

2004

Historical Landmarks of Brownsville Part 4

University of Texas at Brownsville

Texas Southmost College

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/hist_fac



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, "Historical Landmarks of Brownsville Part 4" (2004). *History Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 79.
https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/hist_fac/79

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

Historical Landmarks of Brownsville

- [46. Palmetto Pilings](#)
- [47. Palmito Ranch Battlefield](#)
- [48. Palo Alto Battlefield](#)
- [49. Port of Brownsville](#)
- [50. Post Hospital](#)
- [51. Post Hospital Annex](#)
- [52. Public Market and Town Hall](#)
- [53. Resaca de la Palma Battlefield](#)
- [54. Russell-Cocke House](#)
- [55. Sabas Cavazos Cemetery](#)
- [56. Sacred Heart Catholic Church](#)
- [57. San Roman Building](#)
- [58. Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot](#)
- [59. Stillman, Charles, House](#)
- [60. Thornton Skirmish](#)

[1-15](#) [16-30](#) [31-45](#) [61-65](#)

46. Palmetto Pilings

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Palmetto Pilings
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1936
<i>Designations:</i>	na
<i>Marker Location:</i>	From Brownsville, take Route 4 (Boca Chica Road) about 20.3 miles east to Boca Ricia Beach (on roadside).
<i>Marker Text:</i>	These Palmetto piling are the remains of the Boca Chica Crossing of the Railroad from Boca Chica inlet to White's Ranch on the Rio Grande. Begun by General Francis H. Herron, U.S.A., in 1864 and completed in 1865 by General Philip H. Sheridan for the transportation of military supplies. The Cypress piling 1,000 feet north are what remain of a floating bridge constructed across Boca Chica Inlet by General Zachary Taylor in 1846 as a part of the road from Brazos Santiago to the White Ranch Landing and Clarksville on the Rio Grande, for transportation of military supplies.

[Top](#)

47. Palmito Ranch Battlefield



Palmito Ranch Battlefield

<i>Resource Name:</i>	Palmito Ranch Battlefield
<i>Address:</i>	Between TX 4 (Boca Chica Hwy.) and the Rio Grande, approximately 12 mi. E of Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>Narrative:</i>	<p>Palmito Ranch Battlefield lies on a windswept plain at the southernmost 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 westernmost 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 reliably unchanged, and thus retains its integrity to a high degree.</p> <p>Of the major geographic locations associated with the battle of Palmito Ranch-the battlefield, Fort Brown, Brazos Santiago, Matamoros, and Baghdad-only the battlefield itself remains reliably unaltered since the battle. Baghdad 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 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 110 years since the time of the battle.</p> <p>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.</p>

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 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.

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 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.

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.

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 Baghdad, 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 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 foodstuffs and war materiel. 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 Baghdad 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). Baghdad'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):

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 Baghdad 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 nourishment and protection of the Rio Grande trade and the cultivation of friendly relations with Mexican authority in preparation for 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 5, 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 Zachary Taylor established Fort Brown in 1846 during the Mexican War, directly across the Rio Grande from Matamoros. In the 1860's, 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 Lee 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 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 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 500 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:

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 Brazas 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.

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 (Benson 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" (Benson 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 (Oases 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, H skirmishing some on the way" (Benson 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 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. 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 a very 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:

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].

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. 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" (Benson 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.

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 Tuloosa. The 62nd U.S.C.I. had been ordered to cover the Union forces as they fell back [J], but, according to Captain Carrington, "Benson's Negro regiment was quickly demoralized and fled in dismay." Carrington described the Federals' frantic retreat and frustrated attempts to escape 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), 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 Brazas 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 reinforced from Brazos Island, as they knew from the sound of approaching artillery, and from couriers that Barrett [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 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 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 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 Baghdad, 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 Lee 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.

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 Lee 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 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FILE IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Top](#)

48. Palo Alto Battlefield

<i>Resource Name:</i>	Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site
<i>Address:</i>	6.3 mi. N of Brownsville at jct. of FR 1847 and 511
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>Narrative:</i>	<p>The Palo Alto Battlefield has not changed materials since 1846. It is still a flat land now broken by a few pasture fences. It has a light duty road (Old Port Isabell Road), a couple of unimproved roads, drainage ditches and a buried pipe line. Most of the underbrush has been eradicated for pasturage.</p> <p>On May 8, 1846, the first major engagement of the Mexican War was fought at Palo Alto. Three thousand and three hundred Mexican soldiers under General Manuel Arista opposed the passage into Mexico of General Zachary Taylor and 2,300 United States troops. The Mexican Army attacked and were repelled twice; they then retreated to Resaca de Guerrero (Resaca de la Palma). Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma (fought the next day) were the largest and most important Mexican War battles fought on U.S. soil. Palo Alto was the first American victory in the war with Mexico. Combined with the Battle of Resaca de la Palma the next day, which was also a defeat for the Mexican Army, this resulted in the successful invasion of Mexico, demonstrated the superiority of American arms, heightening of the prestige of the United States at home and abroad, and finally the addition of vast amounts of territory to the United States.</p>
BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FILE IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

