

Henry Grant Higley and his 1908 plan of Guadalajara

Tony Burton. 2025. Published at tonyburton.ca/guadalajara-history/

Henry Grant Higley (1851–1915) was born on 16 February 1851 in Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa, USA. He died, at the age of 64, in Tampico, Mexico, on 4 June 1915.¹

He was married twice. He married his first wife, Ella Maria Nye (1854–1932; born in Boston, Massachusetts), on 28 October 1875. The couple had seven children, all born in Cedar Rapids. The first three all died in infancy in 1878. The other four children all survived to adulthood: Henry Grant “Hal” Higley, Jr. (1880–1961), Laura N Higley (1884–?), Louis Karl Higley (1886–1955) and Ella Olga Higley (Gleason) (1890–1989).

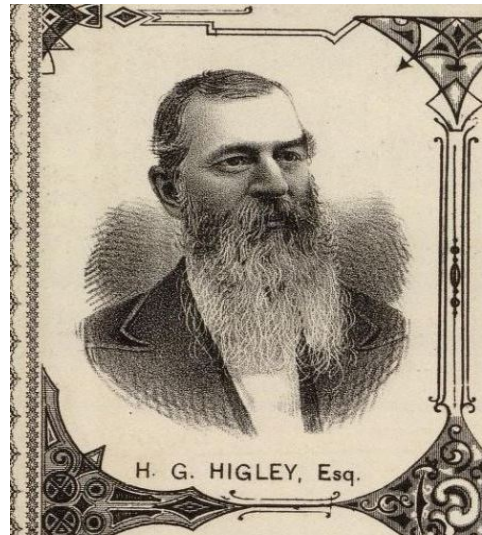


Fig 1. H. G. Higley, ca 1875.²

His second wife was Rosario Andrade (1883–1974). Andrade was born in Ambato, Ecuador, on 5 May 1883 and died in Los Angeles on 16 March 1974. Higley and Andrade presumably met in either Ecuador or Peru. They had one son, born in Lima, Peru, in 1903: Enrique Grant Higley (aka Henry Grant Higley).³

Higley (the cartographer) attended Yale University from 1870 to about 1872.⁴

He then established a floriculture business: “His business is that of florist, owning a fine business house, also extensive gardens, which are pleasantly situated on the bluffs commanding the southern suburbs of the city of Cedar

¹ Death date given is that recorded in Tamaulipas records and on the US Consulate registration of his death. His obituary in *The Gazette* (Cedar Rapids): 24 June 1886, 10, mistakenly says 4 May 1915.

² Portrait Source: Alfred Theodore Andreas. 1875. *Portraits of Citizens of Cedar Rapids*, Linn County, State of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co.

³ Details of son’s life: <https://tonyburton.ca/enrique-grant-higley/>. Higley (the cartographer) gave his eldest son by each wife virtually identical names. The Henry born in 1880 was often known as “Hal;” the Henry born in Peru, named Enrique on his birth certificate, was always known as Henry in later life.

⁴ *Yale Banner*, volume for 1870/1871, p 22.

Rapids. Both he and his wife gained considerable note for original and highly artistic designs in floral decorations.”⁵

Higley’s floriculture business was listed in the 1883 *Nurseryman's directory*.⁶ His 1886 catalogue, with 44 pages, offered an “especially fine selection of roses.... Mr Higley probably has the most extensive greenhouses in the state of Iowa and they are well worth a visit.”⁷ Higley moved to larger premises that year; his announcement of the move included a panoramic view of his new greenhouses, drawn in a style that he later used with such immense success in his city plans.⁸

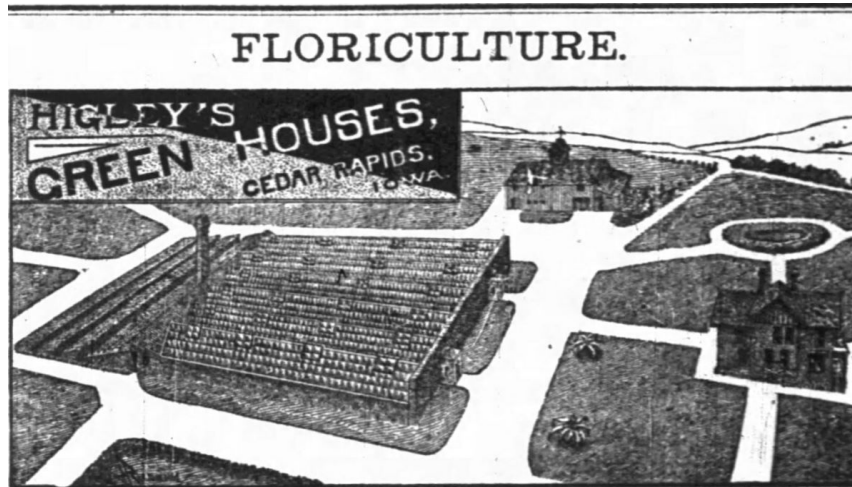


Fig 2. Illustration from *The Gazette* (Cedar Rapids): 24 April 1886, p 8.

