

266

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Palmito Ranch Battlefield

other names/site number Palmito (or Palmetto) Hill Battlefield, 41CF93

2. Location

street & number South of Highway 4 (Boca Chica Highway) n/a not for publication

city or town Brownsville vicinity

state Texas code TX county Cameron code 061 zip code 78520

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Curtis Runnell 22 Feb. 1993
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 6/17/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper
Autawiceta Hue

Date of Action
6/23/93

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	11	buildings
2	6	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	17	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Defense: Battle site

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Agricultural/subsistence: Agricultural field

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets 7-1 through 7-3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Description:

Palmito Ranch Battlefield lies on a windswept plain at the southmost tip of Texas, midway between Brazos Island and Brownsville, on sparse land characterized by marsh and chaparral with a few scattered hillocks (See Photographs 1 through 5). The name of the area comes from the Palmetto trees that dot the landscape wherever the terrain rises a few feet above sea level. Mid 19th century artifacts can be found at the remains of early ranches and railroad camps. The south boundary of the battlefield follows the current course of the Rio Grande River, while the Highway 4 (Boca Chica Highway) marks the north boundary. The west boundary roughly follows a line extending southward from Loma del Muerto to the Rio Grande, and the east boundary roughly follows a line extending southward from the westmost tip of Verdolaga Lake to a point on the Rio Grande midway between Tarpon Bend and Stell-Lind Banco No. 128. (See the accompanying map for a thorough depiction of the battlefield area.) The area is subject to frequent hurricanes and squalls. Only a few permanent buildings are at the periphery of the battlefield, primarily in the vicinity of Palmito Hill. Since this portion of south Texas has not been subjected to much development, the battlefield remains relatively unchanged, and thus retains its integrity to a high degree.

Of the major geographic locations associated with the Battle of Palmito Ranch — the battlefield, Fort Brown, Brazos Santiago, Matamoros, and Bagdad — only the battlefield itself remains relatively unaltered since the battle. Bagdad is now gone, and only the archeological features from Brazos Santiago depot remain, while Brownsville has grown to engulf Fort Brown and Matamoros has continued to grow. The lack of extensive development at the battlefield is due mainly to the unstable nature of both the topography and the climate. The battlefield lies on a somewhat barren plain, where the only vegetation consists of marsh plants and chaparral. The area's name is derived from the small Palmetto trees that appear wherever the landscape rises a few feet above sea level (see Photograph 1). The climate is harsh and unpredictable, with extremely wet, stormy winters and hot, humid summers. As well the soil is unsuitable for extensive farming, grazing, or building development, and thus the battlefield remains remarkably similar in character to the way it appeared at the time of the battle. The only significant difference is the course of the Rio Grande, which continued to alter its path during the almost 130 years since the time of the battle.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

The battlefield lies approximately midway between Brazos Island, a Union Army base of operations during the Civil War, and Fort Brown at Brownsville, the Confederate's headquarters in South Texas (See Figure 1). As the Union troops marched towards Brownsville, they encountered Confederate outposts in the areas of White's Ranch and Palmito Ranch, and this initial resistance determined the placement of the battle. Later in the fighting, the Confederates launched their counterattack in the same vicinity, before driving the Union troops back towards Brazos Island. The most concentrated fighting took place in the area nominated as Palmito Ranch Battlefield.

Small hillocks, or lomas, currently dot the battlefield area, and were present at the time of the conflict. These small increases in elevation, none of which rise more than thirty feet above sea level, were important to both armies. The dense thickets that grew on the hillsides provided for surveillance and cover.

According to eyewitness accounts of the battle, a few ranch houses and auxiliary buildings were scattered throughout the area at the time of the fighting. Praxides Orive, for example, an ancestor of the family that still owns much of the battlefield land, recalled first hearing the sounds of battle from his family's ranch house and barnyard on Palmito Ranch. Later that afternoon, according to Orive, the Union troops burned the ranch house as they passed through the area. The exact location of the house remains unknown.

The only remaining historic properties in the battlefield area are ruins, including the concrete steps, brick piers, and concrete foundation of a dwelling, probably constructed around 1920, and the adjoining ruins of a small concrete outbuilding. Both are atop Palmito Hill on property the same Orive family owned. This is considered a Noncontributing site until comprehensive survey and research is complete.

Within Palmito Ranch battlefield (41CF93) are a number of Civil War era ranch sites, including Tulosa Ranch, Palmito Ranch, White's Ranch, and Cobb's Ranch. Based on a surface examination of the ranch sites by the Department of Antiquities Protection of the Texas Historical Commission, and information provided by Charles Morris (an avocational archeologist and metal detector user), preserved archeological deposits in each of these areas relate to the settlement of the Lower Rio Grande valley. The types of artifacts observed on the ranching sites include such items as English, American, and Mexican ceramics and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

**Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas**

bottles, nails, metal tools, and handmade bricks, along with evidence of structural remains at Tulosa Ranch. These ranch sites are considered Noncontributing because comprehensive survey and research remains incomplete.

The Civil War Union railroad camp is also preserved near Cobb's Ranch. Metal detecting has recovered nails, spikes, and other railroad equipment, along with military artifacts such as buttons, canteens, and tools. This site is considered Contributing as it pertains directly to the battle and has been documented in a survey report prepared by Espey, Huston and Associates for the Corps of Engineers.

Military artifacts from the 1864 and 1865 engagements at Palmito Ranch that local landowners and recent metal detecting activities found are within the boundaries of the battlefield. Artifacts include bullets and shot, cannonballs, and metal buttons from uniforms. The distribution of these types of artifacts across the battlefield remains unknown at present; however, based on reconnaissance survey by the aforementioned Texas Historical Commission archeologists, the profusion of these artifacts warrants that the entire area be considered a Contributing site.

Limited contemporary construction has taken place within the boundaries of Palmito Ranch Battlefield. Recent construction within the area include a trailer park (a Noncontributing site), a gasoline station (a Noncontributing building), and approximately ten single family dwellings (all Noncontributing buildings).

Due to the overall lack of development in the area, Palmito Ranch Battlefield retains its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. The land's virtually unchanged physical features still convey the battlefield's appearance during the Civil War.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

Period of Significance

1865

Significant Dates

1865

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Mexican/United States

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance See Continuation Sheets 8-4 through 8-26.
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See Continuation Sheets 9-27 and 9-28.

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Texas Historical Commission, Austin, TX

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Name of Property

Cameron County, Texas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 6,000 acres

UTM References See Continuation Sheet 10-29.
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheets 10-30 and 10-31.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Moore, Terri Myers, Matt Goebel

organization Hardy-Heck-Moore date March, 1992

street & number 2112 Rio Grande telephone 512/478-8014

city or town Austin state TX zip code 78705

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name See Continuation Sheet (Add. Documentation, page 37)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Statement of Significance:

Palmito Ranch Battlefield is nominated to the National Register at the national level of significance under Criteria A and D for its importance as the site of the last land engagement fought during the Civil War. Although actually occurring more than one month after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union leader General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, in April 1865, the Battle of Palmito Ranch represented the ongoing conflict between the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department and the Union Army. The battle, fought May 12 and 13, 1865, took place on a broad expanse of land halfway between Brownsville and Brazos Island (See Figure 1). This approximately five-mile stretch of land is Palmito Ranch Battlefield. Union Colonel Theodore H. Barrett, commander of the U.S. forces stationed at Brazos Santiago, instigated the battle on May 11, 1865, when he ordered an expedition of Union troops to cross onto the mainland and march in the direction of Fort Brown. These troops skirmished with increasing numbers of Confederates during the next two days, although the total number of Confederates was always well below the number of Union troops. Finally, on the afternoon of May 13, 1865, the Confederate Army, under the command of Colonel John S. (Rip) Ford, launched a spirited, two-pronged counterattack that eventually drove the Union troops back to Brazos Island. The center of the Confederacy's lucrative, secret cotton shipping operation, the Lower Rio Grande region was of great strategic importance to the Confederacy during the Civil War. Through Brownsville and the Rio Grande the Confederacy secretly exported its cotton to Mexico and, eventually, to European textile mills. Profits financed the Confederate government. Recognizing the significance of this cotton trade to the viability of the Confederacy, the Union made repeated attempts during the war to seize control of South Texas. The Battle of Palmito Ranch, which the Confederates won, was not only the Union's last, unsuccessful attempt to seize control of this region; it was also the last battle associated with the American Civil War — a most turbulent and divisive period in United States history.

The Civil War in Texas

Texas seceded from the United States on February 1, 1861, under the authority of an ordinance the newly created Secession Convention passed, and which a popular vote confirmed on February 23. In that vote, the majority of the citizens of the state expressed support for secession. Among the first six states to leave the Union, all of which were major cotton producers, Texas officially joined the Confederate States of America in early March 1861. Soon after the formal transition, Major General D.E. Twiggs, commander of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Union military forces in Texas, surrendered all Federal military supplies and posts in the state to Texas Ranger Ben McCullough, an agent for the state. The Confederacy held those Union troops not yet evacuated from the state and commandeered Union forts (Webb 1952:351).

Texas' decision to secede was essentially a declaration of war against the Union, and the state immediately began assembling troops for military action. A volunteer army was supplemented through a variety of state and Confederate legislative conscription acts issued from 1862 through 1864. The number of Texans involved in military service during the Civil War remains unclear, although one conservative estimate of the number of Texans in the Confederate Army is between 50,000 and 60,000. Of this total, approximately one-quarter served east of the Mississippi River, while the rest were stationed in Arkansas, Louisiana, and along the Texas coast and frontier. Not all eligible Texas men reported to the Confederacy for duty; a small fraction (approximately 2,000) were Union sympathizers, most of whom went north to join the Union Army (including the Second Texas Cavalry, who later fought in the Battle of Palmito Ranch). Other Unionists fled to the hills or the forest to avoid military service, while some joined the Confederate Army only to later become deserters (Webb 1952:351).

At the start of the Civil War, the Texas forces initiated several offensive maneuvers, principally in the New Mexico Territory just west of Texas. In 1862, for example, General H.H. Sibley led a force of Texas troops in the successful capture of Santa Fe and Albuquerque for the Confederacy. Most of these offensive engagements, however, were relatively minor events in the overall military campaigns of the Civil War.

