

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

IMMIGRATION SERVICE

DISTRICT No. 31

IN ANSWERING REFER TO

No.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR IN CHARGE

CALEXICO, CALIF.

Feb. 12, 1926.

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MAIL AND FILES

Commissioner General of Immigration,  
Washington, D. C.

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PORT OF CALEXICO

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PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS; PERSONNEL;

GENERAL COMMENT.

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The City of Calexico is located directly on the Mexican boundary, being separated from the City of Mexicali, Mexico, in the populous and business centers only by a high wire fence which runs parallel to a street on the Mexican side. In the business centers of the two cities there is a street leading from one side of the boundary to the other, the gateway being at the line on either side of which are stationed the officers representing the respective Governments. This fence extends for several miles east of the gateway and runs parallel to an irrigation ditch. On the west of the gateway the fence extends for only approximately a quarter of a mile and terminates at a canyon. Across the canyon, which is several hundred yards wide, there is nothing to mark the boundary line aside from stone markers.

Even the wire fence forms no impenetrable barrier, as at places excavations have been made under it, while at others the wire has either been cut or bent to an extent which permits of easy entry.

So far as the gateway is concerned, the passing through it back and forth is constant, a considerable proportion of the residents in Mexicali doing their shopping on this side, and naturally there is no way of determining their intentions as being otherwise when they declare upon being questioned that they are "coming to buy" which is their customary declaration.

All in all, it is well nigh impossible at this port and vicinity to prevent the entry by one means or another of

aliens who are desirous of gaining access to our country. Our only advantage over those who do effect unlawful entry lies in the comparatively few outlets from the Valley to other parts of the country, and it is here that the border patrol force becomes valuable. They, however, likewise labor under a handicap, inasmuch as the Mexicans once they have succeeded in gaining entry almost immediately engage in employment on the various ranches in this vicinity, thereafter moving about from ranch to ranch as employment offers and gradually by this means penetrate into the interior.

Several months ago the border patrol force in this district, the headquarters of which is in El Centro, about twelve miles from Calexico, began making raids upon these ranches and picking up aliens who were found to be unlawfully in the country. This method of attempted enforcement, however, was not altogether effective nor satisfactory. In the first place the aliens soon learned that the only punishment, if such it could be termed, which awaited them if they were thus located was merely an automobile ride to the boundary and a so called voluntary return to Mexico. Naturally this was not much of a deterrent to a second, third, fourth, and indefinite number of subsequent unlawful entries, and our patrol officers not infrequently returned the same aliens day after day. The allotment for this district was practically exhausted, as a consequence of which the deportation of these aliens under warrant proceedings was more or less impractical because of the expense involved, and it is questionable whether the effectiveness of any such course would justify the expense attendant upon it. Another thing which operated against the plan is the fact that the majority of the patrol officers are not conversant with the Spanish language, nor have they had sufficient experience in immigration work to enable them to determine always whether they were within their rights in accomplishing the return of aliens to Mexico. The complaint was made and no doubt justified that our patrol officers were picking up Mexicans who had resided in the United States for quite a number of years and were not subject to deportation, as a consequence of which Mexican laborers in other parts feared to come to this section of the Imperial Valley. Another thing, strictly speaking it is more or less of a misnomer to say that these aliens voluntarily returned; they were actually given but little if any preference in the matter. We were also subject to the criticism that we were centering our raids upon this particular section of the Valley, and leaving the labor in other parts undisturbed.

Altogether the practice was neither satisfactory nor effective and it had gotten our Service into bad odium in these

parts. As long as it was permitted to continue we were getting nowhere in a constructive way, as the Mexicans had no opportunity to acquire sufficient funds to enable them to meet the fiscal requirements of the law, and they were practically driven to a circumvention of it in order to eke out an existence. It was with this thought in mind and with the hope that something along the line of constructive measures might be substituted for the former existing practice that the plan which has already been outlined and discussed at some length in previous reports was suggested to the parties in interest in these parts, which plan there is every reason to believe is on the way to successful fruition.

PERSONNEL.

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The force at this station just prior to Inspector in Charge Robbins assuming office consisted of the following:

FRED D. JACK.

Appointed inspector in charge on Aug. 1, 1925.

Prior to assuming charge here this officer had had no experience in the handling of border port work, and was greatly handicapped by his lack of knowledge concerning port procedure. Added to this handicap he was surrounded by a force equally inexperienced, for the most part, as indicated by their service records which follow.

