FORM NO. 10-300 (REV. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME
HISTORIC Palo Alto Battlefield
AND/OR COMMON
Palo Alto Battlefield

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER Junction of Farm Roads 1847 and 511, 6.3 miles north of Brownsville
CITY, TOWN Brownsville
STATE Texas
VICINITY OF X
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 15th
COUNTY Cameron
CODE 061

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
DISTRICT
BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE
SITE
OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
IN PROCESS
BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS
OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES: RESTRICTED
YES: UNRESTRICTED
NO

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
EDUCATIONAL
ENTERTAINMENT
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
MILITARY
MUSEUM
PARK
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
RELIGIOUS
SCIENTIFIC
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME Multiple private
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN Brownsville
STATE Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cameron County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER 1150 East Madison Street
CITY, TOWN Brownsville
STATE Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE
The land of the Palo Alto Battlefield remains materially unchanged since the battle. Most of the chaparral is gone but the area is now still open pastureland broken only by fences. In the southwest corner of the highway intersections stands a monument erected by the state of Texas Centennial Commission, together with a cannon placed by General James Parker's Commission in 1920-21.
The battle of Palo Alto was one of only two important battles of the Mexican War fought on American soil. On May 8, 1846, General Zachary Taylor and 2,300 United States troops engaged the Mexican army, 3,300 strong under General Manuel Arista at Palo Alto, a few miles north of present day Brownsville, Texas. It was the first sizable battle of the war. The Mexicans attacked and were repelled twice. They then retreated to Resaca de la Palma, closer to the Rio Grande. After additional losses the following day at Resaca de la Palma, the Mexicans crossed the Rio Grande, ending military action north of the river in Texas. This resulted in the successful invasion of Mexico, the demonstration of the superiority of American arms, and the heightening of American prestige at home and abroad.

HISTORY

Early in 1846, General Zachary Taylor received orders to take possession of the territory lying between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers. Accordingly, he started southward with a part of his force from Corpus Christi overland, sending his supplies and munitions by boat. After a difficult march across the vast territory, the army encamped on March 24, 1846, near Los Fresnos, ten miles north of the present Brownsville, remaining four days while supplies were brought from Point Isabel. On March 28 they reached the Rio Grande where they began construction of earthworks directly on the banks of the river. The post was first known as Fort Taylor but was renamed Fort Brown in honor of Major Jacob Brown who was fatally wounded on May 9 when the fort was besieged by Mexican troops from Matamoros.

Movement of the American army south from Corpus Christi had been the signal for the concentration of Mexican troops at Matamoros. General Arista was appointed Mexican Commander-in-Chief to supercede General Pedro Ampudia, with a total of 5,200 regulars and 26 pieces of artillery.

General Arista moved the concentration of the Mexican cavalry at Rancho Soliseno, 26 miles west of Matamoros with a view of cutting off Taylor's supplies. He crossed from Soliseno on April 24 and took a position on the Point Isabel road near Loma Alta, 9 miles north of Brownsville. Upon hearing of the move, Taylor, with his entire force except for some 50 men remaining at Fort Brown, left on May 11 for the coast, arriving at Point Isabel on May 5. Believing that Taylor was about to withdraw entirely, the Mexicans under Ampudia crossed from Longoreño on May 1 in pursuit of Taylor, leaving a
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
Ripley, R.S. (Brevet Major in the U.S. Army, First Lt. of the Second Regiment of Artillery, etc.) War with Mexico, New York, 1849.
Rivas, George L., The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848, 2 vol, New York, 1913, Vol II.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8176

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

STATE REFERENCES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME/TITLE Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey

DATE 5/12/75

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW.

TELEPHONE 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington D.C.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE Boundary Certified: 4/19/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE Boundary Certified: 4/19/76

Linda Rulon, Director, OAHP

DATE

 date

 date

 date

 date
force to besiege the Fort.

Taylor, having received news of the Mexican movement, departed from Point Isabel on May 7. On the following day the Americans and Mexicans confronted each other on the Battlefield of Palo Alto, an extensive prairie nine miles north of Brownsville, just west of Loma Alta, a rise of land about 28 feet above the surrounding plain.

