division.

Mr. McDonough was born in Galveston in 1939. He earned his undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Notre Dame and studied law at the University of Texas, receiving his degree in 1964. After leaving the U.S. Attorney's office in 1977, McDonough went back to private practice in Houston. He specialized in Criminal Law and is currently a candidate for a Master of Law degree in Health Law. He has remained active in the local legal community, serving as President of the Houston Chapter of the Federal Bar Association from 1976 - 1977, President of the National Association of Former U. S. Attorneys 1986 - 1987, and Director of the State Bar of Texas from 1988 - 1991.



Jose Antonio "Tony" Canales (1977 - 1980)

Tony Canales was appointed to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. He held this position until he returned to private practice in 1980.

Mr. Canales was born in Brownsville on June 22, 1944. In 1957, his mother began her medical internship and the family moved to Corpus Christi. Canales earned an Associates Degree from Del Mar College in Corpus Christi in 1964. He graduated the University of Texas in 1966 and St. Mary's University Law School of San Antonio in 1969. Following law school, Canales created and maintained a successful private practice until his Presidential appointment eight years later. In 1981, Canales returned to his firm in Corpus Christi and has continued working as a trial lawyer taking on criminal and civil cases. Recently, Canales was honored with the 2002 Humanitarian Award from The National Conference for Community and Justice in Corpus Christi.



Daniel Kuldell Hedges (1981 - 1985)

Daniel Hedges was appointed as the United States Attorney by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. During his tenure in office, Hedges co-founded the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force program (OCDETF) which continues to operate under the oversight of the Attorney General.

A native Houstonian, Mr. Hedges was born on September 18, 1946. He attended Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire, where he graduated *Summa Cum Laude*, in 1968. Following college, he served as an officer in the United States Navy on active duty from 1968 to 1971. He was a Lieutenant Commander in the naval reserve at retirement.

Since leaving the office, Mr. Hedges has been in private practice in Houston. He worked on the Texas Supreme Court Task Force on Jury Charges from 1992 to 1993, and was a Director of the Houston Bar Foundation from 1997 to 1999. His wife, Adele Hedges, is a Justice of the First Court of Appeals of Texas. They have one son, Clinton Kuldell Hedges.



Henry K. Oncken (1985 - 1990)

President Ronald Reagan appointed Henry K. Oncken to be the United States Attorney in 1985. Mr. Oncken's administration first staffed the McAllen Office in 1988, and doubled the number of assistant U. S. Attorneys employed in the district.

Born in 1938 in Shiner, Texas, Mr. Oncken moved with his family to

Houston at an early age. After high school, he served in the Texas National Guard for nine years and was called to active duty during the Berlin Wall crisis of 1961. Oncken attended the University of Houston in a combined program earning his business degree in 1965 and his law degree in 1966. Oncken joined the Harris County District Attorney's Office in 1969. He served as an Assistant D. A. for 12 years, then served as a Criminal District Judge in Harris County during 1981 and 1982. After a year on the bench, Mr. Oncken returned to private practice until his presidential appointment.

Mr. Oncken remains active in the Houston legal arena. He chaired the Harris County Civil Service Commission from 1993 to 2000, and currently serves as a Special Judge for Harris County, a position he has held since 1998.



Ronald G. Woods (1990 - 1993)

President George Bush appointed Ronald G. Woods to serve as the United States Attorney for the district in 1990. The focus of Mr. Woods's administration was the prosecution of complex bank fraud cases which arose from the savings and loan industry. Mr. Woods also reorganized the U. S. Attorney's office, increasing the total number of Assistants to 130.

Ron Woods was born in Moab, Utah, on January 1, 1938. Shortly thereafter, he moved with his family to the Texas panhandle town of Pampa, 55 miles northeast of Amarillo. He attended college and law school at the University of Texas, earning his law degree in 1964.

After law school, Woods served as a Special Agent and Legal Advisor to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. From 1969 to 1976, Woods was an Assistant District Attorney for Harris County, where he rose to the office of Chief Prosecutor. In 1976, Ron moved to the federal arena, becoming an Assistant United States Attorney in Houston, where he prosecuted cases in the Narcotics, Public Integrity, and Fraud sections. He currently lives and practices in Houston.



