

Community Fact Sheet

Cattle Dip Tank Area

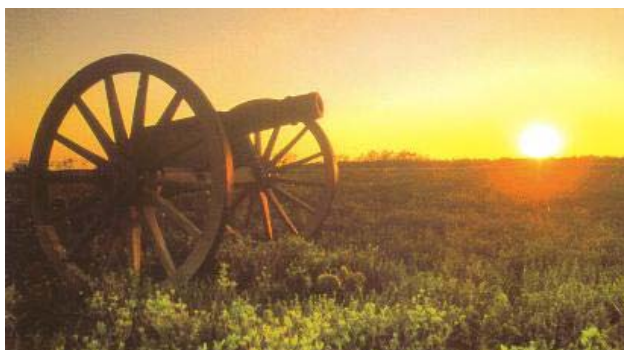
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Palo Alto Battlefield National
Historic Site



THE PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE...

Palo Alto Battlefield was declared a National Historic Landmark and became a unit of the National Park Service (NPS) on December 19, 1960, and was formally declared a National Historic Site in June 1992. This park was created to preserve and interpret the site of the first major battle of the United States-Mexican War. The park has also been given a broad mandate to discuss the war in its entirety, including the broad story of the causes and consequences of this important conflict.



The centerpiece of this effort is the Palo Alto Battlefield. This 3,400-acre expanse of coastal prairie and dense chaparral is recognized as one of the best-preserved battle sites in the nation. Efforts to restore the battlefield to its 1846 appearance are currently underway, and the park continues to develop trails, facilities, and visitor services. The park's entrance is located at 7200 Paredes Line Road (FM 1847), just north of the intersection of FM 1847 and FM 511, approximately five miles north of downtown Brownsville, TX.

A SITE HISTORY...

The former cattle-dipping operation area (the Site) is located within the boundaries of Palo Alto National Historic Site. It was reported that the dip tank was used for the treating of cattle for parasites from around the mid-1920's until the 1970's. The NPS is moving forward with efforts to fully restore the Site.

AND NOW...

The dipping tank has been abandoned for some time now. All that remains is the tank and a nearby man-made depression. Mesquite trees and undergrowth such as grasses, shrubs, and prickly pear cacti surround the area. The tank is rectangular, brick-lined, approximately 6' x 35', and is below grade. The man-made depression is approximately 5' x 25' and was likely used to dump spent solution or clean-out sludge from the tank. The cattle dip tank has been secured to prevent access. An asphalt walkway, heading from the park's visitor's center, is located about 200-feet south of the dipping tank area.



ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS...

A Level I Environmental Site Assessment of the area was conducted pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Department of Interior policy on February 5, 1999. The assessment identified the cattle dipping tank area as a potential environmental concern. In January 2001, a sample of the sludge material in the bottom of the tank was collected and analyzed for contaminants including organic compounds and metals. Only arsenic was detected. (Arsenic is a natural occurring inorganic element that can be toxic at high levels.)

Site activities continued in the following months of 2001. Soil samples were collected from several locations immediately surrounding the tank and at the depression. These samples were analyzed for arsenic. Arsenic was detected in many samples around the dipping tank and depression area.

A larger-scale investigation was conducted pursuant to CERCLA and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan in March 2004. This investigation is called a Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation or PA/SI. The purpose of a PA/SI is to determine if a hazardous substance release requires additional investigation or response action. During the PA/SI, soil samples were collected to determine the vertical and horizontal extent of arsenic in the soil. Additionally, groundwater-monitoring wells were installed and samples collected to assess any impacts to the aquifer. Arsenic was detected in the soil west and south of the dipping tank and the depressed area. Arsenic also was detected in a groundwater sample southwest of the dipping tank.

Visitors are advised to stay on the park's developed trails at all times due to the hazards associated with flora and fauna indigenous to the area. Although the Site appears to pose minimal risk to human health through contact with soil; visitors should stay on the asphalt walkway to ensure their safety, consistent with park procedures.

THE NEXT STEP...

Community involvement is an important factor in the CERCLA process. The public will have the opportunity to be involved in reviewing and commenting on the Cattle Dipping Tank Site investigation and proposed cleanup documents. An administrative record file will be established which will contain documents upon which the selection of the Site cleanup action will be based. It will be available for public review at the following two locations:

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site
1623 Central Blvd, Room 213
Brownsville, TX 78520-8326
Contact: Mr. Peter Pappas
Phone: (956) 541-2785 ext. 225
Mon.-Fri. 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

National Park Service
Intermountain Regional Support Office
Lakewood, CO 80225-0287
Contact: Mr. Jay Boisseau
Phone: (303) 969-2671
Mon.-Fri. 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

It is anticipated that an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) will be conducted for the Site in 2005. This EE/CA will analyze cleanup options for effectiveness, feasibility, and cost. Once completed, the EE/CA (including any recommended cleanup) and supporting documents will be made available to the public in the Site administrative record file for review and comment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

If you have questions concerning the information contained in this fact sheet, please contact Peter Pappas, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site at (956) 541-2785 ext. 225, or Jay Boisseau, National Park Service Intermountain Support Office-Denver at (303) 969-2671.