A much more important aspect of Confederate military strategy in Texas was the defense of its borders and ports from Federal attack. In 1863, Union troops stormed Sabine Pass with a massive array of force including more than 5,000 men and four gunboats, but Confederate soldiers, under the command of Lieutenant Richard Dowling, repelled the invasion (Webb 1952:351). Most Union initiatives concentrated on Texas ports, since the ports were major sources of income for the Confederacy. For instance, the Union took Galveston in 1862. In November of 1863, an invasion force of more than 6,000 Federal troops, the largest yet to invade the state, descended on South Texas and was so successful in securing Brownsville and other points in the Rio Grande Valley that by January 1, 1864, the Union effectively controlled the entire Texas coast from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the Matagorda Peninsula.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

By 1864, however, the Confederates began rebuilding their strength in South Texas. Colonel John S. (Rip) Ford (1815-1897), who later played a decisive role in the Confederacy's defeat of Union troops at the Battle of Palmito Ranch, recaptured Brownsville on July 30, 1864. By the middle of August 1864, Union soldiers abandoned almost all posts in the Rio Grande area and along the Gulf Coast, presumably to concentrate their military strength in states to the east. In Texas, they remained only at Matagorda Peninsula, an island separating Matagorda Bay from the Gulf of Mexico, and at Brazos Santiago Depot, on the north tip of Brazos Island (See Figure 1). Following the Union withdrawals, the Confederacy controlled all of South Texas except for these two coastal bases. Except for minor, scattered skirmishes, the two armies essentially ceased fighting in Texas by that time, as it became increasingly apparent to both parties that further conflict in the state would do little to change the ultimate outcome of the Civil War.

Cotton Smuggling on the Rio Grande

Of all the Texas coastal regions threatened during the war, the Rio Grande Valley region was the most significant area of military conflict, due to its strategic location near both the Rio Grande — an international border — and the Gulf of Mexico. Access to ports was vitally important to the Confederacy during the Civil War, since the transatlantic shipment of cotton provided essential financing for their government and war effort. As one chronicler of the war notes, "To an economist the history of the Confederate States centers about the government's attempts to secure the material means with which to carry on the war. The wealth of the South consisted chiefly of land and slaves, and its industries were almost exclusively agricultural" (Schwab 1901:2). The South's "material means" to finance a war effort was cotton — the basis of its plantation economy.

At the start of the war, the Confederacy withheld cotton from European textile mills — the main importers of Confederate cotton — in hopes that this might drive European governments to pressure the Union into allowing the Confederacy independence. As the war dragged on, however, the leaders of the Confederacy realized that withholding cotton deprived their fledgling government of vital currency (Schuler 1960:11). Union intelligence recognized the importance of Texas ports to both the export of Confederate cotton and the import of medical and military supplies, and had established a blockade around most southern ports, effectively sealing off Texas "from the balance of the world" (Ford 1963:328). The Confederacy had to devise a way to circumvent this barrier if it wished to export cotton.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Confederate cotton farmers used different methods to slip through the blockade depending on their location. Farmers east of the Mississippi River relied on government for smuggling attempts. One historian notes:

Planters in deep southeastern states were cut away from markets by the blockade. These planters sold their cotton, for there was no other outlet, to Confederate government cotton agents, and were paid, because there was no other money, in a Confederate currency which constantly depreciated. To dispose of the cotton thus acquired, the Confederate government fitfully depended upon the limited and uncertain operations of maritime blockade runners (Lea 1957:190).

On the other hand, cotton farmers in Confederate states west of the Mississippi (the Trans-Mississippi Department) were not obligated to sell their cotton to their government, and could instead attempt to smuggle the crops themselves. Western planters quickly learned the strategic importance of the twin cities of Brownsville and Matamoros in the trading and shipment of Confederate cotton.

Brownsville's proximity to the border and the Gulf Coast was crucial to Confederate schemes to evade the Union's naval barriers. The city lay across the Rio Grande from Matamoros, and traders in the Mexican city were sympathetic to the Confederate cause, as well as to their own economic gain. A complex, clandestine trade agreement was thus informally established between Mexico and the Confederacy, whereby cotton from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri was transported across the Rio Grande to Matamoros, then shipped on wagon to Bagdad, Mexico, at the mouth of the Rio Grande. At that point, steamboats flying the Mexican flag carried the cotton to European ships moored beyond the reef in the Gulf. Prior to the war, the privately owned steamboats were registered in Brownsville. For the Confederate ruse to work, merchants changed the registry of their vessels, placing them under the neutral Mexican flag and under the command of Mexican friends. Federal forces knew of this trick, yet a challenge to the authority of one of the "Mexican" steamboats would risk a confrontation with Mexico and possibly another war (Schuler 1960:12). In addition to facilitating the export of cotton, the Confederate-Mexican trade agreement enabled the import of arms and other supplies necessary for the South to maintain an adequate defense and withstand the naval blockade.

From late 1863 to July 1864, the Union Army controlled Fort Brown in Brownsville, forcing Confederate smugglers to sidestep the city in their efforts to transport their cotton to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

the Gulf. Confederate wagons hauled numerous bales of cotton far upriver, to other locations on the border near Laredo and Eagle Pass. "Mexican" wagons (like the "Mexican" steamboats mentioned above, these wagons flew the Mexican flag, yet Confederates operated them) then transported the valuable cargo through the Mexican countryside to the mouth of the river. The extra miles were costly and time consuming, giving the Confederates additional incentive to retake Fort Brown.

Confederate Colonel John S. (Rip) Ford, who would later lead the Confederate counter attack at the Battle of Palmito Ranch, was instrumental in negotiating with the Mexican traders. According to Ford's memoirs, at the start of the war,

[I] visited the merchants of Matamoros, particularly those of foreign countries, and insisted upon steps being taken at once to open trade with Europe and the Confederate States through Matamoros. ...The consuls of Great Britain and Germany promised to aid in the matter, and they did. Cotton was hauled across Texas to Matamoros where it was traded for food-stuffs and war matériel. An immense trade opened up in a short while. Matamoros was soon crammed with strangers and filled with goods of every class (Ford 1963:329).

Indeed, Matamoros quickly became a thriving city filled not only with cotton speculators from both sides of the border, but also with "renegades and conscript dodgers" from both the Union and the Confederacy (Schuler 1960:11). Many of those who tried to cross the river to Mexico died in the attempt, but those who made it to Matamoros and Bagdad found themselves in cities rich with fortunes accumulated from the lucrative cotton trade. The wild, boom period was known as the "cotton times." According to one historian, "Minutes of [Cameron] County Commission meetings [from the period] are filled with granting of liquor dispensing licenses as well as charges of gaming and gambling" (Myers 1990:34). Bagdad's population exploded during the boom from practically zero to between 25,000 and 30,000, while its upriver neighbor, Matamoros, exceeded 40,000.

The flood of cotton through Matamoros was understandable, since the city became, during the Civil War years, "Mexico's most important doorway to North America" (Horgan 1954:837). Cotton brokers in the city paid high prices for the precious commodity during the war years. The following table shows prices paid in "hard money" (often gold, as opposed to the Confederate government's paper money) per pound of cotton delivered at Matamoros from the early years of the war through its conclusion in 1865 (Lea 1957:192):

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Date	Price Paid per Pd of Cotton
August 1862	16 cents
Late in 1862	25 cents
April 2, 1863	36 cents
The year 1863	20 to 74 cents
November 1863	30 and 90 cents
The year 1864	82 cents (only one price cited)
The year 1865	68 cents to as high as \$ 1.25

Unable to compete with the high prices paid in Matamoros, the Confederate government in October 1862 "prohibited the exportation of cotton by anyone other than authorized agents of the Confederate government" (Lea 1957:191). The order was essentially ignored, however, as western cotton planters continued to flock to the Rio Grande. The table, which shows increasing number of ships anchored off the Bagdad coast over the course of the Civil War, demonstrates the continuing market for cotton (Lea 1957:192).

Date	Number of Ships
September 1862	20
March 1863	60 to 70
March 1863	92
Late 1864/Early 1865	200 to 300

These tables demonstrate not only continued popularity of the Brownsville/Matamoros cotton trade (even in the face of the Confederate law banning such activity), but also large amounts of money Confederates stood to make as a result of the secret route.

Colonel Ford played an integral role not only in establishing the clandestine South Texas trade route, but also in cloaking it from the Union and protecting those who used it. He regarded his role as a military commander in the Rio Grande Valley as twofold: first, his troops were to defend the area against Union military attacks, and second, they were to oversee the delicate trade relationship he helped establish between Mexico and the Confederacy. As one of Ford's biographers noted, Ford saw his purpose "to be the

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 11Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

nourishment and protection of the Rio Grande trade and the cultivation of friendly relations with Mexican authority in preparation for unhindered pursuance of that trade during the war emergency" (Lea 1957:176). The presence of the Confederate troops in South Texas was thus as much for economic reasons as it was for military security.

Early in the war, Union leaders recognized that South Texas had become the "back door" of the Confederacy, and they moved to end the cotton smuggling as soon as they could. The Rio Grande area military initiatives, including the taking of Brownsville in late 1863, were all part of Union attempts to wrest control of the Rio Grande and its potential for cotton shipping from the Confederacy. The continued presence of Union troops at Brazos Santiago and at other points along the South Texas coast was a direct result of the economic importance of the area to the Confederacy, and accounted for the concentration of Confederate troops in the region. Palmito Ranch's strategic South Texas location — midway between Fort Brown and Brazos Santiago — is centered in this important trade zone, which explains why the area had already seen military combat during the Civil War, and why in May 1865 it again became the scene of intense fighting between the Union and the Confederacy.

The End of the Civil War

Although General Robert E. Lee officially surrendered his troops to Union General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, in Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, his announcement did not signal the absolute conclusion of the war, because each Confederate military department had to achieve its own separate peace. General Taylor, for example, in charge of Confederate forces in Mississippi and Alabama, did not surrender his troops to Union General Canby until May 4, 1865 (Schuler 1960:18). The Texas branch of the Confederacy was part of the Trans-Mississippi Department (Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory), that had not surrendered as of May 12, 1865, the date of the Battle of Palmito Ranch. Several prominent Texans, including General Magruder and Governor Pendleton Murrah, "vainly exhorted Texas soldiers to continue the struggle," despite Lee's surrender and the virtual dissolution of the Confederacy (Webb 1952:351).

