

PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE ORIGINAL REFLECTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. BACKGROUND

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site in Brownsville, Texas is the sole unit of the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) that commemorates the U.S.–Mexico War of 1846–1848. The battlefield is a relatively new addition to the National Park system. Lands were only acquired in the 1990s. At present, there is no NPS visitor center on the battle site, although one is now being developed. There is a Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) standard park folder available.

Harpers Ferry Center and Palo Alto interpreters developed a dozen waysides for a trail leading from the new battlefield parking lot to a shade-shelter/overlook in 2000–2001. In 2003–2005 another set of waysides was completed for the Resaca de la Palma unit of the park, a recent partnership with the City of Brownsville. All interpretive media at Palo Alto are bilingual. Most of the park’s local and regional visitors are also bilingual.

Although there are considerable 1846–48 graphic resources extant for telling the U.S. side of the story, there are no paintings or illustrations from the Mexican point of view, or that accurately portray Mexican combatants. Many Mexicans consider the U.S.-Mexico War as the greatest defeat in their history, a catastrophe that resulted in the loss of half of their national territory, and therefore not an event to commemorate or illustrate.

Part of the planned visitor experience is to have future Palo Alto visitors walk along the Mexican line of battle. Images will have to be created for waysides to help visitors imagine what the phases of the battle might have been like for Mexican soldiers. Existing waysides already do this for the U.S. perspective.

The Palo Alto battlefield lies on a vast, open coastal plain, unrelieved by any significant elevation or present-day watercourse. The Gulf of Mexico lies some 20 miles to the east. Cactus, thorny scrub, and some slowly returning clumps of bayonet-tipped *Spartina* grass predominate as ground cover. For most of the year, this South Texas battlefield is a flat, hot, harsh-looking place.

Without site-specific battlefield art dedicated to peopling the now empty landscapes, most visitors would find it difficult to see anything worth saving on this field. Effective new site-specific illustrations here will strengthen public awareness of the need to preserve the special historic character of Palo Alto battlefield.

2. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this order is to develop three original reflective illustrations and three rough pencil sketches for use on six wayside exhibits at Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site.

3. **SCOPE OF WORK**

A. PHASE I – Preliminary Sketches

In accordance with the terms and conditions of the above-referenced contract, the contractor shall provide all services, including labor, material, facilities, and travel necessary to develop three original reflective illustrations and three rough preliminary pencil sketches to define composition.

The contractor shall travel to Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to meet with the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). This trip shall consist of one 8 hour day.

(1) Exhibit - PAAL-14 - **VIVA LA REPÚBLICA!** (Mexican Army POV)

The purpose of this wayside exhibit is to describe how 3500 Mexican soldiers were deployed in line of battle, showing how the different units of infantry, cavalry, and artillery were placed. Text will relate that the Mexican troops in this mile-long battle line felt confident and optimistic in the first minutes of the battle, encouraged by Mexican military brass bands and cheering in the ranks.

The proposed location for this wayside is at the far left (west) flank of the initial Mexican battle line, looking eastward along the length of the line. See Attachment A for relative positions of the waysides in this art contract.

Time for the illustration is 2:30 P.M. 8 May 1846.

Weather conditions were sunny and humidly subtropical. Latitude of these two battlefields is 26 degrees north, the same as Miami, Florida. The dense, bayonet-tipped *zacahuistle* (*Spartina* sp. also called cord grass) that covered the battlefield was tall enough to impede infantry troop movement. Part of the challenge of this illustration is to recreate that waist to chest-high vegetation, which has been stripped from the present-day landscape by overgrazing.

Contract Number C1141050011

Order Number T1141050031

Task Order Number 1

Page 3 of 11

The illustration should communicate at a glance how large the Mexican army was at the start of this battle. Some soldiers in the immediate foreground should be portrayed in enough close detail to impart the strong bellicose emotions of the moment. Point of view should be ground level rather than birds-eye view.

The opposing American battle line of some 2200 men was about 1200 yards distant to the north when artillery fire opened the battle.

There is only one significant visible terrain feature rising from the coastal prairie. Now called "Arista's Hill," this *mogote* (low hill / vegetation-covered dune) lies behind the far right (east) flank of the Mexican battle line, about 1000 yards from the center. The main Mexican camp was near this feature, and the Mexican commander remained there during the entire battle. It is a secondary purpose of this wayside and several others to be able to point out this "hill."

The illustration shall be developed in full color. Finished size is 26 x 24 inches.

(2) Exhibit - PAAL-15 - **LET US FIGHT!** (Mexican Army POV)

The purpose of this wayside exhibit is to describe how Mexican troops stood here in their ranks for hours, decimated by U.S. artillery fire, becoming more and more frustrated. Eventually, the men called for their leaders to "Let us fight!" A secondary purpose for this wayside is to be able to contrast the Mexican cannon here in the center of the battle line with the U.S. guns across the field.

The proposed location for this wayside is at the center of the Mexican battle line, looking eastward along the length of the line.

Time for the illustration is 3:30-4:00 P.M. 8 May 1846.

The number of troops clearly depicted should be a cannon crew or two and an infantry platoon. Point of view should also be ground level to give the viewer the feeling of being in the ranks of the Mexican army.