Gaynelle Griffin Jones (1993 - 1997)

In 1993, Gaynelle Griffin Jones was appointed to be the United States Attorney by President Bill Clinton. During her tenure, Ms. Griffin Jones served on the Attorney General's Advisory Committee, chaired the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Committee and the High Intensity Drug Task Force, and was a member of the White Collar Crime Subcommittee and the Civil Rights Committee for the Department.

Ms. Griffin Jones completed her undergraduate work at Emerson College in Boston. She earned her law degree in 1972 from Boston College of Law. Griffin Jones launched her career as a prosecutor in Louisiana and continued at the Harris County District Attorneys office and the U.S. Attorneys Office in Houston for a total of ten years. She was appointed to the Texas First Court of Appeals in 1993. She was the first African American female judge on an appellate court in Texas. Upon leaving the U.S. Attorney's Office in 1997, Gaynelle became the Director of Litigation at Compaq Computer Corporation.



Mervyn Milton Mosbacker (1999 - 2001)

President Bill Clinton appointed Mosbacker to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas in 1999. He served in that position through May, 2001.

Born in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico, on December 9, 1953, Mr.

Mosbacker grew up in Brownsville. He earned an Associates Degree at Southmost College in 1974, and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Texas in 1976. Mr. Mosbacker returned to Brownsville and taught high school science for a year before attend law school at the University of Texas. Mosbacker was awarded his law degree in 1980.

Between law school graduation and the commencement of his career as a prosecutor, Mr. Mosbacker clerked for the Honorable U. S. District Judge Filemon B. Vela, in Brownsville. When his clerkship ended two years later, he accepted a position with the Cameron County District Attorney's Office where he rose to the position of First Assistant District Attorney. In 1988, Mosbacker joined the U.S. Attorney's office in Brownsville and in 1989 was named the AUSA in Charge, a position he maintained until his presidential appointment in 1999.

Mervyn Mosbacker practices law in Houston, where he lives with his wife, Linda, and their 3 children.



Michael Taylor Shelby (2001 - 2005)

Michael Shelby is the twentieth United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas. He was appointed by President George W. Bush on May 10, 2002, although he began his service as the judicially appointed United States Attorney in December, 2001.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Shelby undertook a comprehensive reorganization of the district's six staffed divisional offices focusing their efforts and resources in four specific areas: terrorism and national security; violent crime; organized criminal enterprises; and complex white collar crime, including fraud and public corruption.

Mr. Shelby was born in Luling, Texas, and raised in Houston. He attended Texas A&M University on a debate scholarship and graduated in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He received his law degree in 1984 from the University of Texas School of Law, where he was active in the school's competitive advocacy program. Mr. Shelby was the recipient of the Albert Pierson Jones Advocacy Scholarship, served as Chairman of the Board of Advocates, and remains the only student to twice win the prestigious Hildebrand Moot Court Competition..

A career prosecutor, Mr. Shelby served as an assistant District Attorney at the Harris County D.A.'s Office from 1985 to 1989, primarily in the Special Prosecutions Division. He joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in Houston in 1989, where he specialized in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving public corruption, organized crime, and environmental law. In 1997, Mr. Shelby transferred to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Phoenix, where he continued his work prosecuting corrupt public officials.

Mr. Shelby is a commissioned officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve, where he currently holds the rank of Commander. His active military duty includes service in the Middle East during Operation Desert Storm and most recently in Bosnia. Michael is the recipient of the Department of Justice's Directors' Award and has received numerous awards from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Customs Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. (2006 – present)

Sworn in on March 17, 2006, in Corpus Christi, Texas, Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. became the twenty-first Presidentially appointed United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas.

President George W. Bush nominated Mr. DeGabrielle to serve as United States Attorney for this district on February 13, 2006, on the recommendation of United States Senators John Cornyn and Kay Bailey Hutchison. The full Senate unanimously confirmed his appointment on March 13, 2006.

Prior to his appointment as this District's United States Attorney, Mr. DeGabrielle served the District as the First Assistant United States Attorney since January 2002, and has a total of 24 years of federal law enforcement service including five years as a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. DeGabrielle began his service as an Assistant United States Attorney in 1986 in this District's headquarters office in Houston. Mr. DeGabrielle has prosecuted a varied array of significant federal cases including those involving public corruption, white collar crime, bank fraud, violent crime, and criminal organizations involved in trafficking narcotics and human beings. He has also served as the Chief of the Criminal Division supervising the prosecutorial efforts of Assistant United States Attorneys.