Thus, by the middle of May 1865, despite the fact that most of the rest of the Confederate Army had surrendered, both armies still had troops on alert at their respective Texas posts. The Union troops (who would soon instigate the conflict at Palmito Ranch) remained at Brazos Santiago, while the Confederates, still retaining control over much of the Rio Grande Valley area, persevered at Fort Brown at Brownsville. Brigadier General

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Zachary Taylor established Fort Brown in 1846 during the Mexican War, directly across the Rio Grande from Matamoros. In the 1860s, under the control of the Confederacy, the fort served as an essential link in the cotton smuggling operations that Confederate troops oversaw.

Although both the Union and Confederacy maintained armed forces at Brazos Santiago and Fort Brown, respectively, during May 1865, the leaders of both armies realized that, at that late date, the Civil War was essentially over, and continued fighting in Texas would do little to change the final outcome of the War. In fact, until the Battle of Palmito Ranch began on May 11, both armies honored an informal truce agreement negotiated about two months earlier between Union General Lew Wallace and Confederate commanders General John E. Slaughter and Colonel Rip Ford.

Wallace, acting on orders from General Grant, came to Brazos Island in February 1865, to negotiate a peace agreement with the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederate Army. In addition, Grant hoped that Wallace might curtail "the international intrigue and trade at the Rio Grande" (Schuler 1960:17). Meeting in conference with Ford and Slaughter at Point Isabel on March 11, Wallace proposed a settlement of peace between the two sides. According to Ford's memoirs, Wallace "suggested that it was useless to fight on the Rio Grande, [and] that if the contending parties met and slaughtered each other it would have no effect on the final result of the contest" (Ford, quoted in Oates 1963:388). Ford and Slaughter, while in concert with Wallace, could not formally sign any truce since they lacked the authority to do so from the Confederate government. They did, however, leave the meeting with the intention of honoring the terms of the truce, and fully expected the Federals to do the same.

The next day — March 12, 1865 — General Wallace sent a letter to Slaughter and Ford specifically outlining the truce they had discussed earlier. The document, while acknowledging that neither party had the explicit authority of their respective governments to negotiate a settlement, nevertheless outlined specific propositions intended "to secure a speedy peace" between the Union and the Confederate's Trans-Mississippi Department (Wallace 1865:1281). In return for the Confederates' ceasing all military opposition to the Union, Wallace promised immunity. "The officers and soldiers at present actually composing the Confederate Army proper...shall have...a full release from and against actions, prosecutions, liabilities, and legal proceedings of every kind, so far as the Government of the United States is concerned: Provided...they shall first take an oath of

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 13Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

allegiance to same," Wallace wrote. Further, the agreement guaranteed safe passage to any Southerners who wished to leave the country rather than take such an oath (Wallace 1865:1281).

Until May 11, 1865, the Union and Confederate forces in South Texas honored the truce, actually a gentleman's agreement. That day, however, Colonel Theodore H. Barrett, commander of the Union forces stationed at Brazos Santiago, ordered his troops to advance towards the Confederate stronghold of Fort Brown. The Federals soon encountered a Confederate outpost, and fighting erupted. Outraged at the Union transgression, Colonel Ford ordered retaliation, and the Battle of Palmito Ranch began.

Prior to the Battle

Immediately prior to the battle, Union troops were stationed at Brazos Santiago, as they had been for much of the Civil War. Although the Union evacuated most of its troops from South Texas by 1864, they maintained bases on Brazos Island and Matagorda Peninsula for the duration of the war to support blockade ships along the Texas coast. Colonel Theodore H. Barrett of the 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry (U.S.C.I.), who himself had no combat experience prior to the engagement at Palmito Ranch, was one of the commanding officers stationed on the island, along with Brigadier-General E.B. Brown (Widener 1992:4). Lieutenant Colonel David Branson, also of the 62nd, assisted the commanders. The battle accounts of Barrett and Branson possibly provide the most accurate descriptions of the early stages of the battle, since they were recorded almost immediately after the conflict — earlier than other accounts which survive today. Branson's account, in the form of a report to the headquarters of the 62nd, is dated May 18, 1865, just a few days after the battle, while Barrett's report to the headquarters of the Third Brigade dates to August 10 of that year.

The Union force on Brazos Santiago consisted of both black and white soldiers, men from the 62nd U.S.C.I. and the Second Texas Cavalry (unmounted). The latter were pro-Union Texas residents who joined the Federal army at the start of the Civil War. Soon after the battle began, men from the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry (also known as the Morton Rifles), under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison, joined these troops. Altogether, the Union Army had more than 1,500 men in place at Brazos Santiago, although a somewhat smaller number actually participated in the Battle of Palmito Ranch (Schuler 1960:1).

Confederate forces at Fort Brown were under the command of Colonel John Salmon (Rip) Ford and General James E. Slaughter. Ford, mentioned earlier as instrumental in

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 14Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

establishing the clandestine cotton shipping route for the Confederates, was a South Carolina native who came to Texas in 1836. He served in the Texas Army for two years, and later, from 1847 to 1848, was a member of the Texas Rangers during the Mexican War. It was during this tour of duty that Ford earned the name "Rip." Responsible for the writing of condolence letters to the families of soldiers killed in action, Ford would end all his messages with the words, "May he rest in peace." After writing hundreds of such letters, Ford began to abbreviate this message "R.I.P." and soon afterwards he acquired the nickname. In 1849, Ford was made a captain in the Texas Rangers and patrolled the territory between the Nueces River and Rio Grande. He gained political as well as military experience as a Texas Ranger, serving as a delegate to the state's Secession Convention in 1861. That same year, he initiated the trade agreements between Mexico and the Confederacy that eventually led to the transport of Confederate cotton to European ships via Mexican-owned wagons and steamboats (Schuler 1960:7-9; Webb 1952:617).

Ford and his superior officer, General Slaughter, had an unusual working relationship according to several sources, including Ford's own memoirs. Although Slaughter was technically in charge of the soldiers, Ford actually commanded the troops, and it was he who the troops obeyed and respected (Schuler 1960:8). Slaughter seemed comfortable with Ford in command. An incident that occurred in 1864 illustrates the situation: while discussing a plan to attack the Union stronghold on Brazos Island, Slaughter concluded that the strategy was sound, and suggested that Ford lead the troops, with Slaughter himself accompanying them merely as an observer. Ford objected, believing that if the general were going to accompany his troops, he should command them, as well. Ford's wishes were carried out, although the mission was ultimately unsuccessful (Ford 1963:386). The episode illustrates Ford's active command over the troops, and Slaughter's more passive role. Indeed, it would be Ford who soon led the Confederate troops' effective counterattack in the Battle of Palmito Ranch.

Significantly, the number of Confederate troops based at Fort Brown had shrunk dramatically in the weeks immediately preceding the encounter at Palmito Ranch. On May 1, 1865, the Confederates had approximately 500 troops in the Rio Grande area, but two weeks later, by the time fighting began, they had only about 300 men. Reasons for the decline in Confederate strength are unclear, although Captain W.H.D. Carrington of Austin, a participant in the battle who detailed the conflict in his memoirs, suggested that a large number of Confederates deserted after hearing news of Lee's surrender one month earlier. His account, written in 1883, almost 20 years after the conflict, offered this explanation:

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 15Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

On the 1st of May, 1865, the Confederate troops on the Rio Grande numbered about five hundred men of all arms. A few days after that time, a passenger, on a steamer from Boca Del Rio [Boca Chica] to Brownsville, threw some copies of the *New Orleans Times* to some Confederates posted near the Palmetto ranch. These papers stated that Gen. Lee had surrendered. The news was soon known to all the troops, and caused them to desert, by the score, and to return home; so that on the morning of the 12th of May, 1865, there were not more than three hundred men at and below Brownsville (Carrington 1883:20, in Schuler 1960).

Other historians agree with Carrington's figure of 300, but suggest that the decrease in soldiers was due not only to deserters, but also to a large number of troops on furlough (due to the presumed truce, and imminent end to the hostilities). Too, some soldiers fled across the Rio Grande to Mexico to escape capture by a victorious Union Army. Regardless of the reasons, most sources agree that the Confederates had only about 300 men at Fort Brown on May 12, 1865, far fewer than the 1,500 Union troops stationed at Brazos Santiago. The Confederate forces appeared ill prepared for the coming battle in South Texas.

The Battle of Palmito Ranch: May 12 and 13, 1865

The following account of the battle is based principally upon the written accounts of four key participants: Colonel Barrett's and Lieutenant Colonel Branson's reports, mentioned above, provide the most detailed descriptions of the Union's initial advance towards Palmito Ranch. The memoirs of Colonel Ford and Captain Carrington of the Confederate Army provide detail on the Confederate army's counterattack and the last stages of the battle.

On the evening of May 11, 1865, Union Colonel Barrett ordered an expedition of 250 men of the 62nd U.S.C.I., along with 50 men of the Second Texas Cavalry (led by First Lieutenant Hancock and Second Lieutenant James), all under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Branson, from Brazos Santiago [A on accompanying map] onto the mainland. Originally ordered to land at Point Isabel, just northwest of Brazos Santiago across the Laguna Madre, an intense storm thwarted the expedition and forced the troops to return to camp. Later, at approximately 9:30 p.m., they made the crossing at Boca Chica — a narrow inlet at the south tip of Brazos Island (See Figure 1). Two six-mule teams hauled surplus ammunition and supplies for the soldiers. Upon reaching the mainland, the force marched all night, in the direction of Fort Brown.

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Early the next morning, at approximately 2:00 a.m., Branson's troops surrounded White's Ranch [B], a small settlement west of Palmito Ranch, in hopes of capturing a Confederate outpost. They discovered, instead, that the outpost had been deserted one or two days prior to their arrival. Hiding themselves in a thicket of tall weeds, the troops camped out for the rest of the night on the banks of the river, approximately 1.5 miles above White's Ranch (Branson 1865:268).

About 8:30 a.m., persons on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande spotted the Union camp and promptly brought the concealed soldiers to the attention of the Confederates. According to Branson, "At the same time soldiers of the Imperial Mexican Army were marching up that bank [on the Mexican side] of the river." The Imperial Mexican Army was sympathetic to the Confederate cause, and its presence no doubt caused concern among the Union soldiers. Branson continues, "I immediately started for Palmetto Ranch [C], skirmishing most of the way with the [Confederate's] cavalry, and drove them, at noon, from their camp, which had been occupied by about 190 men and horses, capturing 3 prisoners, 2 horses, and 4 beef cattle, and their ten days' rations, just issued" (Branson 1865:268). Union soldiers confiscated the supplies and materials they could carry; they burned the rest.

