

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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 LOCATIONSTREET & NUMBER Junction of Farm Roads 1847 and 511, 6.3 miles north of
Brownsville

CITY, TOWN

Brownsville

☒ VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
15th

STATE

Texas

CODE

48

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

VICINITY OF

STATE

Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
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

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
☐ 1600-1699	☐ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☒ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
☒ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1846

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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 supersede 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

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Grant, U.S., Personal Memoirs, 2 vol., New York, 1885, Vol I.
Henry, Capt. W.S., Campaign Sketches of The War With Mexico, New York 1847.
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.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8176

UTM REFERENCES

A 1 4 6 5 8 3 4 0 2 8 8 1 4 1 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 1 4 6 5 7 7 9 0 2 8 7 2 4 9 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 1 4 6 5 2 0 3 0 2 8 7 7 9 5 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D 1 4 6 5 2 2 5 0 2 8 8 1 2 2 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

11 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

Washington

STATE

D.C.

12 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

TITLE

Landmark

Designated: 12.19.60

date

DATE Boundary Certified: 4-19-76

Chief, Hist. &

date

Arch. Surveys

DATE Boundary Reaffirmed: 4/2/76

Noted Director, OAHPS date

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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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 Rio Grande.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Smith, Justin H. The War with Mexico, 2 vol., New York, 1919, Vol I.

Tillotson, M.R., "Report on Proposed Fort Brown, Texas, National Historic Park," 1947, NPS, HSS property files.

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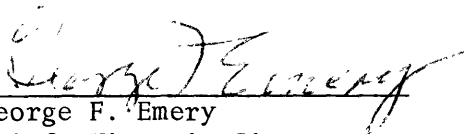
Palo Alto Battlefield

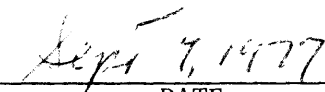
CONTINUATION SHEET

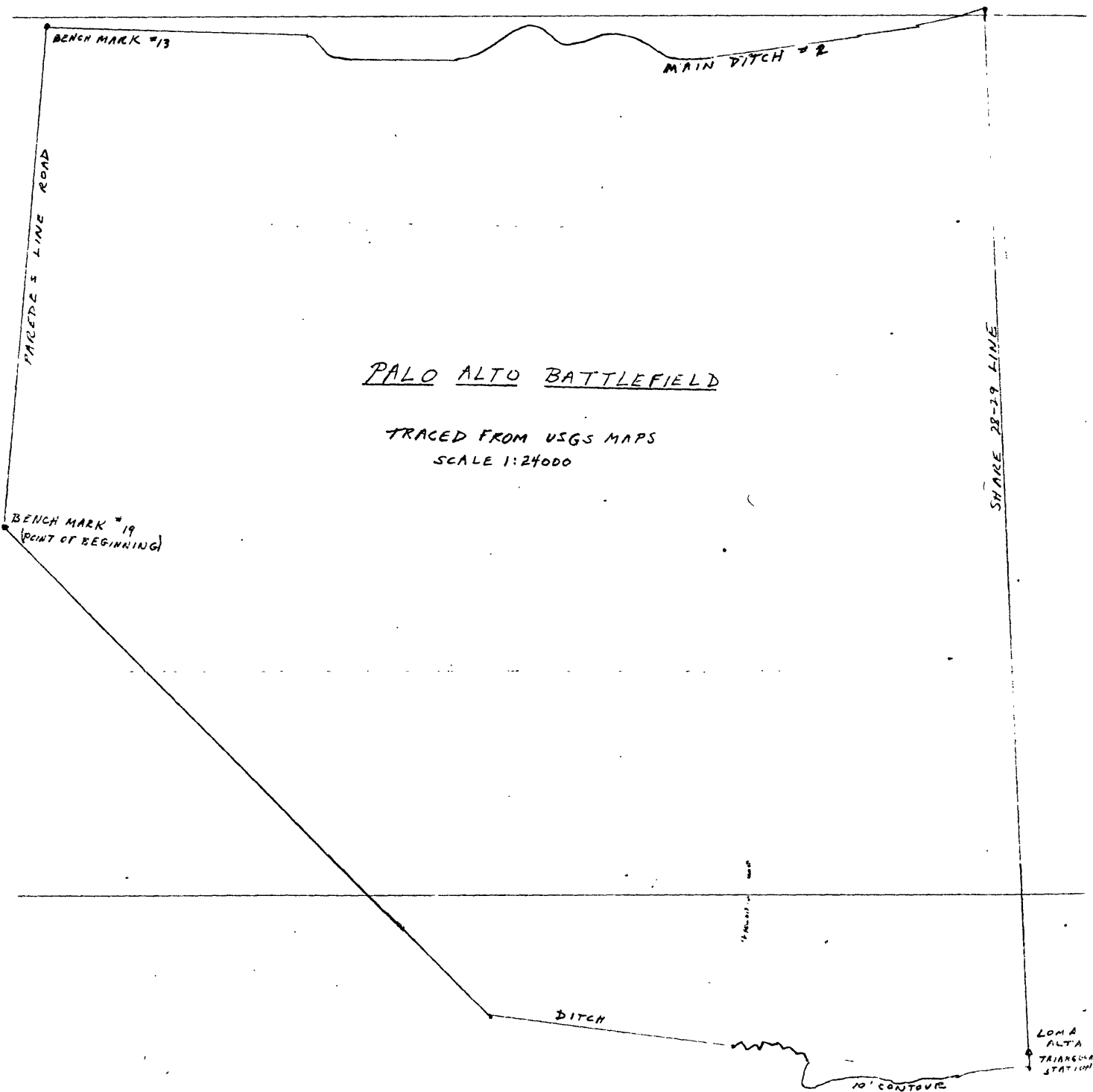
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The revised boundary for the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Landmark is keyed to Map B.