Given his extensive prosecutorial experience, the Department of Justice has called upon Mr. DeGabrielle to share his legal knowledge and expertise with others. He has been frequently invited to participate in training conferences and seminars throughout the United States, presenting lectures on a variety of legal topics and issues to thousands of criminal law enforcement officers and prosecutors. Mr. DeGabrielle also has the distinction of being one of a very select few who are selected to serve as a Resident Legal Advisor to the South African National Directorate of Public Prosecutions.

V. History of the Individual Divisions of the United States Attorney's Office within the Southern District of Texas.

The Southern Judicial District of Texas is divided into seven divisions as seen below. Each division has a federal courthouse and a sitting judge. The United States Attorney's Office has permanently staffed field offices in every division except Galveston.

Houston Division - Houston is the fourth largest city in the United States and is a major hub of transportation. There are two major airports in Houston, and the city is bisected by Interstate Highways 10 (east-west) and 45 (north-south) and several U. S. Highways. The Port of Houston is the second busiest in American, taking in over 175 million tons of cargo in 2001. It is connected to the Gulf of Mexico by the Houston Ship Channel, a 50 mile water artery that follows the natural route of Buffalo Bayou.



Houston Skyline



Port of Houston - Early 1900's

The Houston Division of the U. S. Attorney's Office has been gradually formed as the other offices were split off. It now covers the counties of Austin, Brazos, Colorado, Fayette, Fort Bend, Grimes, Harris, Madison, Montgomery, San Jacinto, Walker, Waller and Whorton with a total population of 4,572,226. Currently, the Houston Office is located in the Bank One Building, two blocks from the Bob Casey Federal Courthouse in downtown Houston. The offices contain the Headquarters of the Southern District as well as almost 100 Assistant United States Attorneys.



Galveston Division - Galveston is an island city located 50 miles south of Houston. In 1845, when Texas was admitted to the Union, Galveston was the seat of the Texas Judicial District.

The Galveston Division covers the four counties of Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston and Matagorda. Due to its proximity to Houston, there has never been an Assistant United States Attorney in residence in the Galveston Division since the Southern District was formed.

Brownsville Division - In 1961, Reynaldo G. Garza was named to the federal bench in 1961 in Brownsville, Texas, a border town of 48,040 people at the time. Shortly thereafter, the Brownsville office the United States Attorney was established. The office was the first branch office of the Southern District and was in charge of prosecutions from Brownsville to Starr County and occasionally as far west as Laredo. Marina Vera, with the help of Judge Garza's sister Soila, handled the paperwork for the office until the first resident Assistant United States Attorney position was filled by Homer Lopez. For several years, Lopez and Vera ran the entire office. It is said that Lopez's violin practice could be heard throughout the courthouse on Elizabeth Street from his second floor office.



Brownsville Federal Courthouse

In 1969, AUSA Raul Gonzalez took charge of the Brownsville office. It remained a one attorney division until the hiring of John Patrick Smith in 1973. Gonzalez left shortly thereafter, eventually going on to become a Texas Supreme Court Justice, and the office was again a one attorney operation. AUSA Charles Lewis came on board in 1976 and AUSAs Ruben de Luna and Danny Ramirez doubled the number of attorneys-in-residence in 1978. With the surge in drug trafficking along the Mexican border, the docket had swelled to nearly 1000 felony cases per year by that time, with an additional 450 in Laredo. The AUSAs in Brownsville found themselves putting in 12 hour court days with Judge Vela on a regular basis.

Civil attorney Harry Hall brought the attorney staff to five in 1980. Tragically, Ruben de Luna was killed in a car accident in that April. A plaque in his memory still hangs in the Brownsville Division.

By 1980, the population of Brownsville had grown to 85,000, and change continued to shake up the Brownsville Division. The growing office moved to the ground floor of the courthouse that year. In 1983, Charles Lewis transferred to the Houston Division, followed in 1986 by John Patrick Smith which left Chris Miller in charge. Robert Guerra took charge in 1987 and he was replaced by Mervyn M. Mosbacher in 1988. Also in 1988, the McAllen Office was opened, taking AUSA's Terry Leonard and Alan Hoffmann from Brownsville.