In January 1889, Higley’s wife joined a group traveling to Mexico on a Raymond and Whitcomb Excursion by train. The group visited Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Queretaro and Mexico City and included California on their return journey north.⁹ Later that year her husband, who had not accompanied her to Mexico, was ‘raised’ (elevated) within his Masonic Lodge to become a Master Mason.¹⁰

It cannot have been very long afterwards that Higley left his family in Iowa and set out for a new life in central America.

In 1894, it was reported back in Cedar Rapids that Higley, who had been “the surveyor in chief of the Mosquito reservation... and later the only American at Bluefields to side with the government in maintaining its claim to sovereignty over the reservation... is now in the employ of Nicaragua as a

⁵ Mary Coffin Johnson. 1896. [The Higleys and Their Ancestry. An Old Colonial Family](https://archive.org/details/higleystheirance00johniala/higleystheirance00johniala/). New York: D. Appleton and Company.

⁶ Anon. *The Nurseryman's directory: a reference book of nurserymen, florists, seedsmen, tree dealers, etc., for the United States, 1883*. Galena, Illinois: D. W. Scott & Co.

⁷ *The Gazette* (Cedar Rapids): 27 March 1886, 4.

⁸ *The Gazette* (Cedar Rapids): 24 April 1886, 8.

⁹ *The Two Republics*: 31 January 1889.

¹⁰ Ernest Robert Moore. 1946. *History of Mount Hermon Lodge no. 263. Ancient Free & accepted masons Cedar Rapids, Iowa, under the jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1870-1945*.

military engineer."¹¹ The following year, after a brief hiatus, Higley was reappointed "to his former position as land commissioner for the district of Bluefields."¹² During his time in Nicaragua, Higley drew the first of his known published cartographic works.

From Nicaragua, Higley traveled through South America to Chile, and then returned to Mexico, producing a series of maps along the way.

Higley's cartographic works

In chronological order, Higley's cartographic works include:

1894 - Nicaragua. Map of the Mosquito Shore, Nicaragua. New York: G.W. and C.B. Colton & Co., 1894. Multicolor map with advertisements for local businesses to support investment in the Bluefields development.

1899 - Guayaquil, Ecuador. Described as a 'simple plan' by Capello.¹³ Commissioned by the Municipalidad de Guayaquil, the map was drawn by Higley and Slater. The lithographed edition by Herman Braeunlich in New York was dated 1900.¹⁴

1903 - Quito, Ecuador. A panoramic view, subsidized by local businessman Julio Esau Delgado. Similar maps had become popular in US, and this was probably designed with foreign travelers and investors in mind.

1903 - Lima, Peru. Although Higley was living in Lima, Peru, when his son was born in June 1903, there is no evidence that he drew a map of that city.

1904 - Santiago, Chile. The Biblioteca Nacional de Chile has digitized its copy of this map, and made a high resolution digitized file available online.¹⁵

1904 - Talca, Chile. Plan (isometric drawing) of Plaza La Victoria in Talca.¹⁶

1905 - Mexico City, Mexico. According to *The Mexican Herald*, Higley, "an architect" was making a bird's eye view of Mexico City with streets, buildings and parks in their exact relation to one another. The work was well advanced, and expected to be sent to the lithographer shortly. The paper reported that Higley had made similar pictures of "every city of any importance all the way from Cape Horn to this point." It noted that he had been unable to draw one in Panama because his paper had been so long in the tropics "it had turned a poetic brown, not very satisfactory for pen and ink work."¹⁷

¹¹ The Gazette (Cedar Rapids): 3 August 1894, 4.

¹² The Gazette (Cedar Rapids): 5 April 1895, 5.

¹³ Ernesto Capello. 2011. *City at the Center of the World: Space, History, and Modernity in Quito*. Univ. of Pittsburgh Press.

¹⁴ César Santana Moncayo. 2022. "Mapas, Croquis e Historia: El Desarrollo Urbano de Guayaquil, Ecuador en 326 Años (1547-1900)." *Revista Científica ECOCIENCIA*, Universidad Tecnológica ECOTEC, Samborondón, Ecuador, 295-312.

¹⁵ Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, Laboratorio Digital, 2016. Objeto digital: MP0003855. <https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/visor/BND:334726>

¹⁶ Used on Wikipedia at https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaza_La_Victoria

¹⁷ The Mexican Herald: 8 November 1905, 3.

