



## **Resaca de la Palma Historic Battlefield**

### ***Partnership for Preserving History and Building for the Future***

The Brownsville Community Foundation, in partnership with the National Park Service, seeks your support for our plan to preserve and develop the Resaca de la Palma battlefield site in Brownsville, Texas. In particular, we require immediate assistance to obtain Congressional approval to have the site designated within the boundary of the Palo Alto National Historic Park. Acquiring this boundary extension will pave the way for the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site to officially recognize its commonality with Resaca de la Palma in the most important Mexican-American War and to begin to provide services to the Resaca de la Palma Battlefield National Historic Landmark, and, eventually, acquire it.

In 1846, news of a military victory at Resaca de la Palma swept across the United States and created an outpouring of support for a war that would change history, culture and the U.S. economy. This was the site of the second major battle of the Mexican-American War, a hard-fought battle which involved 2,000 U.S. soldiers and 3,000 Mexican troops. 169 Mexicans were killed and 228 wounded. 45 U. S. troops were killed and

976 wounded. As a result of this War, the U.S. for the first time encompassed the entire continent from sea to sea. The 525,000 square miles later became the U.S. states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Utah.

Brownsville is one of the most historic cities in Texas, with America's only –Mexican-American War battlefields at Palo Alto and at Resaca de la Palma. In 1992, the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site was designated part of the National Park Service to preserve the 3,400-acre scene of the first clash of this war. As the only National Park Service site to focus on the Mexican-American War, Palo Alto Battlefield interprets the entire conflict, from its origins to its present day significance. As a place of bi-national understanding, all research and interpretation at the site reflects perspectives of both nations.

Today, it is the hallowed ground at Resaca de la Palma that needs support. Surrounded on all sides by development, the field is a fraction of its original size. If the site is overtaken, it is not just the loss of a piece of land; it is the loss of part of our nation's history. Fortunately, key portions of the battlefield have survived. The Brownsville Community Foundation, in partnership with the National Park Service, seeks to create an historical park that will preserve and commemorate this notable site and transform it into a cultural and economic attraction of national importance.

Palo Alto Battlefield's General Management Plan notes that the Resaca de la Palma Battlefield is integral to the Park mission and calls for efforts to preserve and interpret the site. Over recent years, the site has been listed as one of the nation's most endangered battlefields and is in danger of being overrun by development. The Brownsville Community Foundation is determined to serve as a partner in the preservation effort. The project contributes to the national initiative to preserve endangered battlefields, will produce immediate, measurable results in the form of visitor satisfaction and understanding, as well as preservation.

Thanks to funding from the Greater Brownsville Incentives Corp., the Foundation was able to purchase the 34-acre historic battlefield site, protecting it from imminent development. With expertise from the National Park Service, the property was assessed and interpreted for its archaeological significance and a preliminary design plan was drawn for its development. Since that time, and with support from the Brownsville Community Improvement Corp., the partnership has added an interpretive trail, a viewing platform (for historic interpretation), and a covered shelter for living history programs and other gatherings. An event, held annually at the site, brings hundreds of volunteers, visitors, and community dignitaries, from both Nations together for a memorial illumination. There is the lighting of 8,000 candles – one for each U.S. and Mexican soldier who served in these clashes.

In the coming years, the National Park Service and the Foundation is seeking to develop the site into a fully operational historical park with a visitor contact center, and a regular offering of programs and events. The Foundation is now raising funds to construct a building on the site to house an interpretive center to be manned by a Park Service Ranger. The building would also house the NPS administrative headquarters for both the Resaca and the Palo Alto sites; and the offices of the Brownsville Community Foundation. This plan brings multiple benefits to the affected organizations, and more importantly, to the residents and visitors of Brownsville. The National Park Service gets an administrative home from which it can preserve the battlefield site, educational and other special events can be held there, the community will have use of the interpretive trails with exhibits, the sheltered areas, viewing platforms. There will also be assembly areas for living history programs and other community gatherings.

Resaca de la Palma must be included within the Palo Alto Park boundaries for the Park Service to be able to pursue its preservation activities.

Partnerships such as this one between The Brownsville Community Foundation and the National Park System one have become key to national park development over the last 10 years. In recognition of the economic boost that communities receive, Congress has encouraged parks

to pursue federal-local partnerships. These are happening with great success throughout the United States. The National Park Service promotes these sites through their advertising campaigns, tourist expositions, web site and more.

With your assistance, the National Park Service, along with The Brownsville Community Foundation can advance their efforts to preserve this site for the enjoyment and understanding of future generations of American citizens.



*Resaca de la Palma*  
*A Battle of the Mexican-American War*  
*“Hallowed Ground”*

*“No one can look upon those interesting battlefields without feelings of deepest emotions. The soil which has been wet with human blood has become too deeply hallowed, to be soon regarded with careless indifference.”* Melinda Rankin, Texas in 1850

*“I could not but feel that I stood on consecrated, if not holy ground...upon the ground where many a gallant life went out.”* Anonymous correspondent from Resaca de la Palma, N.Y.  
Tribune, June 1864

**Although we are talking about the historic site of a battle in a war that was finally won by the United States...we are also talking about “hallowed ground” in a region that is so entrenched in the cultures of two nations--Mexico and the United States...that it is almost an area of “one country”. Today’s residents are descendants of both the Mexican soldiers and the American soldiers who gave their lives at the battle of Resaca de la Palma.**

**There are only 34 acres saved from development and left of the original battlefield. The land is preserved by The Brownsville Community Foundation. This fledgling organization is struggling to find a permanent solution to restoring the site to its proper prominence.**

**The long term plan is to work with the National Park Service to form a partnership to develop and oversee Resaca de la Palma. The Brownsville Community Foundation is seeking to construct a building to be shared by the Park Service and the Foundation as a memorial to the Mexican and to the American Soldiers who gave their lives on this ground. At the beginning of this month, Representative Soloman Ortiz and Senator John Cornyn both introduced legislation to expand the boundary of Palo Alto to include the Resaca property.**

**While the two nations have battled over boundaries and borders from time to time throughout their histories...they have also and more importantly shared human bonds that transcend political issues. The border area of Texas and Mexico is one of shared values, shared beliefs, shared cultures...even shared languages...it is like no other area in the United States or in Mexico.**

**Diane Milliken Garza, Ph.D.**

# *Resaca de la Palma*