The 1990's began in Brownsville with 6 Assistant United States Attorneys, 5 staff members and one student position. The city had grown to a population of 107,000 and the office continued to grow along with it, moving in to the Texas Bank of Commerce Building in 1992. Charles Lewis returned to Brownsville as the first Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force attorney to be in residence. As the drug traffic continued to increase, the number of federal law enforcement agent skyrocketed. Corresponding AUSA hirings occurred and



South Padre Island near Brownsville

by 2000, the number of attorneys in residence was 13 with 9 staff positions, 1 student and a newly created Victims - Witness Specialist. Following Mervyn Mosbacher's appointment as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas in 1988, Ricardo Lara was named to be the AUSA-in-Charge of Brownsville. Mr. Lara still holds that position today.

Today, the Brownsville Division covers the two counties of Willacy and Cameron including the City of Brownsville which now has over 140,000 people. In 2001, the Brownsville Division was responsible for over 600 felony indictments and hundreds of misdemeanors.

Laredo Division - Billed as the Gateway to Mexico, Laredo is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. It has a population of 193,000 people along with over 400,000 across the river in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Laredo is also one of the busiest inland ports in the nation, handling more freight than all the U. S. ports of entry to its west combined. The Laredo Division covers the five counties of Webb, Zapata, La Salle, McMullen and Jim Hogg and totals nearly 220,000 people. It covers as much of the international border as McAllen and Brownsville combined, and contains four normal ports of entry and the new Columbia Bridge that deals exclusively with commercial traffic. Leading north from the Laredo division are the major smuggling routes of I-35 and Texas State Highway 16, which both lead to San Antonio, and U. S. Highway 59 which leads to Houston. The Laredo Sector of the U. S. Border Patrol has six stations and four permanent traffic checkpoints in the division and together they make nearly 1000 narcotics seizures per year.



International Bridge #1
Downtown Laredo

The tremendous caseload of the Laredo Division is handled by AUSA in Charge Jose Flores and his staff of 13 attorneys. The office was first opened in 19?? and was located for many years in a converted villa style house on Matamoros Street near the Federal Courthouse downtown. In the spring of 2000, the division moved in to the Wells Fargo Building downtown.

McAllen Division - In 1988, Terry Leonard and Alan Hoffmann opened the McAllen Office of the United States Attorney's Office in the Southern District of Texas. McAllen, a border town located 60 miles up the Rio Grande River from Brownsville, is a major gateway to Mexico. The McAllen office is responsible for all cases arising from Hidalgo and Starr Counties. These two very large counties cover a 175 mile stretch of international border, with seven ports of entry and have a combined population of over 600,000. Just across from McAllen is the Mexican city of Reynosa, with an estimated population of over 700,000. Two hours south of Reynosa is the city of Monterey, Mexico with a population of almost 3,000,000. Leading north from McAllen is U.S. Highway 281 which connects with U. S. Highway 59 in George West, Texas. Leading north from the Starr



International bridge near McAllen

County is a myriad of two lane roads which all connect to State Highway 16 which connects to Highway 59 in Freer, Texas. Highway 16 is then a straight shot to San Antonio. This vast population, combined with dozens of smuggling routes leads to huge volume of cases involving drugs and illegal aliens. These two areas alone comprise over 90% of the volume in the McAllen Division. To handle this caseload, AUSA in Charge Terry Leonard has 13 other attorneys on staff.

Corpus Christi Division - The beautiful city of Corpus Christi, Texas with its 278,000 people looks



Corpus Christi Federal Courthouse

out over the Gulf of Mexico. The Corpus Christi Division was first staffed by Assistant United States Attorney Robert Berg in 1975. It is composed of Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kelburg, Live Oak, Nueces, and San Patricio counties with a total population of over 540,000. Even though it has no international border, the division covers 100 miles of coast line and three of the most heavily traveled smuggling routes in Texas. U. S. Highway 281 leads from McAllen to Dallas / Ft. Worth and goes through Brooks, Jim Wells and into Live Oak county where it intersects U. S. Highway 59. Highway 59 leads from Laredo to Houston, passing through Duval, Jim Wells and Live Oak counties. Leading north from Brownsville is U. S. Highway 77 which follows the coast line through the Corpus Christi Division before intersecting with U. S.

Highway 59 in Victoria.