1908 - Guadalajara, Mexico. Plan (isometric drawing) of Guadalajara, Mexico.



Fig 3. H Grant Higley. 1908. La Ciudad de Guadalajara. American Brokerage Co. de Guadalajara.
Credit: Mapoteca "Manuel Orozco y Berra". (<http://mapoteca.siap.gob.mx/>)

A contemporaneous newspaper piece called it, "A magnificent map of Guadalajara, in which not only is the accuracy of the work remarkable, but the projection of the plan also gives the complete effect of a photograph, in which the main buildings of the town stand out, making it extremely easy to understand its indications."¹⁸

The plan was produced by engineers H. Grant Higley and H. F. Cox. It was due to be displayed in one of the commercial establishments in the *portales* before being sent to Chicago, to be turned into a lithograph by the famous specialist publishing company Rand McNally. This newspaper report establishes a more precise time frame for this map than the wide range of dates (including 1900) in some blog posts, articles and theses.

Spanish-language analyses of Higley's cartography include these two relatively recent articles:

Lic. José Ángel Sánchez Duarte. 2023. "[Henry Grant Higley, el re-creador de ciudades latinoamericanas desde 1894 hasta 1908.](#)" Paper presented at Séptimo Coloquio de la Red Internacional Patrimonio Cultural y Ciencias Sociales, Zapopan: CUCSH, 22-24 de noviembre de 2023.

Edmundo Gutierrez González. 2017. "[Intervenciones al paisaje urbano histórico de Guadalajara para el desarrollo económico.](#)" Revista Gremium.

¹⁸ La Gaceta de Guadalajara: 11 October 1908, 11.

Death

By 1914, Higley was living in Tampico, Mexico. That year he applied for a US patent for a new method of applying enamel and kindred coatings to iron.¹⁹

Henry Grant Higley took his own life in Tampico, Mexico, on 4 June 1915.²⁰ His remains were interred by Masons in Tampico cemetery. The registration of his death with the American consulate claims that he had no personal effects. A short obituary in his hometown US newspaper described him as a civil engineer who had lived in Mexico for many years.²¹

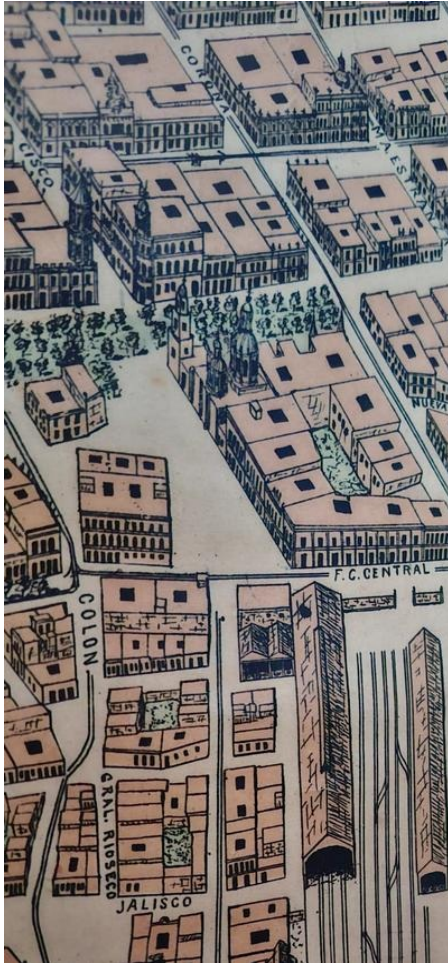


Fig 4. H Grant Higley. 1908.
La Ciudad de Guadalajara (detail)
American Brokerage Co. de Guadalajara.
Courtesy of Arq. Toño Aceves.

The American Brokerage Co. of Guadalajara, S.A., was engaged in real estate and mining transactions. With offices at calle San Francisco #470, its three principal shareholders were James E. Dooley, William L. and William F. Cox.²²

This section of Higley's plan, centered on the Mexican Central Railway station and the area known today as Los Dos Templos (The Two Churches) reveals the extraordinary level of detail shown on the plan.

¹⁹ US Patent US1178469A was filed by Henry Grant Higley on 31 March 1914 and granted on 4 April 1916.

²⁰ US Consulate in Tampico, Report dated 5 June 1915 of death of American abroad. (Ancestry.com)

²¹ Cedar Rapids Gazette: 24 June 1915, 10.

²² Araceli Ibarra Bellon. 1995. "La consolidación de las relaciones entre México y Estados Unidos en el Porfiriato; su impacto en Jalisco, 1876-1910" in Jesús Arroyo Alejandro and David E. Lorey (comp). 1995. Ajustes y desajustes regionales. El caso de Jalisco a fines del sexenio salinista. Guadalajara: U de G., p 32.