

TWICHELL SURVEY RECORDS AVAILABLE

Submitted by Lauren Goodley • Texas General Land Office



The Archives and Records Program of the Texas General Land Office is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of the Twichell Survey Records. Willis Day Twichell (1864-1959), a prominent surveyor in West Texas and the Panhandle Plains from 1885 until his death in 1959, surveyed a vast amount of land, including the XIT ranch and the disputed Texas-New Mexico boundary along the 103rd meridian, as well as lands and boundaries for the Texas permanent school fund, railroads, and ranchers. Originally brought to Texas by an immigration company to plat the town of Garden City, Twichell ultimately surveyed lands in 165 of Texas' 254 counties as well as locations in New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and Northern Mexico.

The Twichell Survey Records have been held since 1959 by a consortium of oil companies that purchased them from the Twichell family. Their deposit at the Texas General Land Office Archives will make them publicly available for the first time.

The records date from the mid-1800's to the 1960's and are comprised of 119 linear feet of maps and 56 linear feet of field books, correspondence, and photographs from the records of Twichell and several other West Texas surveyors, including Robert Estes, Sylvan Sanders, and Edward Saunders. Correspondence reflects business with the Texas General Land Office, private clients, or between surveyors, and includes field notes, maps and plats of the land under discussion. Maps and files will remain organized as they arrived, by county and by land block or area.

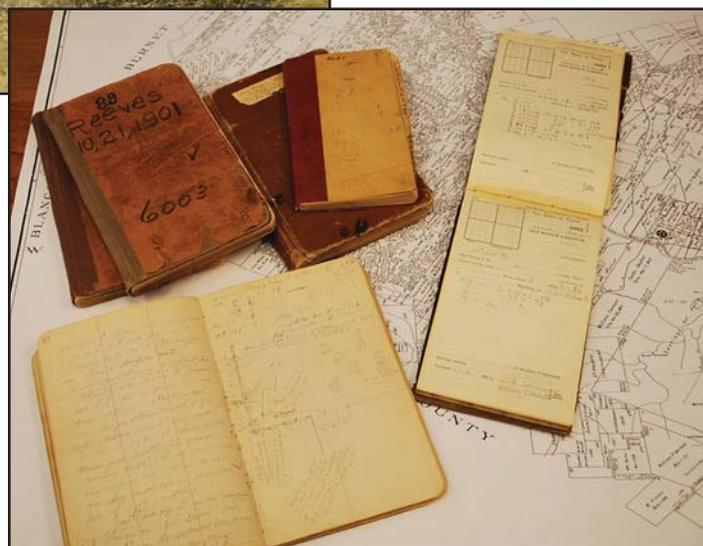
"The Twichell Survey Records are a treasure trove of magnificent proportions," said archivist and historian **David B. Gracy**. "Beyond the specific records of surveys, Twichell's correspondence with landowners and their agents is rich in documentation of settlement and land use, adding an important dimension to the survey records. Snapshots taken by the surveying crews of the land over which they

worked provide a particularly outstanding document of land use in themselves, and by comparison with contemporary photographs, of land change."

These records greatly complement the GLO holdings of county maps, survey files, and field notes for the West Texas and Panhandle Plains regions. The records will be available to the public beginning January 3, 2011. A finding aid will be posted on Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) soon thereafter, and maps and select small-format documents will be digitized and available online on the GLO Web site by January 1, 2012.



Left: W. D. Twichell surveying the 103rd meridian between Texas and New Mexico, 1903. Note the surveying equipment box to Twichell's side and the solar compass mounted on tripod that stands over the surveying monument (a rock mound). A closer look reveals a stack of wolf hides on the ground and an antelope skull on the fencepost.



Examples of field books found in the Twichell Survey Records. Field books—the notebooks that surveyors make on the ground—are particularly valuable as they contain sketches, computations, and notes from which official field notes and maps are created.

SSA dues notices will soon be sent for the 2011 calendar year.

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