The Confederate forces with whom Branson's troops skirmished were members of Gidding's Regiment, under the command of Captain Robinson. Colonel Ford notes in his memoirs that, on the afternoon of May 12, he received a message from Robinson that "the Yankees had advanced, and he was engaged with them just below San Martin Ranch." Ford sent a message back to Robinson urging the captain to hold his ground, and that Ford would bring reinforcements as soon as possible (Oates 1963:389).

After the brief skirmishing at Palmito Ranch, Branson and his Union troops retreated to the hill nearby to rest and feed their animals. At approximately 3 p.m., however, the Confederates appeared with reinforcements. Branson considered the Federal's position on Palmito Hill to be "indefensible," so he led his troops back to White's Ranch for the night, "skirmishing some on the way" (Branson 1865:268). One member of the Union's Second Texas Cavalry was wounded in the retreat. At White's Ranch, Branson sent a message to Barrett requesting additional support.

At daybreak the next morning (May 13, 1865), Branson and his men were joined at White's Ranch [D] by 200 men of the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry (also known as the Morton Rifles), under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Morrison. Colonel Barrett also joined the troops, and assumed command of the enlarged Federal force.

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 17Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Barrett, in his report to Confederate headquarters, recalled his activities that morning:

I at once ordered an advance to be again made in the direction of Palmetto Ranch [E], which, upon the retirement of Lieutenant-Colonel Branson, had been reoccupied by the rebels. The enemy's cavalry were soon encountered. Driving them before us, we reached the ranch by 7 or 8 a.m., and again compelled the rebels to abandon it. Such stores as had escaped destruction the day previous were now destroyed, and the buildings which the enemy had turned into barracks were burned, in order that they might no longer furnish him convenient shelter. A detachment was here sent back to Brazos Santiago with our wounded and the prisoners and captures of the day previous. The remainder of the force was ordered to advance. Nearly the entire forenoon was spent in skirmishing. The enemy, though taking advantage of every favorable position, was everywhere easily driven back (Barrett 1865:266).

Meanwhile, Ford had difficulty organizing the main body of the Confederate troops for battle. "It would be saying the mere truth to assert that [my] orders found some of the detachments badly prepared to move" (Oates 1963:389), Ford later wrote in his memoirs. Carrington referred to the Confederate forces on the night of May 12 as "scattered and depleted," and the situation was little improved the next morning (Carrington 1883, quoted in Schuler 1960:21). Much of the disarray can be attributed to the reduced force and ambivalence in the face of imminent defeat (or of Lee's surrender). Regardless of the cause, Ford's troops were ill prepared for battle, and after receiving Robinson's request for assistance on the afternoon of the 12, Ford had to act quickly to assemble a defensive force. Ford noted that, "The artillery horses had to travel the most of the night of the 12th to reach Fort Brown. So had many of the men" (Oates 1963:289). The majority of Ford's troops would not be ready and in place for battle until late the following afternoon. Ford arrived on the parade grounds of Fort Brown on the morning of May 13, 1865, and waited for General Slaughter to lead the Confederates to battle. Slaughter did not appear, however, and around 10:00 a.m. Ford "placed himself at the head of the troops present and marched to a short distance below San Martin Ranch" (Oates:390).

Some Confederate troops had already assembled near Palmito Ranch, however, and it was these Confederate outposts with whom Barrett's force skirmished in the early afternoon on May 13. One particularly "sharp" engagement pushed these Confederates west of Tulosa Ranch [F], back towards Fort Brown. Barrett describes the incident:

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

In this engagement our forces charged the enemy, compelled him to abandon his cover, and, pursuing him, drove him across an open prairie beyond the rising ground completely out of sight. The enemy having been driven several miles since daylight, and our men needing rest, it was not deemed prudent to advance farther. Therefore, relinquishing the pursuit, we returned to a hill [at Tulosa Ranch] about a mile from Palmetto Ranch, where the Thirty-fourth Indiana had already taken its position (Barrett 1865:266).

Tulosa Ranch is southwest of Palmito Ranch and approximately twelve miles from Boca Chica. Once at Tulosa, Barrett and his men rejoined the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, who, as Barrett mentioned in the passage above, anticipated fighting and had already established a skirmish line. The Union soldiers made preparations for renewed fighting atop the hill.

By about 4:00 p.m., Colonel Ford and his troops concluded their long march from Fort Brown and had reached a point just below San Martin Ranch [G]. The Union Army at Tulosa Ranch was in sight, although not yet aware of the Confederates' presence. Ford issued directions for a two-pronged attack:

...Having made reconnaissance and determined to attack, [Ford] directed Captain Jones to place one section of his battery in the road under Lieutenant Smith, another under Lieutenant [William] Gregory on the left, supported by Lieutenant [Jesse] Vineyard's detachment. The other section was held in reserve. The guns were directed to move in advance of the line. Captain Robinson was placed in command of the main body of cavalry — Anderson's battalion under Captain D.W. Wilson on the right by consent, and Giddings' battalion on the left. Lieutenant Gregory had orders to move under cover of the hills and chaparral, to flank the enemy's right, and if possible to get an enfilading fire. Captain Gibson's and Cocke's companies were sent to the extreme left with orders to turn the enemy's right flank. Skirmishers were advanced (Oates 1963:390).

Once his men were in position, Ford ordered the attack [H].

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 19Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Thus, on the afternoon of May 13, 1865, Colonel Barrett and the Union troops resting at Tulosa Ranch abruptly found themselves facing a largely reinforced Confederate Army and a daunting array of firepower, advancing towards them not only in the front, but also on the right flank, in an attempt to gain their rear. Along with additional troops, the Confederates now possessed several cannons, (six, according to Barrett). The Union soldiers prepared for the imminent attack by forming an oblique skirmish line, extending from the Rio Grande on the Union's left all the way around the front of the Union forces and stretching back to cover their rear. The heaviest fighting of the battle commenced.

According to Barrett's account, the Confederates opened fire on the Federals simultaneously from the front and the side:

...The rebels, now largely re-enforced, again reappeared in our front, opening fire upon us with both artillery and small-arms. At the same time a heavy body of cavalry and a section of a battery, under cover of the thick chaparral on our right, had already succeeded in flanking us with the evident intention of gaining our rear. With the Rio Grande on our left, a superior force of the enemy in front, and his flanking force on our right, our situation was at this time extremely critical. Having no artillery to oppose the enemy's six 12-pounder field pieces, our position became untenable. We therefore fell back, fighting [I]. This movement, always difficult, was doubly so at this time, having to be performed under a heavy fire from both front and flank (Barrett 1865:266).

While the main body of the Union troops fell back, a small number of men (110, according to Branson) were deployed as skirmishers under the command of Captains Miller and Coffin and Lieutenants Foster and Mead. The effectiveness of this skirmishing force is uncertain. Branson recalls that, "They kept the enemy at a respectful distance at all times and did their duty in the best possible manner" (Branson 1865:268). Ford, however, writes that he "saw the enemy's skirmishers, which were well handled, left without support by the retreating main body, and he ordered an advance. Very soon Captain Robinson charged with impetuosity. As was expected the Yankee skirmishers were captured and the enemy troops were retreating at a run" (Oates 1963:391). Barrett confirmed the capture of some 48 Federal skirmishers (Barrett 1865:266). Regardless of how well the small number of skirmishers performed their duty to hold off the Confederates and give Union troops time to retreat and regroup, the Yankees had deployed simply too few of them to mount an effective challenge to the approaching Confederate troops.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

In addition to difficulties the skirmishers faced, the main body of Union troops rapidly broke into disarray, forced to retreat from an "untenable" defensive position at Tulosa. The 62nd U.S.C.I. had been ordered to cover the Union forces as they fell back [J], but, according to Captain Carrington, "Branson's negro regiment was quickly demoralized and fled in dismay." Carrington described the Federals' frantic retreat and frustrated attempts to escape the superior Confederate forces:

The Indiana troops [34th Volunteer Infantry] threw down their arms and surrendered; most of Hancock's company escaped; retreating through the dense chaparral. The entire force of the Federals commenced to retreat; Ford's fierce cavalry charges harassed them exceedingly. The artillery moved at a gallop. Three times, lines of skirmishers were thrown out to check the pursuit; these lines were roughly handled and many prisoners captured (1960:21).

Colonel Barrett, understandably, described the Federals' hasty retreat as occurring in a more orderly fashion: "...The entire regiment fell back with precision and in perfect order, under circumstances that would have tested the discipline of the best troops. Seizing upon every advantageous position, the enemy's fire was returned deliberately and with effect. The fighting continued three hours" (Barrett, 267). As the Union soldiers quickly retreated toward the west, one group of troops was cut off from any escape route by a bend in the Rio Grande. Some attempted to escape by dashing around the bend in the river on foot, while others attempted to cross the river. The Confederates captured or shot many of those who ran, yet most escaped. Carrington noted the unfortunate fate of some who braved the river crossing: "It is greatly to be regretted that several who attempted to swim the river to escape capture were drowned. Several swam across and were immediately slain and stripped by Mexican bandits, and thrown into the river" (Carrington 1883, quoted in Brown 1962:434).

The Confederates pursued the Union troops in a northeast direction for approximately seven or eight miles. Ford described their efforts:

Our guns pursued at the gallop; the shouting men pressed to the front. Occupying the hills adjacent to the road, Confederates fired in security from behind the crests. The enemy endeavored to hold various points, but were driven from them. The pursuit lasted for seven miles, the artillery horses were greatly fatigued (some of them had given out),

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 21Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

the cavalry horses were jaded. Ford was convinced the enemy would be reinforced at or near the White House [at White's Ranch]. For these reasons he ordered the officers to withdraw the men (Oates 1963:391).

The Union troops were driven back to Cobb's Ranch [K], approximately two miles from Boca Chica, where they could cross over to their base on Brazos Island. Ford then ordered his troops to halt. Carrington speculated as to why Ford discontinued the pursuit at this critical point, when the Confederates were so successfully driving the Federals back towards the Gulf Coast:

If Ford had more troops he would doubtless have placed himself between the enemy and Brazos Island, but with his small force of less than three hundred men, he said "the undertaking would be too hazardous." He thought the Federals would be reenforced from Brazos Island, as they knew from the sound of approaching artillery, and from couriers that Barret [sic] was defeated, and Ford's force would have been between two bodies of enemies, each numbering as many as five to one (Schuler 1960:21).