[Top](#)

49. Port of Brownsville

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Port of Brownsville
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1986
<i>Designations:</i>	na

<i>Marker Location:</i>	At Brownsville Navigation Dist., SE corner of FM 511 and SH 48 (on FM 511), Brownsville.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	The first serious attempt to study the possibility of construction of a deep water seaport in this part of South Texas was undertaken in 1854 when a survey was conducted by United States Army engineers. At that time, the only natural harbor in the area was located at Brazos de Santiago Pass near Point Isabel (16 mi. NE). Shipping through that pass dated to the 16th Century, but the presence of shifting sandbars prevented large vessels from anchoring at that point. In 1906 Louis Cabolini, a commercial fisherman in Point Isabel, took on the cause for a deep water port. He compiled data that convinced U.S. Army engineers that such an undertaking was practical and deserved federal economic support. During the next 20 years, various attempts at dredging channels and eliminating the sandbars were made without much success. Recognizing the need for deep water transportation to assure sound economic growth, the citizens of Brownsville created a navigation district in 1929 to provide local support for the Federal Government to build a deep water port. Between 1934 and 1936, this ship channel, linking Brownsville and the Gulf of Mexico, was dredged. The port facilities were formally dedicated in May 1936.

[Top](#)

50. Post Hospital

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Post Hospital
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1962
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Location:</i>	Admin. Bldg., campus of Texas Southmost College, 80 Fort Brown, Brownsville.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	In March 1868, Captain William Alonzo Wainwright arrived in Brownsville to supervise the rebuilding of Fort Brown following the Civil War and an 1867 hurricane. One of the first structures built under his direction was the Post Hospital, completed in 1869 and noted for its classical design and Palladian influences. First Lt. William C. Gorgas began studies that led to the discovery of the source of yellow fever while he was based here in 1883.

[Top](#)

51. Post Hospital Annex

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Post Hospital Annex
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1962
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Location:</i>	Admin. Bldg., Campos of Texas, Southmost College, 80 Fort Brown, Brownsville.

<i>Marker Text:</i>	Completed in 1869 during the rebuilding of Fort Brown by Captain William Alonzo Wainwright, the Post Hospital Annex (also known as the Medical Laboratory), was constructed to house personnel assigned to work in the nearby Post Hospital. A finely crafted, classically influenced building, it subsequently was used as a medical laboratory, for storage purposes, and as a dispensary.
---------------------	--

[Top](#)

52. Public Market and Town Hall

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Public Market and Town Hall
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1965
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Location:</i>	At Market Square and E. 11th Street, Brownsville.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	Authorized 1850. On land deeded forever for this purpose. Butchers, other vendors moved in during 1851. Building complete with top story and bell tower, 1852. Town hall over market used for Presbyterian church services. In high wind of 1867 lost its second floor. Restored 1868. Remodeled 1912, 1948. Original foundations and walls still survive in the modern market.

[Top](#)

53. Resaca de la Palma Battlefield

<i>Resource Name:</i>	Resaca de la Palma Battlefield
<i>Address:</i>	N edge of Brownsville on Parades Line Rd.
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1936
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>Narrative:</i>	Today the Resaca battlefield merely suggests conditions as they were in 1846. The bend of the Resaca, once dense with chaparral of mesquite and cactus has been cleared, and until recently was planted as a citrus orchard. This has been removed and is now an open field used for polo. The outlying areas are heavily developed residentially, losing completely any remaining historical integrity. At least the Resaca de la Palma, once filled in has been excavated and again contains water. The tall palms that suggested the name of the Resaca are still standing. A Texas Centennial Commission monument marks the site, but a cannon placed by General James Parker during 1920-21 has been removed about 1/2 mile north of the site. The intrusions are so great that no attempt at preservation is possible. The only remaining open space, although it no longer retains original landscape features is the major portion of the active battlefield and serves well in a commemorative function.

