

NUMERIANO PADILLA, APPLICANT AND APPELLEE, VS. PABLO REYES AND THE DIRECTOR OF LANDS, OPPOSITORS AND APPELLANTS.

G. R. No. 37435. November 28, 1934

Ponente: ABAD SANTOS, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-37435/>

ABAD SANTOS, J.:

Appellee applied for the registration in his name of a parcel of land containing a little over 161 hectares located in Bongabong, Nueva Ecija. The application was opposed by the Director of Lands and by nine homesteaders, on the ground that the property sought to be registered was public land. One Pablo Reyes, who claimed to be the exclusive owner of the land, also filed an opposition. After due hearing, the court below dismissed all the oppositions and decreed the registration of the land in the name of the appellee. From this judgment all the parties who opposed the application appealed, although Pablo Reyes' appeal was dismissed for failure to file his brief on time.

In support of this appeal the following errors have been assigned: (1) That the lower court erred in holding that the appellee has established his title to the property sought to be registered, and (2) that the lower court erred in decreeing the registration of the property in the name of the appellee.

Appellee presented no valid and sufficient title deed showing his ownership of the land in question. He, however, tried to prove that he inherited the same from his ancestors, who had been in possession of the land for many years dating back to the Spanish regime; that he as well as his predecessors in interest had partly cultivated the land and partly used it as a pasture; that various improvements had been made on the land ever since the Spanish regime; and that upon the death of their father, Pablo Padilla, he and his sister Alejandra took possession of the land. On the other hand, the appellants introduced evidence tending to show that the land in question was never occupied by Pablo Padilla during the Spanish regime; that when the several homesteaders settled upon the land during 1912 to 1918, the same was unoccupied, unclaimed, and without any sign of previous cultivation or occupation; that the homesteaders were not molested in their possession of portions of the land in question until 1927, after they had cleared their holdings and put the same in cultivation.

In *Roman Catholic Bishop of Lipa vs. Municipality of Taal* (38 Phil., 367, 375, 376), this court said: "* * * In order, however, that the petitioner for registration of his land under the Torrens system shall be permitted to have the same registered and to have the benefit resulting from the certificate of title finally issued, the burden is upon him to show that he is the real and absolute owner, in fee simple, of the lands which he is attempting to have registered. The petitioner is not entitled to have his lands registered under the Torrens system simply because no one appears to oppose his title and to oppose the registration of his lands. In order that land may be registered under the Torrens system, the petitioner must show, even though there is no opposition, that he is the absolute owner, in fee simple, of the same. * * *"

On the other hand, it is well-settled that no public land can be acquired by private persons without any grant,

express or implied, from the government. A grant is conclusively presumed by law when the claimant, by himself or through his predecessors in interest, has occupied the land openly, continuously, exclusively, and under a claim of title since July 26, 1894, or prior thereto. (*Ongsiaco vs. Magsilang*, 50 Phil., 380.) In the case before us, appellee has failed to prove any express grant from the government; neither has he succeeded in proving possession from which a constructive grant can be predicated.

It results that the judgment appealed from must be reversed, and it is hereby decreed and adjudged that the property sought to be registered in this case is public land. Without any special pronouncement as to costs in this instance. So ordered.

Street, Butte, Goddard, and Diaz, JJ., concur.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.