After withdrawing from the pursuit, the Confederates retreated a short distance. At this point, General Slaughter arrived. According to Ford, Slaughter assumed command and sent a messenger to Ford directing the colonel to "resume the pursuit." The Federals, at this point,

had commenced to double quick by the left flank across a slough through which a levee had been thrown up about three hundred yards long [L]. The slough was an impassable quagmire for any character of troops except upon the narrow levee. General Slaughter saw the movement and scarcely pausing for a moment, ordered the pursuit to be resumed; ordering Carrington to press the rear guard of the enemy. His idea was to strike the rear guard so as to cut it off before reaching the levee; but the rear guard was in a hurry. Although Carrington's troopers were comparatively fresh and spurred their horses up nearly to their best running capacity, the enemy gained the levee when they were about two hundred yards from the main body of the enemy who had formed a line of battle at the farther end of the levee among the sand hills. Carrington immediately formed the Confederate troopers into

line on the edge of the slough then covered with tide water. While doing this he saw General Slaughter dash forward into the water in front, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 22Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

emptied his six-shooter at the retreating foe. The Federal line formed on the other side of the slough was three hundred yards off from the Confederate troopers. A heavy skirmish fire was kept up for nearly an hour across the slough. The enemy though in full view shot too high. They were, as we thought, five or six times as numerous as the Confederates (Schuler 1960:22).

Ford himself refused to join the resumed pursuit of the Federals, protesting that the horses were tired and that the Union would be reinforced when they were within range of Brazos Island. In his memoirs, he described the above action as a minor coda to the overall Battle of Palmito Ranch. According to Ford, Slaughter merely sent skirmishers in the Union Army's direction, and the Federals responded sending out skirmishers of their own. Both sides then engaged in firing — for "perhaps ten minutes," according to Ford, rather than Carrington's "nearly an hour" — and then Slaughter withdrew his skirmishers.

Regardless of how long this fighting took place, it undoubtedly occurred at or immediately following sunset. Most members of the Union Army forged their way back to Boca Chica and then to Brazos Island. The Confederates also withdrew a short way, with Slaughter announcing his intention to camp nearby at Palmito for the night. Ford, however, insisting that the Union Army still might receive reinforcements and return during the night, moved his troops to a point about "eight miles higher up" (Oates:392), and encamped there.

That evening, as both armies retreated from the site of the final skirmishing, a shell from a ship stationed nearby, possibly the S.S. Isabella, exploded between the two armies. According to Carrington, the noise disturbed "a seventeen-year-old [Confederate] trooper, [who] blazed away in the direction of the exploded shell with his Enfield rifle, using a very profane expletive for so small a boy, causing a hearty laugh from a half score of his comrades. The firing ceased. The last gun had been fired" (Schuler 1960:22). Although details of this story vary, most accounts contend that this was the last shot of the Battle of Palmito Ranch and of the last land battle of the Civil War.

Aftermath of the Battle

Historians still debate the number of casualties for each side. First hand accounts report light casualties for both armies. Barrett reports 111 Federal casualties total, a number that includes both killed and wounded men, as well as those the Confederates captured. Rip Ford, in his handwritten memoirs, recalled that the Confederates sustained only seven wounds and no deaths during the conflict; all seven men were wounded, he reported, and not killed. However, Stephen B. Oates, the editor of Rip Ford's Texas — the edited, organized

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 23Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

version of Ford's manuscripts compiled in 1963 — believes that about 30 Federal troops died and 113 taken prisoner, from the total fighting force of 800. Oates theorized that the Confederates lost about the same number, although their total fighting force was considerably smaller (Oates 1963:392).

Many of the casualties of the conflict were not killed or wounded as a direct result of the fighting. Enemy fire killed or injured a numerous soldiers, mostly from the Federal Army, as they attempted to flee across the Rio Grande. Hostile troops of the Imperial Mexican Army confronted many men who successfully crossed the river. The Mexican Army reputedly killed or robbed the Union soldiers attempting to escape the conflict.

Not all those who crossed the river were Union soldiers escaping from battle, however. Confederate General James Slaughter and several men in his command, reportedly upon hearing of Lee's surrender, themselves crossed the river to Matamoros just prior to the arrival of Union reinforcements. Once in Mexico, Slaughter conveyed the remaining Confederate military supplies and artillery under his command to the Imperial Mexican Army (Myers 1990:42).

Although the Confederates had won a decisive victory in the Battle of Palmito Ranch, the battle did nothing to change the ultimate outcome of the War. General E. Kirby Smith surrendered the Texas troops of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederate Army on May 26, 1865, and the entire Department formally surrendered on June 2, 1865 (Schuler 1960:18).

A poor showing at Palmito Ranch embarrassed the Union Army, and commanding officers (perhaps Colonel Barrett) attempted to place some of the blame for the loss on the shoulders of Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Morrison. The Union Army conducted a court martial in July 1865, on charges of "disobedience of orders, neglect of duty, abandoning his colors," and displaying "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline," but acquitted Morrison in September of that year (Kent 1865:1).

Of the key places and geographic locations important in the battle, only the battlefield area itself remains relatively unchanged today, due primarily to the fact that the land remains undeveloped. The marshy soil and unpredictable weather conditions, subject to hurricanes and frequent storms, combine to create an unstable environment not suited to development. Soldiers departed from Fort Brown (National Historic Landmark), the Confederate headquarters in Texas at the time of the battle, for the last time in 1944; today, Texas

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 24

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Southmost College, also known as University of Texas at Brownsville, owns and occupies the remaining fort buildings. The Union post during the conflict, Brazos Santiago (National Register 1971), is today abandoned, although numerous artifacts and remnants of tent stakes, roads, and other remains are uncovered after heavy storms. A hurricane shortly after the war ended permanently destroyed the once bustling city of Bagdad, which saw its heyday during the Civil War years as a shipping point for Confederate cotton.

Theories as to why the Battle Occurred

As stated earlier, General Lew Wallace, along with General Slaughter and Colonel Ford, arranged a truce between the Texas forces of the Union and Confederate armies during March 1865. Since both parties apparently negotiated the truce in good faith, it remains unclear what prompted the Union Army to advance towards Fort Brown in May of that year, instigating the Battle of Palmito Ranch and clearly violating the truce agreement.

Civil War historians have advanced two theories to explain the Union's actions. The first of these theories involves Union Colonel Theodore Barrett, and seeks to understand his motives for launching the attack. Most accounts agree that Barrett instigated the conflict, ordering Union troops to advance onto the mainland and into direct conflict with the Confederates. Presumably, Barrett ordered the attack while Brigadier General Brown was absent from Brazos Santiago on other business. Barrett's motives remain undocumented, however. According to military records, Barrett himself, unlike Ford, Carrington, Branson, and the other key figures of the battle, had no prior military experience. The first theory set forth to explain the battle states that Barrett triggered the conflict out of a personal desire for combat experience. With the end of the Civil War rapidly approaching — indeed, the news of Lee's surrender may have already reached South Texas — Barrett perhaps felt that time was growing short for him to gain actual combat experience that might later prove invaluable if he hoped for advancement in the armed forces. Perhaps Barrett triggered the Battle of Palmito Ranch for personal reasons, hoping that a quick battle (which the Union should easily have won, owing to their great advantage in number of troops) would enhance his fledgling reputation as a soldier (Widener 1992:4).

The historian J. Schuler, in his booklet The Last Battle, presented a more plausible theory as to why the Union descended upon the Confederacy in South Texas. Schuler contends that the decision to attack came not from Barrett, but from his commanding officer, Brigadier General E.B. Brown.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 25

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

The bulging warehouses at Brownsville, with some two thousand bales of cotton earmarked for consignees in Matamoros, was the primary cause for the breaking of the truce on May 12, by the Federal troops at Brazos Island, then under the command of Brigadier General E.B. Brown.... Brown had been persuaded by the Yankee cotton speculators at Matamoros, anxious to unload their cotton before the Confederate collapse, that the cotton could be seized by the Federals and sold as contraband, and the rebels at Brownsville would offer no resistance to the capture of the city and the cotton stored there. The plan took no account of Rip Ford, the man of integrity; the man who believed in the pledged work of the Wallace truce (Schuler 1960:18).

According to Schuler, the Union either overestimated the faith the Confederates placed in the truce agreement, and would therefore not fight even when directly challenged, or else they underestimated the fighting strength of the troops defending Fort Brown that Rip Ford commanded. Regardless, the Union's inability to correctly predict the response of the Confederates to an attack ultimately led to the Union's defeat in the Battle of Palmito Ranch.

There was precedence for southern cotton to be used for strategic purposes in military conflict. In November of 1863, for example, immediately prior to the imminent Union occupation of Fort Brown, Confederate General Bee ordered the burning of more than 200 bales of unshipped cotton stored there, rather than let the precious commodity fall into Union hands. The resulting fire destroyed all of Fort Brown and much of the surrounding areas of Brownsville (Banks 1983:34). The incident suggests the importance of cotton in the series of South Texas Civil War battles fought as much for economic as for military reasons. The Confederacy's shipments of cotton through South Texas certainly influenced the location of the Battle of Palmito Ranch, and the immediate presence of stockpiles of cotton in Brownsville in May 1865 perhaps provided the direct trigger for the Union to launch an attack on the South Texas city, although the Civil War was essentially finished.

Significance of Palmito Ranch Battlefield

As the site of the last land engagement of the American Civil War, Palmito Ranch Battlefield holds significance at the national level. Although the most intense fighting of the Civil War occurred outside Texas, the state was the scene of numerous military conflicts during the War, most notably those involving Federal attempts to seize control of all or parts of the Gulf Coast and the Lower Rio Grande region. These Federal initiatives concentrated on blocking Texas ports, as the South relied on shipping to provide money for the

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 26**Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas**

Confederate government. Palmito Ranch Battlefield was the scene of the last Civil War battle to occur on American soil, ultimately fought over cotton from Texas and nearby southern states. Western farmers smuggled their cotton through South Texas, across the Rio Grande, and into Mexico, where sympathetic Mexicans transported the valuable commodity to the Gulf for eventual shipment to Europe. This complex, clandestine arrangement proved essential for the Confederacy's war effort, and brought hard currency (gold) to Confederates west of the Mississippi. The Confederates were determined to defend this lucrative trade, and they did so at Palmito Ranch. The battle was thus not only a matter of pride to Colonel Ford and the rest of the Confederate soldiers — it was a matter of economic security.