The battle of Resaca de la Palma was one of only two important battles of the Mexican War fought on what is now American soil. Following the Mexican retreat from the Battle of Palo Alto on May 8, General Zachery Taylor and his army followed them to the Resaca de la Palma, where fighting resumed. Deploying his infantry through the chaparral and sending his cavalry on a sudden charge down the road, Taylor captured enemy artillery and caused the foot soldiers to withdraw. With heavy losses in artillery and personnel, the Mexican army retreated across the Rio Grande. These events led to the successful invasion of Mexico, demonstrating the superiority of American arms which gained the United States new prestige at home and abroad. History

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

Movement of the American army south from Corpus Christi had been the signal for the concentration of Mexican troops at Matamoros. General Arista was appointed Mexican Commander-in-Chief to supersede General Pedro Ampudia, with a total of 5,200 regulars and 26 pieces of artillery. General Arista moved the concentration of the Mexican cavalry at Rancho Soliseno, 26 miles west of Matamoros with a view of cutting off Taylor's supplies. He crossed from Soliseno on April 24 and took a position on the Point Isabel road new Loma Alta, 9 miles north of Brownsville. Upon hearing of the move, Taylor, with his entire force except for some 50 men remaining at Fort Brown, left on May 1 for the coast, arriving at Point Isabel on May 5. Believing that Taylor was about to withdraw entirely, the Mexicans crossed from Longoreno on May 1 in pursuit of Taylor, leaving a force to besiege the fort. Taylor having received news of the Mexican movement, departed from Point Isabel on May 7. On the following day the Americans and Mexicans confronted each other on the Battlefield of Palo Alto.

After each army was unable to advance, the Mexicans retired southward during the early hours of May 9 and made a stand at Resaca Guerrero, since known as Resaca de la Palma. Here they planted three cannons and the greater part of their infantry on the north banks of the Resaca. Supporting these were four cannons on the south side of the Resaca, distributed on each side of the road from Point Isabel, with the remainder of the infantry planted on the bank on the Resaca.

The cavalry was distributed along the western turn of the Resaca and a body called "Defensores de Tampico" was hidden in the woods west of the old road which ran south from the Resaca Rancho Viejo in the direction of Brownsville. In front and to the north of the position taken by the Mexicans there was a prairie about three miles in length, thickly covered with sacahuiste or wire grass. To the west, along the road on both sides, there was also a dense growth of ebony, mesquite, and other native cover. The artillery, which had been so effective the previous day, was greatly impeded in its progress by the wire grass. Realizing that artillery alone could not dislodge the enemy, General Taylor ordered Captain May of the Dragoons to charge the position. This was done successfully and the Mexican army quickly retreated. General Arista narrowly escaped capture, his tent and

all his personal effects falling into the hands of the Americans. His force fled toward the Rio Grande while all the Mexican artillery and supplies fell into the hands of the victorious Americans.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FILE IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Top](#)

54. Russell-Cocke House

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Russell-Cocke House
<i>Address:</i>	602 E. St. Charles St.
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	2000
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Text:</i>	Built in 1877 for Judge William H. Russell (1838-1882), this house was purchased by Virginian and Confederate veteran Joseph James Cocke (1841-1926) in 1885. The Cocke family continued to live in the home until the late 1940s. The eclectic Victorian house displays Italianate and Greek Revival influences in such features as its Classical proportion and massing and its bracketed porch supports. Its most distinguishing feature is a distinctive large pedimented dormer and door with transom. The 1975 restoration of this house spurred preservation efforts in the neighborhood. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark-2000

[Top](#)

55. Sabas Cavazos Cemetery

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Sabas Cavazos Cemetery
<i>Address:</i>	
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1995
<i>Designations:</i>	na
<i>Marker Location:</i>	From Brownsville, take US 281 west about 4 miles.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	Established in 1878 with the burial of rancher and businessman Sabas Cavazos, this small cemetery has served the Cavazos and related families for more than a century. It is located within the Portrero de Don Sabas Cavazos, a portion of the Espiritu Santo land grant conveyed to Jose Salvador de la Garza by the King of Spain in 1781. Born December 4, 1809, in Camargo, Nuevo Santander, Mexico, Sabas Cavazos was the son of Jose Maria Francisco Cavazos and Estefana Goseascochea, and a great-grandson of Jose Salvador de la Garza. Encompassing more than one-quarter million acres of land, the Espiritu Santo Grant

included the future sites of Fort Brown and the City of Brownsville. The de la Garza Family established Rancho Viejo, the first settlement in the Brownsville area. The communities of San Pedro, El Carmen, La Gloria, and La Puerta were established by Dona Estefana. Although in use since 1878, the cemetery was not officially recorded in deed records until 1947. Among those buried here are members of the extended Cavazos Family, their relatives, and members of the San Pedro Community. The site is maintained by descendants of persons buried here.