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





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2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Brownsville

X VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Cameron

STATE

Texas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT National Park Service

DATE OF PHOTO May 1973 verified
February 1975

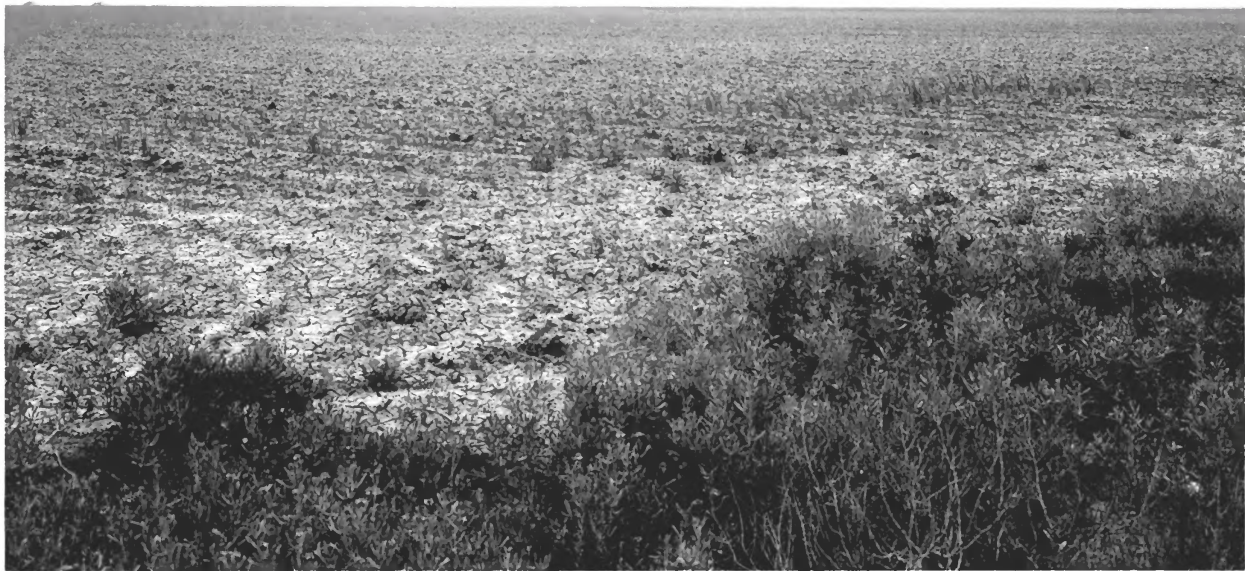
NEGATIVE FILED AT NPS, SWRO

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.



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PHOTO NO

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.



RESACA DE LA PALMA BATTLEFIELD, Texas. Citrus orchards partially cover the field where Taylor drove the Mexican Army from a resaca and across the Rio Grande. National Park Service photograph, 1958.