Fought more than one month after General Lee's surrender, the battle represented the ongoing conflict between the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department and the Union Army. The battle was not important in terms of the number of casualties or territory won or lost; indeed, the Battle of Palmito Ranch was a victory for the Confederates, although the Union won the war. However, Palmito Ranch Battlefield represents the final episode of one of the most disruptive, turbulent periods in United States history and thus qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criterion A.

Palmito Ranch Battlefield, and the Civil War era ranches and railroad camps within its boundaries, is also significant under Criterion D. The area contains archeological information that contributes to an understanding of the settlement of the Lower Rio Grande valley at the time of the Civil War. Artifacts present also attest to the economic conditions of the Palmito Ranch community during the mid to late 19th century. Study of the types of military-related artifacts preserved on Palmito Ranch Battlefield, and their spatial distribution, may provide direct data on the character of the engagement, the exact location of the various skirmishes, and the lines of Union and Confederate fire.

The battlefield has been used for ranching since 1865, as it was in the years prior to the battle. Major geographical and topographical features are intact. The integrity of the archeological resources, as well as the integrity of the entire battlefield, has thus been preserved. The landscape visible today is much the same as that the Union and Confederate soldiers experienced as they faced each other in battle.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 27

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 28

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Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 29

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

UTM References

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|----|-------------------|----|-------------------|
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| 23 | 14/673780/2871240 | | |

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 30

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Verbal boundary description:

Please refer to the accompanying USGS map for a precise depiction of the boundaries of Palmito Ranch Battlefield.

The battlefield is bordered on the north by the Boca Chica Highway and on the south by the current course of the Rio Grande River. On the east, the nominated area extends to a point immediately east of Tarpon Bend and immediately west of Stell-Lind Banco No. 128. The western border follows a line from the Loma del Muerto southward to the Rio Grande.

Beginning at a point on the United States bank of the Rio Grande immediately south of Loma del Muerto, proceed due north approximately one mile to the intersection of the Boca Chica Highway and Loma del Muerto. Then proceed east along the Boca Chica Highway, approximately 4.5 miles, to a point on the highway due south of the easternmost tip of Verdolaga Lake. Then proceed due south to the Rio Grande. Then proceed along the U.S. bank of the Rio Grande approximately 4.5 miles to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries for Palmito Ranch Battlefield encompass the large expanse of land where the most intense fighting of the conflict took place. Since the battle consisted of a series of moving skirmishes, the battlefield itself covers a large area approximately five miles long.

The southern boundary of Palmito Ranch Battlefield follows the current path of the Rio Grande River, since the river formed one border for all fighting. Also, the river is the international boundary line between the United States and Mexico.

The western boundary of the battlefield roughly follows a line extending from the Loma del Muerto southward to the Rio Grande. The line approximates the point at which the Confederate reinforcements, led by Colonel John S. (Rip) Ford, arrived at the scene of the battle on the afternoon of May 13, 1865. The boundary also approximates the position of "San Martin Ranch," referred to by officers of both armies in written accounts of the battle.

The Boca Chica Highway forms the northern boundary of the battlefield. Although some scattered fighting may have taken place north of this line, most of the conflict was concentrated much closer to the Rio Grande. The placement of the boundary at the highway

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 31

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

allows for the inclusion of a broad area north of the river, providing an accurate demarcation of the large area in which the running battle occurred.

The battlefield's eastern boundary roughly extends from the westernmost tip of Verdolaga Lake southward to a point on the Rio Grande just east of Tarpon Bend and just west of Stell-Lind Banco No. 128, as shown on the accompanying map. This line marks the approximate location of a small levee referred to in written, first hand accounts of the battle as the scene of the final skirmish, and the place where the Confederate Army ceased its pursuit of the Union troops on the evening of May 13, 1865.

JAN 18 1995

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-85)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

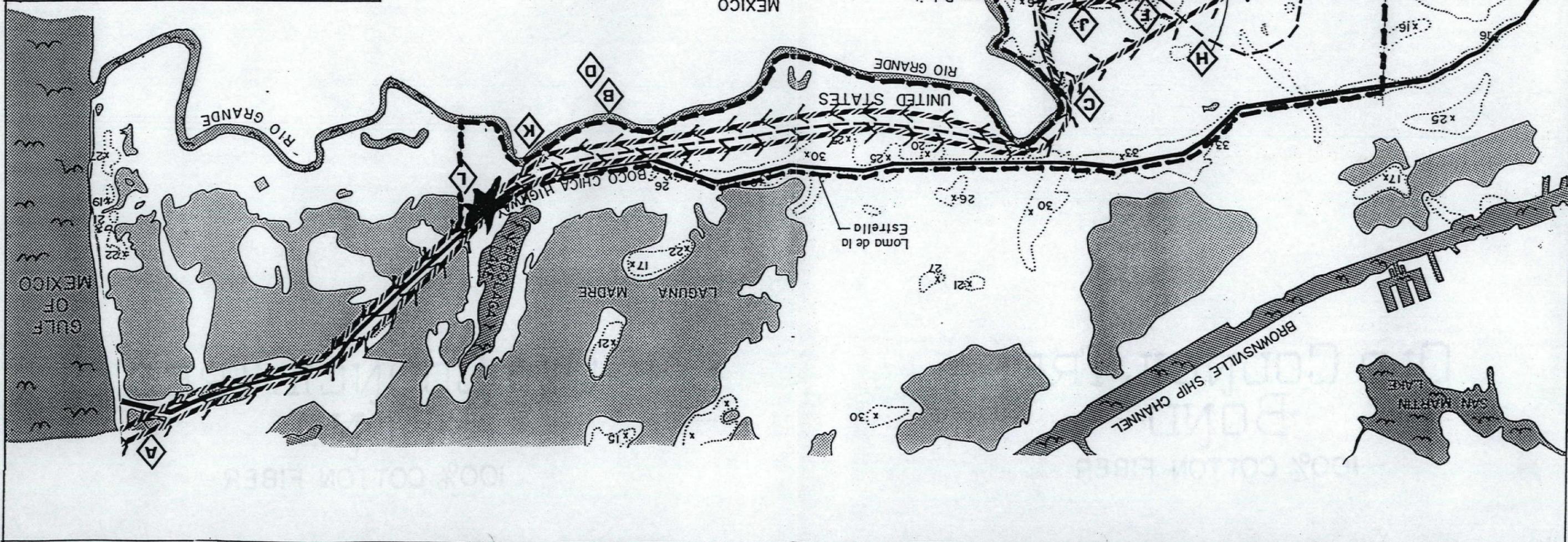
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number MAPS Page 34

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron Co., TX

SEE REVERSE



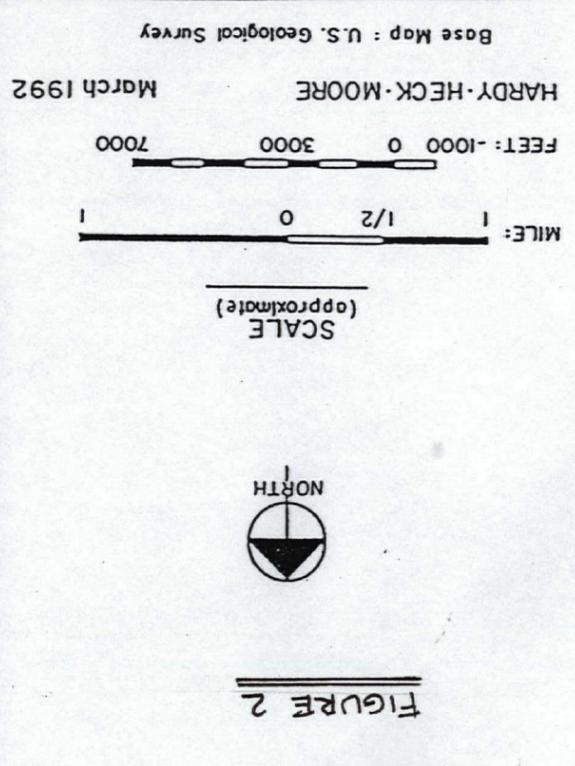
PALMITO RANCH BATTLEFIELD
CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

MAP KEY

GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES:
 Bodies of Water
 Land Areas below Sea Level (marshes, lagoons, etc.)
 Land Areas of 10' Elevation or more
 Highest Point of Lomas & Hills

HISTORIC FEATURES:
 Historic Site Boundary
 Site Numbers (see inventory)
 Confederate Troop Movements (approximate)
 Union Troop Movements (approximate)
 Sites of Skirmishes

MAP KEY



Key to Chronological Map Codes

A: Lt. Col. David Branson, leading 250 men of the 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry (U.S.C.I.) and fifty men of the 2nd Texas Cavalry (unmounted), leaves the Union camp on Brazos Santiago on the evening of May 11, 1865. The expedition heads towards Brownsville.

B: Branson crosses Boca Chica and arrives at White's Ranch at 2:00 p.m. on May 12. Branson had hoped to surprise a Confederate camp at White's Ranch, but discover the Confederates have already retreated.

C: The Federals push toward Palmito Ranch, engaging about 190 Confederate cavalrymen in light skirmishing. Branson pushes the Confederates beyond Palmito Ranch. The Confederates are then reinforced, and the Union troops fall back to White's Ranch for the night.

D: At daybreak, May 13, Col. Theodore Barrett of the 62nd U.S.C.I. joins Branson at White's Ranch. Barrett brings with him reinforcements — 200 men of the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, under Lt. Col. Robert G. Morrison.

E: Barrett advances to Palmito Ranch and beyond, pushing Confederate skirmishers west of Tulosa Ranch where there is some sharp skirmishing.

F: Union troops retire to small hillocks at Tulosa. The 34th Indiana forms skirmish line in preparation for battle.

G: Confederate reinforcements under Col. John S. (Rip) Ford advance from the direction of San Martin.