THOS. M. GOURLEY

Entered service July 5, 1911; resigned Sept. 30, 1923; reinstated March 9, 1925. This officer while having been in the service for quite a number of years, has been engaged almost exclusively on line inspection, and while a good officer for that particular branch of the work, his experience in the handling of board of special inquiry work and other matters pertaining to office procedure is limited. Unfortunately, also, for the successful operation of affairs, he appears not to have been relied upon

as much as I believe he should have been by Inspector in Charge Jack in the way of an adviser, as after he had held the position of assistant inspector in charge for a time after Mr. Jack assumed charge, he was replaced by Inspector Dold, who quite recently graduated from the border patrol force, and had insufficient experience to equip him for that position, particularly without a thoroughly qualified man at the head of affairs.

EMIL M. DOLD	Appointed patrol inspector Aug. 6, 1924. Appointed Immigrant Inspector Oct. 27, 1924.
JOHN P. McNAMARA	Appointed guard at Angel Island about April 16, 1913. Appointed Inspector and assigned Rio Grande City May 21, 1924. Transferred Calexico Nov. 25, 1925.
SAM ROBERTS	Appointed Inspector April 25, 1924.
T. STANLEY CLYBURN	Appointed Inspector April 4, 1924, and assigned to Nogales, Arizona. Transferred Calexico Nov. 16, 1925.
MERRILL H. SCOTT	Appointed Patrol Inspector Sept. 4, 1924. Appointed Imm. Inspector Sept. 16, 1925.
AUSTIN SPURLOCK	Appointed patrol inspector without examination Sept. 11, 1924. Regularly appointed patrol inspector March 17, 1925. Appointed Imm. Inspector Dec. 19, 1925.
HOWARD B. BEAUMONT	Appointed inspector Nov. 17, 1925.
NATHAN A. PULSIFER	Appointed clerk October 1, 1925.
OLIVE CHAMPLIN	Transferred from Grand Forks to Calexico as clerk (S & T) November 5, 1925.

From the foregoing it will be observed that with the exception of Inspectors Jack and Gourley, all of the officers here are comparatively young in the service, several of them having been inspectors for only a few months. It is only natural, therefore,

that mistakes should have been made, and altogether the combination was an unhappy one. With one exception, however, I believe that the inspectors here will eventually develop into good material. They are on the whole possessed of the requisite natural ability; are eager to learn; courteous in their demeanor towards the public, and speak and understand Spanish to a degree which qualifies them for work at this port. Therefore it is recommended that no changes in the personnel be made, with the exception of the transfer elsewhere of Inspector Roberts, who has already been made the subject of two reports.

To replace Inspector Roberts, there should be assigned here an officer able to speak and understand the Spanish language, without which qualification he would be of very little value at this port.

To provide for days off for the force during vacation periods, which necessarily extend practically throughout the year, there should be assigned to this station an additional inspector, such officer, as in the case of the one to replace Inspector Roberts, being qualified in the Spanish language.

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#### OFFICE QUARTERS.

The office quarters at this port heretofore have consisted of four rooms, one occupied by the inspector in charge; a second by the clerical force, in which are stored the files and where board of special inquiry hearings are held; a third extremely cramped and partially filled with filing cabinets containing primary records, being occupied by the primary officers, and a fourth used as a waiting room. The rooms utilized as a waiting room and primary inspection room were altogether too small for those purposes, lack of proper and sufficient space having greatly handicapped the officers in the performance of their duties, to say nothing of the congestion which frequently occurs in the waiting room, particularly on days when border permit cards are being issued.

Observing this condition of affairs, the writer went to the owners of the building with a proposition to extend the structure to the end of the lot in the rear, thereby adding approximately twenty feet of space to the waiting room and

primary inspection room. It is gratifying to report that the owners consented to thus enlarging the building, and workmen are already engaged upon this undertaking. The building is located as near to the line as any which could be secured, and with the additional space there is very little left to be desired in the way of office quarters.

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INSPECTION OF ALIENS.

The greatest fault to be found with the examination of aliens at the line is that altogether too much reliance is placed upon identification cards. These cards are seldom scrutinized to an extent which enables the officers to determine whether they have expired, and in no instance have I observed the officers question aliens who have been issued the cards to ascertain whether, if they show the holders to be resident in Mexico, they have since moved to this side of the line. The writer, after one of the officers had glanced hurriedly at an identification card and passed the holder, stopped the alien and observing that the card showed him as a resident of Mexicali, questioned him concerning his present residence. It developed that he is now living in Calexico, although it developed that he had been lawfully admitted. It is evident that the card originally issued to the alien should have been taken up or his place of residence as indicated thereon appropriately amended when he was admitted for residence. I have refrained from attempting to inaugurate any changes in procedure as it was desired to make observations covering an extended period, but this and other matters pertaining to the handling of affairs at this station will be gone over at length with the officers prior to my departure, and appropriate suggestions made to them, as well as to Inspector in Charge Robbins.