[Top](#)

56. Sacred Heart Catholic Church

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Sacred Heart Catholic Church
<i>Address:</i>	602 E. Elizabeth St.
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	2001
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Text:</i>	Sacred Heart Church was established by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for the English-speaking parishioners of Immaculate Conception Church. San Antonio architect Frederick B. Gaenslen designed this building for the new congregation in the Gothic Revival style. Dedicated in 1913, the structure served Sacred Heart until 1967, when parish boundaries were redrawn and it became a chapel of Immaculate Conception Cathedral. With its tall bell towers and pointed-arch stained glass windows, Sacred Heart is a noteworthy part of Brownsville's architectural history. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark - 2001

[Top](#)

57. San Roman Building

<i>Marker Title:</i>	San Roman Building
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1965
<i>Designations:</i>	Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
<i>Marker Location:</i>	1245 E. Elizabeth Street, Brownsville.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	Erected 1850 for Don Jose San Roman, native of Biscay, Spain--importer, steamboat owner, merchant, investor in city lots. He and successor, Feliciano San Roman, backed the Rio Grande Railroad. Fulgencio Lopez was last of San Romans in charge here.

[Top](#)

58. Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot



Southern Pacific RR Passenger Depot

<i>Resource Name:</i>	Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot
<i>Address:</i>	601 E. Madison St.
<i>Architect:</i>	Southern Pacific Railroad
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>Architectural Style:</i>	OTHER
<i>Narrative:</i>	<p>An excellent example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in Texas, the Southern Pacific Depot was designed by the Chief Engineer of the Southern Pacific Railway in 1928. Construction was completed in 1929. It stands almost isolated at the intersection of East Sixth and East Madison Streets in Brownsville. The light colored stuccoed, one-story, rectangular building displays good examples of cast stone ornamentation at the major entrances, the cornice, on the coped parapet at the gabled end, and at the chimney and its adjacent parapet. The roof is red clay mission tile.</p> <p>The entrance facade facing southwest is a 12 bay design with some arched openings denoting the prior existence of an open waiting area and now enclosed with plaster walls. The remaining window and door openings are rectangular with cast stone surrounds. The southwest entrance pavilion has a parapet embellished with an elaborate cast stone cornice and urns, and is topped by the raised central arched parapet. The main entrances are two pairs of wooden doors flanked by engaged columns that support an architrave, urns, and a decorative railing. Above the architraves are two casement windows with cast stone surrounds. In the center between the parapet openings is a large window with side lights and an arched transom. Set above is an ornate cast stone apron supporting an iron balcony. This simulated iron balcony has a small arched window above with elaborate cast stone surrounds and is placed just below the central arch.</p> <p>The central portal at the southeast facade has elaborate cast stone ornaments consisting of double engaged spiral columns, an architrave, urns, and a circular window.</p> <p>Dominating the structure's silhouette is an arched parapet and adjacent stuccoed and tile roofed chimney. The parapet is pierced by arched openings.</p> <p>The main interior spaces consist of waiting rooms, plus the baggage room at one end. The open waiting areas behind the arches are now enclosed. Interior finishes include tile floors</p>

and wainscoting, plaster walls, stenciled beams in the waiting room, wood trimmed windows, doors and ticket counter and decorative tile around the drinking fountain.

In addition to the enclosed waiting areas along the northeastern and southeastern sides of the building, other modifications include the removal of 400 foot long concrete train shed that extended to the northeast along the tracks and a baggage loading platform.

The Southern Pacific Depot in Brownsville a fine example of a Spanish Colonial Revival structure and symbolizes the importance of the railroad to the economic development of Brownsville and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Brownsville is the largest city in the thriving semi-tropical region at the southern tip of Texas. The Depot's isolated position and its design make it one of Brownsville's most outstanding Landmarks. The architectural style is reminiscent of the 18th Century Spanish settlement of South Texas.

Although railroads had been planned for this region of the South, during the Civil War shipments of cotton through Texas to Mexico and the Gulf via Brownsville had to rely on other means of transportation. In 1871 the first railroad, the Rio Grande Railway, came into Brownsville. Later, the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad was extended. It was allowed by the San Benito and Rio Grande Valley Railway in 1912 and the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway in 1927. These railroads served the agricultural markets, that were thriving due to extensive irrigation, as well as an international trade stimulated by the development of Port Brownsville.