Thanks to these smuggling routes, the criminal caseload of the office is driven largely by the illegal narcotics trade. Four permanent U. S. Border Patrol stations patrol the area and man two permanent traffic checkpoints. The Sarita checkpoint is on U. S. Highway 77, ninety-five miles south of Corpus Christi, and the Falfurrias checkpoint is on U. S. Highway 281, sixty miles due west of Sarita. The Falfurrias checkpoint has the highest number of illegal drug seizures by any fixed checkpoint in the United States. In addition are the offices of U. S. Customs, D. E. A., U. S. Fish and Wildlife, three military bases and the Three Rivers Federal Corrections Institution. AUSA in Charge Patricia Booth leads a staff of 10 attorneys to cover this very busy division. They are housed in Wilson Plaza in downtown Corpus Christi.



USS Lexington, Corpus Christi Bay



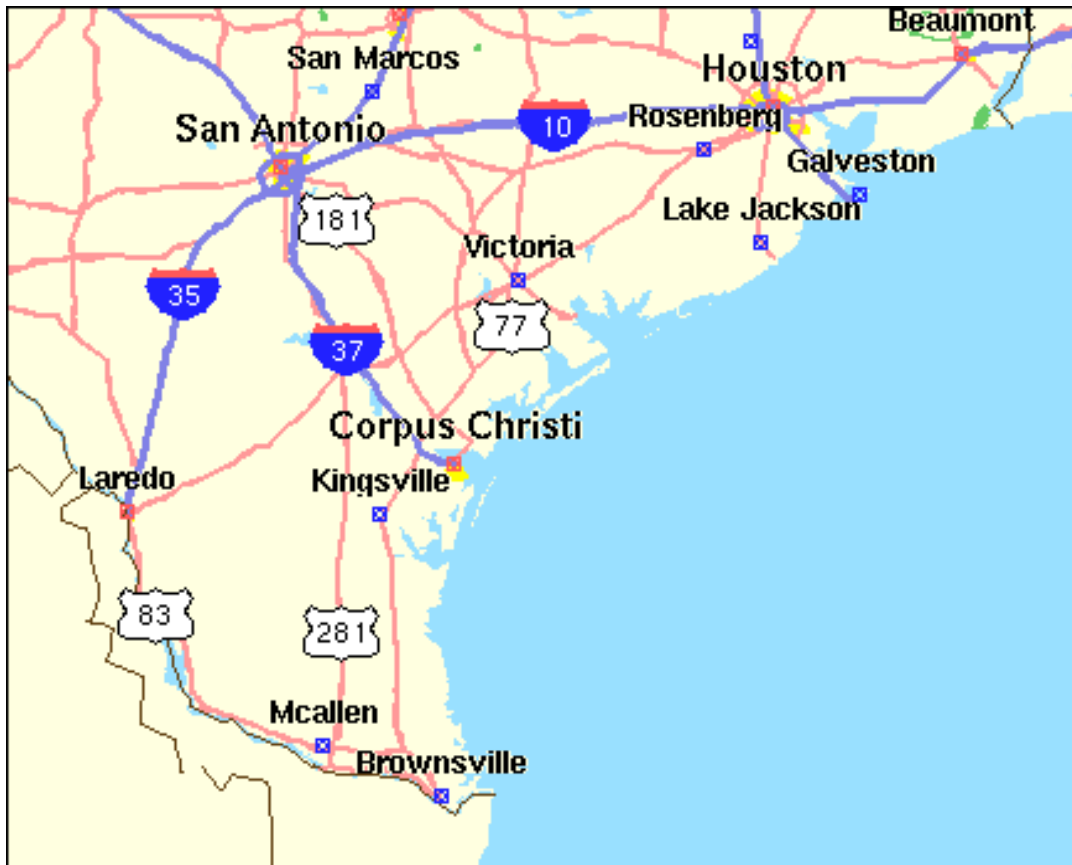
Victoria Barge Canal

Victoria Division - Though cases had been tried sporadically in Victoria previously, in 1994 John D. Rainey was the first U. S. District Judge to be permanently assigned to the area. That year the court heard only 4 cases, followed by 13 the next year and 23 in 1996. Since the case load was so light, the U. S. Attorney's Office handled cases in Victoria from the Corpus Christi office. By 2000, however, the number of cases had grown to 110 and Timothy Hammer was assigned as the first Assistant United

States Attorney-in-residence for Victoria in March of 2001. Mr. Hammer is still the only attorney on staff.