The Mexicans opened the battle with their artillery but their fire which was only cannon, proved ineffective in the tall, almost shoulder high grass. Soon after the battle opened, Taylor brought his artillery, which included in addition to cannon, three or four twelve pound howitzers throwing shell, besides eighteen pounders that had a longer range, to within 700 yards of the Mexicans, making heavy inroads into their solid ranks of infantry.

Advancing under the smoke of their discharges, American artillery men were soon pouring an intensive fire of grape shot upon the Mexicans, breaking all attempts of General Arista to get his cavalry into action. The intensity and effectiveness of the American artillery and the rapidity with which the cannons were fired presented a surprise to the Mexicans who had about 3,000 troops on the field when the battle opened. These were later reinforced by an additional 2,000 men under General Ampudia, but every effort of their overwhelming forces to reach the American line was broken by the galling force of the American artillery.

At dusk, when the battle ceased, the Mexican troops still held the passage to Fort Brown, but dawn disclosed no sign of their forces. The American losses in the battle were nine killed and 44 wounded. Mexican losses were 102 killed and 127 wounded. The first major battle of the Mexican-American War had been fought, resulting in the repulsion of the attacking Mexicans and the beginning of their retreat toward the Río Grande.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


The revised boundary for the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Landmark is keyed to Map B.

BEGINNING at Bench Mark 19 located on the Paredes Line Road approximately 1300 feet north of Paredes Line Road intersection with FM 511; Thence southeast along a line parallel to and 1200 feet northeast of the centerline of FM 511 to an intersection point on Drainage District No. 1 side ditch; Thence along the centerline of side ditch, easterly to a point; Thence southeast along the centerline of the ditch and its crossing of the Old Port Isabel Road to the north boundary of the BND property in Share 28 of the Espiritu Santo Grant; Thence North 52 deg. 04 min. 45 sec. East 570.4 feet to a point; Thence South 37 deg. 55 min. 15 sec. East 150 feet; Thence South 88 deg. 0' 35" East 183.9 feet; Thence North 56 deg. 42 min. 30 sec. East 381.9 feet; Thence North 79 deg. 10 min. 50 sec. East 534.7 feet; Thence North 88 deg. 34 min. 55 sec. East 375.4 feet; Thence South 78 deg. 75 min. 40 sec. East 355.2 feet; Thence South 55 deg. 58 min. 35 sec. East 193.65 feet; Thence North 74 deg. 52 min. 20 sec. East 202.65 feet; Thence South 76 deg. 32 min. 40 sec. East 62.96 feet to a point on the common boundary line between Shares 28 and 29; Thence along the 10 ft. USGS contour to a point due south of the Loma Alta triangulation station; Thence North to the aforesaid Loma Alta triangulation station; Thence northwest to the intersection of the Share 28-29 line with main ditch #2; Thence west along main ditch #2 to its intersection with the Paredes Line Road at Bench Mark #13; Thence south along the Paredes Line Road to Bench Mark #19, the place and point of beginning.

George F. Emery  
Chief, Historic Sites  
Survey Division  

DATE
Palo Alto Battlefield

Traced from USGS Maps
Scale 1:24000
1 NAME
   HISTORIC    Palo Alto Battlefield
   AND/OR COMMON    Palo Alto Battlefield

2 LOCATION
   CITY. TOWN    Brownsville
   VICINITY OF
   COUNT V
   STATE

3 PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT    National Park Service
   DATE OF PHOTO    May 1973 verified
   NEGATIVE FILED AT    NPS, SWRO
   DATE OF PHOTO    February 1975

4 IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
   PHOTO NO
   Old Port Isabel Road looking toward Loma Alta. Mexican positions were left or
   North of road.
Palo Alto Battlefield

Brownsville, Cameron, Texas

National Park Service

May 1973 verified February, 1975

View of battlefield from Mexican position toward American position.
PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD, Texas. Chaparral has been cleared from these fields and fences erected where Taylor clashed with Mexican forces in the first major battle of the War with Mexico. National Park Service photograph, 1958.