Missouri Pacific was already established in Brownsville when Southern Pacific acquired the charter for the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway in 1925. This event, appropriately celebrated, became significant to the development of the Valley. Attended by VIPs from the Railway, the celebration was a part of the first annual South Texas Chamber of Commerce Convention and the day was declared Southern Pacific Day. Southern Pacific also brought in the special track laying machine which made possible the rapid expansion of its railway system into this area. The first train arrived in Brownsville, November 10, 1927.

Southern Pacific and the Missouri Pacific Railroads are joined to the Mexican National Railway in Matamoros, just across the Rio Grande River.

The structure was used as a depot until 1952, when it was erected to the Gulf Pacific Cotton Agency for warehouse and office space. The City of Brownsville is negotiating to purchase the depot and adapt it for reuse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FILE IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Top](#)

59. Stillman, Charles, House

<i>Resource Name:</i>	Stillman, Charles, House
<i>Address:</i>	1305 E. Washington St.
<i>Architect:</i>	Unknown
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>Architectural</i>	GREEK REVIVAL

Style:

Narrative:

In the 1850's the residence at 1305 E, Washington Street was built for Charles Stillman. This one story home is one of the earliest Greek Revival brick structures built in Brownsville.

Located in the midst of the central business district, the house is built on a brick foundation into which metal grille vents are incorporated. The house is constructed of common bond pink brick with wood framed floor and roof construction. A flat-roofed porch, supported by four large round plastered columns, crosses the entire front facade. A simple wood balustrade extends between the columns across the front and the corner column and the wall on the ends. Simple square balusters are supported by a bottom rail raised off the floor and capped with a plain wood rail. The columns, balustrade, and balusters are all painted white. The house, which is five bays wide, has a gabled roof of slate shingles and is surrounded by a boxed white wooden cornice. There is an inside end chimney on each gable end of the front side of the ridge. Flush with the face of the wall, the chimneys extend up to an arched brick hood. Another chimney, located on the end wall of the kitchen, extends up to a four step brick course cap.

The window treatment on the house consists of wood framed, single-hung apertures. The windows have six-over-six light sashes with wooden sills and lintels. There are wooden adjustable louver shutters painted dark green.

In an L shape, the Stillman House has a floor plan based on a large central hall. The main entrance, located on the center axis of the front facade, is a wood panel door flanked by side lights on each side. The side lights have a lower wooden panel topped by twenty-one lights. The transom, setting above a deep lintel, has twenty-one lights also. The interior flooring is of wide wooden boards, walls and ceilings are of painted plaster. Some rooms have cornices formed by picture moldings; circular ceiling medallions can also be found on several rooms.

On the right side of the center hall are the parlor, dining room, and study. There are doors on the northeast walls of the parlor and dining room connecting the three rooms. A fireplace, with a simple wooden mantelpiece and concrete hearth is found in the parlor. At the left of the center hall, opposite the parlor is the bedroom. The bedroom itself is distinguished by a wallpaper frieze forming a cornice.

Following the bedroom, a small display room is found which joins a large display room. All rooms open on the center hall. At the end of the hall, opposite the main entrance, is a double wood panel door with eighteen light transom above and wood surrounds which opens onto a small garden and patio. The large display room opens onto a small kitchen with a large brick fireplace with raised hearth for cooking. Flooring in the kitchen consists of hexagonal clay tile.

Around the front and part way around the sides extends an iron fence mounted on a brick sill. A raised brick well is found in the gardens near the kitchen. A brick carriage house is found at the rear of the house. Living quarters are located in the corner of the carriage house. The quarters are inaccessible.

The Charles Stillman House, circa 1850, is one of the oldest residences in Brownsville. This fine small scale Greek Revival structure was built as the home of Charles Stillman, owner and developer of the original townsite of Brownsville. Thomas Carson, agent for the Stillman interests and mayor of Brownsville from 1879-1892, occupied the home in the 1890's.

60. Thornton Skirmish

<i>Marker Title:</i>	Thornton Skirmish
<i>Address:</i>	
<i>City:</i>	Brownsville
<i>County:</i>	Cameron
<i>Year Marker Erected:</i>	1936
<i>Designations:</i>	na
<i>Marker Location:</i>	From Las Rucias, take US 281 west 2 miles to roadside park.
<i>Marker Text:</i>	The spot where "American blood was shed on American soil" April 25, 1846; here Captain Seth B. Thornton and 62 dragoons were attacked by Mexican troops.

[Top](#)