The area covered by the Victoria Division includes Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Refugio and Victoria counties. Victoria is a city of 62,000 located at an important crossroads in the Southern District. U. S. Highway 77 runs from Brownsville due north through Victoria. It intersects with U. S. Highway 59 which runs northeast from Laredo, Texas through Victoria and on to Houston. Along its route, Highway 59 intersect several other highway that are major smuggling routes heading north from the Mexican border. In addition, there is the Victoria Barge Canal connects with the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway which connects Victoria with cities along the Gulf Coast from Brownsville to Apalachee Bay near Tallahassee, Fla. Thirty miles south of Victoria is the newly expanded Port of Port Lavaca - Point Comfort which accommodates more than three-million tons of shipping per year. All this leads to a tremendous amount of interstate commerce passing through Victoria each year.

As might be expected, the vast majority of cases involve smuggling and immigration violations along with violent crime and gun cases. These cases come primarily as the result of cooperative efforts with local police departments, sheriff's departments, state troopers and other law enforcement personnel and organizations within Victoria's seven county area. This cooperation allows for the free flow of information between federal and local agencies and allows the U. S. Attorney's Office to better serve the 182,000 people who live in the Victoria Division.



VI. Chronological List of Cases with Historical Merit from the Southern District of Texas

1907 - As is the case today, smuggling cases were a big part of the court's criminal docket. The smuggled goods were often seized by customs officials and then sold at auction. These goods were usually bought by the original intended purchasers. This followed Judge Burns' ideal of staying true to federal law, while encouraging development in South Texas.

1911 - During the tumultuous years of revolution in Mexico, Texas was used as a staging ground for revolts. Mexican General Bernardo Reyes went to San Antonio to build an army to overthrow Mexican President Francisco Madero. In an historic case in Brownsville, Reyes, Francisco Chapa (an aide to Texas Governor Collquit), Amdor Sanchez (Sheriff and political boss of Webb County) and nine other men were indicted for violating the U. S. neutrality laws. Tons of equipment were seized and the conspiracy was foiled. In a highly publicized trial, Chapa and Sanchez were found guilty. Reyes escaped to Mexico before the trial.

1917-1921 - WWI swelled the courts docket. Prosecuting draft evaders became a focus of the Southern District. Normal sentences were 1-5 months followed by induction into the army. In addition, exporting prohibited goods to Mexico was big business. Texas was also a favored military training area which led to hundreds of crimes on federally run bases.

1921 - The depression hits South Texas and many people find they can earn money by turning their living rooms in to private drinking establishments. These illegal liquor dealership cases make up almost half of the criminal caseloads in Houston and Corpus Christi.

1947 - The French ship *The Grandcamp*, which was loaded with ammonium oxide fertilizer, explodes in the port of Texas City near Galveston. The explosion is so powerful that it knocks two planes from the sky and registers on seismographs in Denver, Colorado. It kills over 500 people and destroys 80% of Texas City. Over the next several years, the U. S. Attorney's office is involved in one of the largest civil actions in the history of Texas up to that time.

1966 - *United States v. Timothy Leary* - The 1960's counter-culture icon is prosecuted in Laredo for trafficking marijuana.

1967 - Draftee number 15-47-42-127, also known as heavy weight boxing champion Mohammed Ali, is convicted of draft evasion in Houston. Ali is sentenced to 5 years in jail and fined \$10,000.

1972 - David Ruiz files suit against the Texas Department of Corrections alleging violations of his constitutional rights. The suit was consolidated with seven other inmate suits in 1974 and the United States was ordered to appear in the case as amicus curiae (friend of the court) to intervene as a plaintiff. This action began almost 30 years of litigation that continued until 2001 when it was finally resolved by an act of the Texas Legislature that created more prisons in Texas and limited the population.

1980 - Former U. S. Attorney for the Southern District, Judge Woodrow Seals, declares unconstitutional a Texas law that denies access to a free public education to children of undocumented aliens. Later, the U. S. Supreme court upholds his decision.

1987 - Steward McGlinchey, a major drug trafficker in the Galveston-Houston area for several years, is arrested. This was the first continuing criminal enterprise (also known as the Drug Kingpin statute) prosecution in the Galveston Division of the Southern District. This case results in three concurrent 12-year sentences for McGlinchey and the seizure of two houses and a large quantity of jewelry.

1992 - Aaron Morel Lebaron, the "Grand Patriarch of the Church of the First Born of the Lamb of God" is indicted in Houston, along with 6 other church members, for conspiracy and murder for hire. The church holds a belief that individuals who leave the "one true church" are evil and must be killed before the Kingdom of God can come to Earth.