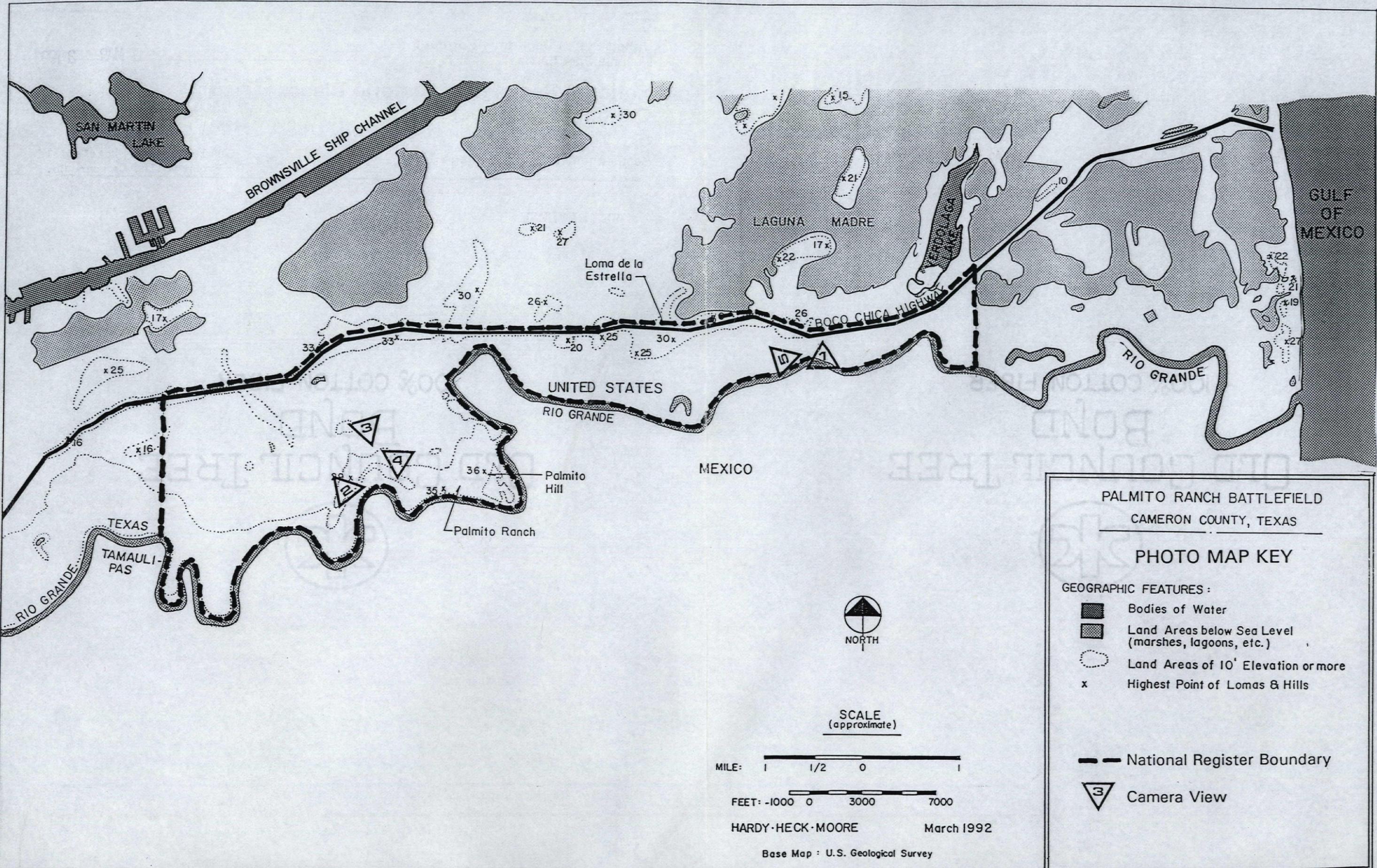
H: Ford sends artillery and support to his left with the intent of turning the Union right flank. Additional artillery is used to punnell the front of the Union line.

I: To prevent being outflanked on their right, Barrett retreats under the protection of his skirmish line. Forty-eight skirmishers of the 34th Indiana are captured, and many of the remaining 34th break and run through the three-quarter-mile skirmish line formed by the 62nd U.S.C.I.

J: The 62nd U.S.C.I. forms a three-quarter-mile skirmish line to prevent the Federal right flank from being turned.

K: Cobb's Ranch. Union Army pushed back to here, just prior to final skirmish.

L: Scene of the final skirmish: Under cover of the 62nd U.S.C.I., the Union retreats toward Boca Chica, where the Federals briefly hold off the Confederates. Night falls, and the Union troops retreat toward Brazos Santiago and the Confederates return to Brazos Santiago.



PALMITO RANCH BATTLEFIELD
CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO MAP KEY

- GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES :
-  Bodies of Water
 -  Land Areas below Sea Level (marshes, lagoons, etc.)
 -  Land Areas of 10' Elevation or more
 -  Highest Point of Lomas & Hills

 National Register Boundary

 Camera View



SCALE
(approximate)

MILE: 1 1/2 0 1

FEET: -1000 0 3000 7000

HARDY·HECK·MOORE March 1992

Base Map : U.S. Geological Survey

MAR 3 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number PHOTOS Page 35

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photograph Log

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
22 January 1992
Negative with Texas Historical Commission
Vicinity of White's Ranch, camera facing north
Photograph 1 of 5

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
22 January 1992
Negative with Texas Historical Commission
Union vantage point of main area of battle (May 13, 1865), camera facing northeast
Photograph 2 of 5

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
22 January 1992
Negative with Texas Historical Commission
Looking towards Tulosa Hill, camera facing southeast
Photograph 3 of 5

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by David Moore
22 January 1992
Negative with Texas Historical Commission
Military Road near Tulosa Ranch site, camera facing south
Photograph 4 of 5

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
22 January 1992
Negative with Texas Historical Commission
Vantage point of Union troops as they retreat, camera facing west
Photograph 5 of 5

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number PHOTOS Page 36

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron Co., TX

SEE REVERSE

100% COTTON FIBER

VOID

100% COTTON FIBER



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 3 1993

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number ~~ADD.~~ ~~Page~~ 37
~~DOCUMENTATION~~

Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Ownership information:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department
Larry Ditto, Coordinator
320 N. Main Street, Room A103
McAllen, TX 78501
512/630-4636

Bobby Lerma
1000 E. Van Buren
Brownsville, TX 78521

Praxides Orive
P.O. Box 191
Brownsville, TX 78520

Mrs. Frank Henggeler
24 Calle Retama
Apt. 102C
Brownsville, TX 78520

Daniel Orive
85 Laura Lane
Brownsville, TX 78521

Missing Core Documentation

Property Name	County, State	Reference Number
Palmito Ranch Battlefield	Cameron, Texas	93000266

The following Core Documentation is missing from this entry:

X Nomination Form, pages 32-33

X Photographs, located in NHL file

X USGS Maps, located in NHL file

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Palmito Ranch Battlefield

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Cameron

DATE RECEIVED: 3/03/93 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/16/93
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/01/93 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/17/93
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 93000266

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/7/93 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Because Fish + Wildlife is a substantial owner of this property, it should require some or send signed letter indicating concurrence.

See F+W FPO is: David L. Olsen
Federal Preservation Officer
U.S. Fish + Wildlife
1849 C Street, NW
Room 3246 MIB
Washington DC (202) 208-5333

Revised nomination should include any bldgs and structures in number of resources under classification (Section 5) - under contributing or non-contributing.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return
REVIEWER Autawell Lee
DISCIPLINE History
DATE 4/7/93

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

count resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

historic current

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification
materials
descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

summary paragraph
completeness
clarity
applicable criteria
justification of areas checked
relating significance to the resource
context
relationship of integrity to significance
justification of exception
other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage verbal boundary description
UTMs boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps USGS maps photographs presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

A. LEE Phone 202-343-9520

Signed Date 4/7/93

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Palmito Ranch Battlefield
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Cameron

DATE RECEIVED: 6/23/93

DATE OF PENDING LIST:

DATE OF 16TH DAY:

DATE OF 45TH DAY:

8/07/93

DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 93000266

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION: Y

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6/23/93 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Palmito Ranch Battlefield is significant for its role as the site as the last land engagement fought of the Civil War. It occurred one month after the surrender of Confederate forces and reflected an on-going conflict between the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department and the Union Army.

Ed Beaus has copy of this for NHL review.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept 1a
REVIEWER Antoinette Hesse
DISCIPLINE History
DATE 6/23/93

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- ___summary paragraph
- ___completeness
- ___clarity
- ___applicable criteria
- ___justification of areas checked
- ___relating significance to the resource
- ___context
- ___relationship of integrity to significance
- ___justification of exception
- ___other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

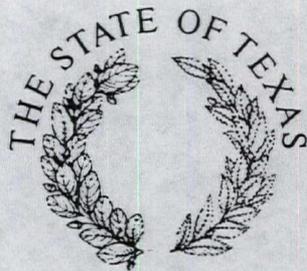
___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512)463-6100

September 22, 1992

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department
Larry Ditto, Coordinator
320 N. Main Street, Room A103
McAllen, TX 78501

Re: Palmito Ranch Battlefield
Vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Dear Mr. Ditto:

We are pleased to inform you that the above-mentioned property will be considered by the State Board of Review for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at their meeting on October 30, 1992 at 2:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church, at the corner of Convent and Estrella in Roma, Texas.

The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition, assists in preserving our nation's heritage and results in the following for historic properties:

1. Consideration in planning for federal, federally licensed, and federally assisted projects. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to have an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties listed in the National Register. For further information, please refer to 36 CFR 800.
2. Eligibility for federal tax provisions. If a property is listed in the National Register, certain federal tax provisions may apply. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 revises the historic preservation tax incentives authorized by Congress in the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the Revenue Act of 1978, the Tax Treatment Extension Act of 1980, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, Tax Reform Act of 1984, and, as of January 1, 1987, provides for a 20 percent investment tax credit with a full adjustment to basis for rehabilitating historic commercial, industrial, and rental residential buildings. The former 15 percent and 20 percent Investment Tax Credits (ITCs) for rehabilitations of older commercial buildings are combined into a single 10 percent ITC for commercial or industrial buildings built before 1936. The Tax Treatment Extension Act of 1980 provides federal tax deductions for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures. Whether these provisions are advantageous

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

to a property owner is dependent upon the particular circumstances of the property and the owner. Because tax aspects as outlined above are complex, individuals should consult legal counsel or the appropriate local Internal Revenue Service office for assistance in determining the tax consequences of the above provisions. For further information on certification requirements, please refer to 36 CFR 67.