The officers here, likewise, have been accustomed to simply turn back aliens who were applying for admission, some of them natives of countries other than Mexico, without referring them to boards of special inquiry. The excuse for this is lack of sufficient officers always to comprise boards, but I attribute it more to lack of knowledge on the part of the officers, including the former inspector in charge, concerning the proper manner of handling part of entry work, and particularly board of special inquiry proceedings. Such cases as have been before boards were in some instances improperly handled and at times the officers comprising boards indulged in more or less heated discussion in the presence of the ap-

plicant concerning the proper way of handling the case. This is something that will have to be corrected, and it has been suggested to Inspector in Charge Robbins that he devote attention to it.

So far as the public is concerned, there is no occasion, as near as I can determine, for any complaint on their part concerning the manner in which they are treated by our officers at the line regardless of their citizenship. If anything too great laxity prevails in the examination of persons crossing the border from Mexico, and gradually the inspection work here should be tightened up.

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#### IDENTIFICATION CARDS ISSUED TO CHINESE.

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Under a special dispensation of the Department, it has been customary at this port to issue identification cards to merchants engaged in business contiguous to the boundary on either side of the line who have occasion to go back and forth in connection with their business. I find that perhaps too great liberality prevailed under ~~the~~ former Inspector in Charge Neilsen in the issuance of these cards, it apparently having been left almost entirely to a local Chinaman who was employed on occasions as interpreter to decide who should and who should not be granted the privilege, and there is reason to suspect that this party and some of the officers were financially profiting from the practice. There is evidence of record that it was customary for the Chinese to pay the interpreter a fee which was practically demanded of them, and there is reason to suspect that Inspector Neilsen shared these fees, although there is perhaps insufficient proof of it to substantiate the charge. Statements have been taken from several Chinese who claim to have paid money in return for the border privilege, and these are now in the hands of the District Director at Los Angeles, and will be forwarded to the Department and Bureau for consideration. A suit of clothes was made for Inspector Thames without cost by a Chinese tailor in business at Mexicali in return for the issuance of a card to him, and other gratuities in the way of dinners, etc., are made mention of in the statements.

It was recently learned that a certain Chinese person to whom a card had been issued and who was presumed to be in business in Mexicali, was actually residing on this side of the

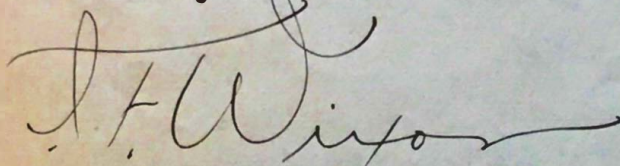
line. A check of his movements was made for quite an extended period, and finally the card issued to him was taken up and he has been denied the crossing privilege. Coincident with this action, the writer called in the representative Chinese business men on both sides of the boundary to whom the border crossing privilege has been extended, and they were notified that since the issuance of these cards to them is in the nature of a courtesy granted them by the Department, and by no means a right to which they are entitled, it behooved them to not only refrain from abusing the privilege themselves, but to see that it is not abused by others. Through their spokesman they expressed appreciation of the courtesy extended, and deplored the fact that anyone should have violated it. They were given to understand that in all probability not more than two cards would be issued to the members of any one concern, and that number only to the larger business establishments; that for the most part the privilege would be extended only to a single member of a concern. Their representatives later called and asked that no such limit be fixed, claiming that it is absolutely essential in some instances that several members of a concern be granted the crossing privilege inasmuch as several active members have exclusive charge of different branches of the business in the way of buying and selling, and that a denial of the crossing privilege to them would greatly handicap them in the handling of their business.

There apparently has been very little abuse of the privilege on the part of the Chinese persons to whom the privilege has been extended, and it has been suggested to Inspector in Charge Robbins that he give the individual cases careful consideration, and if he deems advisable to present the facts to the Department for decision. It should be taken into consideration that in some instances these cards are issued to citizens of the United States, and there is some question whether, if they are responsible, they should be restricted from crossing the line in pursuance of their business even though more than two of them are connected with the same concern. Personally I would be inclined to recommend that cases of this kind be regarded with the greatest liberality possible consistent with the policy of the Department.

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SUMMARY.

To summarize briefly; the existing situation at the time this report is being written, which is on the eve of my departure, gives rise to the belief that the conditions heretofore complained of are on a fair way to adjustment, and that, with tactful though firm administration of affairs, there will be a minimum of complaint voiced by those who have been foremost in their criticism.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. H. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chief Supervisor.