In June of 1988, the conspirators shoot and kill two former church members in Houston and one in Dallas. One of the murders in Houston is done in front of the victim's nine-year-old daughter, who is then killed with one shot to the head herself. AUSA's Michael Shelby and Terry Clark launch a lengthy investigation and prosecution that finally results in Aaron Morel Lebaron's guilty verdict on February 28, 1997. His brother and several other close relatives are found guilty as well.

1992 - Operation "Smuggler's Lair" is launched. U. S. Customs agents and members of the Corpus Christi Police Department, working closely with the U. S. Attorney's Office in Corpus Christi, launch a long term investigation. The focus is a narcotics ring in South Texas operated by Frank Herman. By 1996, the operation had resulted in over 60 convictions and the seizure of over two tons of marijuana, a ton of cocaine and 5 ounces of pure black tar heroin. "Smuggler's Lair" also blew open a money laundering operation that involved banks in Europe, Central America and Aruba and exposed a nationwide drug distribution network.

1994 - The Zapata County Sheriff, District Clerk and County Judge are convicted of accepting payoff money from a drug-trafficking operation in their county. All of the defendants receive jail time with the Judge receiving an eight-year sentence

1995 - In McAllen, a renowned insect expert is caught smuggling butterflies in from Mexico. U. S. Fish and Wildlife agents recover over 30,000 smuggled insects. The smuggler pleads guilty and his entire collection is returned to Mexico.

1996 - Dora Cisneros of Brownsville is prosecuted for a murder-for-hire, a case that has received national attention. The original conviction of Cisneros in state court for the murder of a 17-year-old boy after his break up with Cisneros' daughter, was overturned by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Following the reversed conviction, federal "murder for hire" charges are filed against Cisneros in the Brownsville division of the office in 1996. Mervin Mosbacher tries the case of Cisneros in the federal district court and secures a conviction in 1998.

1996 - Juan Garcia-Abrego, the head of the ruthless Gulf Cartel, is arrested in Monterey, Mexico in January 1996, and expelled from Mexico and transported to the Houston, Texas the following. For sixteen years, Garcia-Abrego had been one of the biggest drug smugglers along the southwest border, bringing in well over 100,000 kilograms of cocaine and thousands of pounds of marijuana. Garcia-Abrego had risen to power in the 1980's by systematically eliminating his competition, and anyone who stood in his way.

In October, 1996, after a month long trial in Houston, Texas, Garcia-Abrego was convicted of all counts in a twenty-two count indictment including multiple charges of drug trafficking and money laundering and of operating a continuous criminal enterprise. Garcia-Abrego was sentenced to nine concurrent life sentences and fined \$128 million. Additionally, Garcia-Abrego is ordered to forfeit \$350 million as the profits of his drug enterprises. His conviction was the result of a massive ten year investigation involving the cooperative efforts of many different local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

1998 - In Laredo, former State District Judge Ruben Garcia pleads guilty to case fixing. This leads to an operation that ultimately results in the 1999 conviction of Webb County Assistant District Attorney Ramon Villafranca who was involved in the case fixing scheme with Judge Garcia. Ultimately, fifteen defendants are found guilty, including Assistants of the Webb County DA's office, investigators for the DA's office, a local bail bondsman, and the father, brother and cousin of the Webb County DA. The most recent conviction was in May of 2002 and their are still indictments pending.

2000 - Jonathon Tampico is arrested following a traffic stop by officers of the College Station, Texas Police Department. Tampico, who is 50 years old at the time, is a fugitive from California with a long history of sexual abuse of children. He had been featured on the America's Most Wanted television show just a few days before his arrest in College Station. A search of Tampico's residence by the FBI and College Station Police revealed thousands of pictures involving child pornography, some depicting sex acts with boys as young as 3 years old. Tampico was tried in Houston and sentenced to 360 months in federal prison.

2001 - After a 2-year string of murders and violent home invasions in Victoria and Calhoun Counties, Michael Martinez pleads guilty to a racketeering enterprise. He admits to being a member of the Mexican Mafia and that all the murders and home invasions were all related to Mexican Mafia activities. In an investigation that is still ongoing, almost a dozen indictments have been handed down for racketeering with trial set for September 2002 in Victoria.