3. Consideration in issuing a surface coal mining permit: In accordance with the Surface Mining and Control Act of 1977, there must be consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface coal mining permit where coal is located. For further information, please refer to 30 CFR 700 et seq.

4. Qualification for federal grants for historic preservation when funds are available. Presently, funding is unavailable.

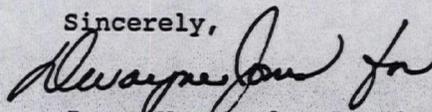
National Register listing does not:

1. require the owner to provide public access,
2. obligate the owner to maintain the property,
3. require notification of changes in ownership, or
4. impose restrictive covenants (unless grant assistance is received or tax credits are taken.)

Owners of private properties nominated to the National Register of Historic Places have an opportunity to concur in or object to listing in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 60. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to listing may submit to the State Historic Preservation Officer a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the listing. If a majority of the owners object to the listing, the property will not be listed. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of how many properties or what part of the property that party owns. If the property cannot be listed because a majority of owners object prior to the submission of a nomination by the State, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall submit the nomination to the Keeper of the National Register for a determination of eligibility of the property for listing in the National Register. If the property is then determined eligible for listing, although not formally listed, federal agencies will be required to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment before the agency may fund, license, or assist a project which will affect the property. If you choose to object to the listing of your property, the notarized objection must be submitted to Mr. Curtis Tunnell, State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX, 78711, by October 29, 1992.

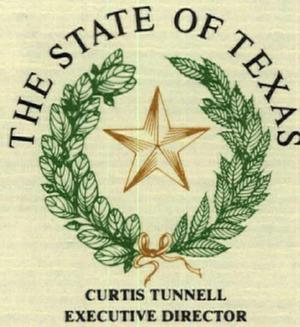
If you wish to comment on the nomination of the property to the National Register, please send your comments to the State Historic Preservation Officer before the State Board of Review considers this nomination on October 30, 1992. A copy of the nomination and information on the National Register and federal tax provisions are available upon request.

Sincerely,



James W. Steely, Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer

JWS/mc



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512)463-6100

20 April 1993

Mr. Dave Siegel
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
P.O. Box 1306
500 Gold Avenue, SW
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

RE: Palmito Ranch Battlefield National Register Nomination

Dear Mr. Siegel:

A National Register of Historic Places nomination for Palmito Ranch Battlefield was submitted to the Texas State Historic Preservation Office last summer and was approved by the State Board of Review last fall. We then submitted the nomination to the National Register Office of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., for final approval. Because your agency is a substantial owner of the land within the nominated area, the nomination was returned to our office to obtain the signature of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Federal Preservation Officer.

This morning I spoke with Kevin Kilcullen at the Virginia office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife about the nomination of Palmito Ranch Battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places. He requested that I forward the nomination, and our previous correspondence regarding the nomination, to you. He said he would telephone you this week. Mr. Kilcullen requested that you forward the contents of this package to his office following review and approval of the documentation.

We appreciate your expeditious review of this nomination.

Sincerely,

Amy E. Dase
Historian, National Register Programs

Enclosures

The State Agency for Historic Preservation



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

POST OFFICE BOX 1306
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87103



MAY 14 1993

In Reply Refer To:
R2/DPURP

Memorandum

To: Director, FWS, Washington D.C.
Attention: Dave Olsen, Federal Preservation Officer

From: Regional Director, Region 2 *John B. Tegen*

Subject: Palmito Ranch Battlefield National Register Nomination

The Texas Historical Commission has nominated the Palmito Ranch Battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places. A substantial portion of this battlefield falls within some recent additions to the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

We have reviewed the Palmito Ranch proposal and we are pleased to forward the nomination to you with our full concurrence. Our land acquisition program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley appears to be auspicious, for in the process of acquiring critical wildlife habitat, we have secured significant historic resources as well. The Palmito Ranch Battlefield is a major component of the rich, natural, and cultural values of the Lower Rio Grande Corridor.

We anticipate working closely with the State of Texas and other partners toward the management of the Palmito Ranch Battlefield. Indeed, in consultation with the Texas Historical Commission, we have already begun taking direct measures to protect this site. We trust that the National Register designation will ultimately prove beneficial to our efforts to apply maximal and appropriate resources toward the management of this nationally significant property.

Attachments

cc: (w/o attachments)
Refuge Manager, Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR
Nancy Kenmotsu, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas
Amy Dase, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

ADDRESS ONLY THE DIRECTOR,
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/RF

RECEIVED

JUN 17 1993

JUN 23 1993

NATIONAL
REGISTER

Memorandum

To: Director, National Park Service
Attention: Keeper of the National Register

From: Acting Assistant
Director

Subject: Nomination of the Palmito Ranch Battlefield to the
National Register of Historic Places

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to submit the attached nomination forms for the listing of the Palmito Ranch Battlefield in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Battle of Palmito Ranch was the last land engagement fought during the Civil War, occurring 1 month after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. A substantial portion of the Palmito Ranch Battlefield rests within the boundaries of the Service's Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Texas. The accompanying nomination forms were prepared for the Service by the Texas Historical Commission.

Questions on the nomination forms should be directed to Kevin Kilcullen, Service Archaeologist, at (703) 358-1786.

Attachments



CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2276

(TELEPHONE) 512-463-6100

(FAX) 512-463-6095

(RELAY TX) 1-800-735-2989 (TDD)

9 January 1995

Antoinette Lee
National Register of Historic Places
Interagency Resources Division
National Park Service, WASO
P.O. Box 37127, Stop 413
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

RE: Palmito Ranch Battlefield National Register Nomination, vicinity of Brownsville,
Cameron County, Texas

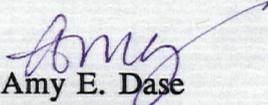
Dear Toni:

Happy New Year!

Enclosed is a revised map that should replace the existing map, on page 34, of the above-referenced nomination. The difference is minute; the key to chronological map codes on the former map only went to "K," this map goes through "L." Please exchange the new for the old at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Amy E. Dase
Historian
National Register Programs

enclosure

Data Collector Recommendation: SLR _____ Clarification/Return

Lower Action: _____ SLR Final _____ Return.
_____ None

DOCUMENTATION ISSUES--DISCUSSION SHEET

State Name TX County Name Cameron

Resource Name Palmito Ranch Battlefield

Reference No. 93000266

Multiple Name _____
Listed Date _____ pend.

Section of Nomination:
 Classification Bld. Count
 State/Agency Certification
 Function

Federal
Notification 1 References

Geographical Data
 Accompanying Documentation
 Other

See Page _____ Paragraph _____

should be

Solution:

sent to
FPO in
Wash. DC

not signed by
FPO for FWS -
notification
sent, only

NR Staff:

Data Collector's Explanation of Problem:

USGS Maps show buildings & structures
w/in NR boundary - none listed on form

Data Collector: Beall

Date: 3/19/93

Resolution in Data Base:

D.B. Corrected:

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY REPORT

REFERENCE No.: 93000266

Control No.: 930319/ehb

PROPERTY NAME: Palmito Ranch Battlefield

OTHER NAME/ Palmito (or Palmetto) Hill Battlefield;41CF93
SITE No.

MULTIPLE NAME: NOT APPLICABLE

ADDRESS/ Between TX 4 (Boca Chica Hwy.) and the Rio Grande, approxia
BOUNDARY : tely 12 mi. E of Brownsville

CITY: Brownsville

VICINITY

COUNTY: Cameron

STATE: TEXAS

Bestial and Location Information: Owner: PRIVATE Resource Type: SITE
FEDERAL

Contributing Noncontributing

Buildings	0	0
Sites	1	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	0	0

Nomination/Determination Type: SINGLE RESOURCE

Nominator: STATE GOVERNMENT

Nominator Name:
NOT APPLICABLE

Federal AGENCY: FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

NPS Park Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Certification: DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION

Date: 03/03/93

Other Certification: NOT APPLICABLE

Historic Functions: DEFENSE

Historic Subfunctions: BATTLE SITE

Current Function: AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE

Current Subfunctions: AGRICULTURAL FIELDS

Level of Significance: NATIONAL Applicable Criteria: EVENT
INFORMATION POTENTIAL

Significant Person's Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Criteria Considerations: NOT APPLICABLE

Area of Significance: MILITARY

Periods of Significance: 1850-1874

Circa: Specific Sig. Years:

Architect/Builder/Engineer/
Designer:

NOT APPLICABLE

Other Documentation:

NOT APPLICABLE

HABS No. N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

Mexican
American Military

Architectural Styles: NOT APPLICABLE

Describe Other Style: NOT APPLICABLE

Foundation Materials: INAPPLICABLE
Wall Materials: INAPPLICABLE
Roof Materials: INAPPLICABLE
Other Materials: NONE LISTED

Acreage: 6,000.0

UTM	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
Coordinates:	14/	/6 80 120/	/28 73 700	14/	/6 80 060/	/28 72 100
	14/	/6 69 480/	/28 72 180	14/	/6 66 700/	/28 71 180
	14/	/6 66 500/	/28 67 500	14/	/6 72 580/	/28 69 440
	14/	/6 71 920/	/28 72 080	14/	/6 75 600/	/28 70 940

Palmito Ranch Battlefield

(Resource Name)

93000266

(Reference Number[s])

06 / 13 / 2015

(Date form completed)

Cameron

(County)

TX

(State)

WACC

(Completed by)

STATUS:

1. MISSING ___ 2. REMOVED/ DEMOLISHED ___ 3. NHL 4. TR ___ 5. MRA ___ 6. OVER-SIZED ___ 7. NPS - UNDOCUMENTED ___ 8. DOE - OWNER OBJECTION ___ 9. RESTRICTED ___

EXPLANATION:

1. Missing Status: Entire Folder (); Nomination (); Map(s) (); Photos ()
Available on: Microfiche (); Optical Disk ()

2. _____
(Cause for removal)

____ / ____ / ____
(Date Removed)

3. _____
(NHL Name, if different than NRHP Name)

09 / 25 / 1997
(Date Designated)

4. _____
(If multi-state/county TR, state/county where filed and location)

(TR or MRA Name)

5. _____
(If multi-state/county MRA, state/county where filed and location)

6. _____
(Location of oversize file)

7. _____
(Current source of partial documentation)

____ / ____ / ____
(Target Date)

COMMENTS:

(Where found, or source of replacement)

____ / ____ / ____
(Date Found/Replaced)