The illustration should communicate that the Mexican ranks were still intact after taking losses. The most visible emotion to be seen should be frustration, with the beginnings of demoralization. The primary units to be depicted should be infantrymen of the Tampico *Guardacosta* battalion, and the artillery units posted in the center of the line.

The illustration shall be developed in full color. Finished size is 26 x 24 inches.

- (3) Exhibit - PAAL-16 - **NIGHT AMONG THE WOUNDED** - (Mexican Army POV)

The purpose of this wayside is to relate that despite heavy losses, the Mexican troops did not retreat, but slept on the battlefield among their own wounded. A secondary goal may be to identify the position of the Mexican hospital tents, supply trains, and the commander's tent on Arista's Hill. Exhibit text will discuss the growing sense of despair and demoralization among the Mexican troops, and the color palette chosen should amplify that emotion.

Time for the illustration is before midnight on 8 May 1846.

The proposed location for this wayside is at the center of the Mexican battle line, the same as Item (2) above.

The number of troops clearly depicted should be infantry platoon-size units. As in other illustrations above, point of view should be ground level to give the viewer the feeling of being in the ranks of the Mexican army.

The illustration shall be developed in full color. Finished size is 26 x 24 inches.

- (4) Exhibit - PAAL-205 - **TAMPICO BATTALION** - at Resaca de la Palma (Mexican Army POV)

The proposed location for this wayside is at the Resaca de la Palma unit of the National Historic Site, in deeply shaded, dense undergrowth near an oxbow lake, a former bed of the Rio Grande. These old river channels are locally known as *resacas*. At the time of the 1846 battle, this ravine was a 10-foot-deep, 200-foot-long curving depression,

damp, but not full of standing water. Through the edge of the trees, a large open former polo field stands between the visitor and the battle site parking and main highway.

Conditions on this 2nd-day battlefield sharply contrast with broad, open vistas at the Palo Alto coastal prairie. At Resaca de la Palma subtropical thorny plants and chaparral severely limited both vision and tactical movements. This is the only illustration to be developed for this battlefield. No period art (mostly done by illustrators who had not been to the site) correctly portrays the actual conditions of combat.

The purpose of this wayside exhibit is to describe the conditions experienced when the first U.S. shots were fired on the Tampico battalion, as they were preparing their first meal in over 24 hours. Text will inform visitors that this infantry unit had been in the thick of the fighting the day before at Palo Alto, and bore the brunt of the U.S. attack at Resaca de la Palma. Other text captions reveal that experienced American officers characterized this particular unit as a skilled and determined foe.

Time for the illustration is early morning, on 9 May 1846. U.S. troops had marched five miles and been fed breakfast before the fighting. Mexican troops had also marched the same distance, and were eating when the first shots rang out. Evidence from archeology on-site of Mexican mass graves indicates women were among the casualties, and so camp followers could form part of the scene.

Lighting should be dappled from the heavy vegetation overhead. Part of the challenge of this illustration will be to represent accurately how the ravine-side vegetation did look before housing developments changed the landscape. There are some unaltered *resacas* in the Brownsville area that can provide better art reference than the actual battle site.

The number of troops clearly depicted should be infantry squad-size units, getting up from their campfires to form line of battle in midst of dense undergrowth. The illustration should encourage viewers to feel like they are part of the Mexican defenders, seen from a ground level point of view.

The illustration shall be developed as a rough preliminary concept sketch to define composition. Size is 26 x 24 inches.

(5) Exhibit - PAAL-17 - **THE PRICE OF BATTLE** (Mexican Army POV)

The purpose of this wayside exhibit is to describe the withdrawal of the Mexican army from the Palo Alto battlefield to a new defensive position five miles away at Resaca de Palma. Text may showcase quotes of U.S. soldiers reacting to the carnage they found here as they moved up to occupy the Mexican position.

Time for the illustration is dawn on 9 May 1846. Lighting should be somber and moody with long shadows.

The number of troops clearly depicted should be company-size units, breaking bivouac and leaving Mexican casualties on the field, taking the unpaved wagon road south toward Matamoros and the Rio Grande river fords.

The illustration should encourage viewers to identify with the withdrawing Mexican troops, by placing viewers in the midst of close-up action.

Point of view, as in other illustrations described above, should be ground level.

The illustration shall be developed as a rough preliminary concept sketch to define composition. Size is 26 x 24 inches.

(6) Exhibit - PAAL-12 - **PROTECT THE WAGONS** (U.S. Army POV)

The purpose of this wayside is to explain that General Taylor had to protect his supplies at all costs. His actions during the battle show that he did not dare risk moving his troops too far away from his only source of food and munitions for the next four months. Exhibit texts will relate that General Arista fully recognized what a *coup de grace* capturing the U.S. supply wagons would be, and ordered two cavalry charges to attempt to overwhelm them.

This illustration should inform visitors that there were over 300 U.S. supply wagons, pulled by nearly 2,000 oxen, indicating the general position of the vast wagon park. There are historic reference sketches that show cannon placement and ad hoc field fortifications around the wagon park. Part of the interpretive surprise to be achieved with this exhibit is to reveal these defenses, which are not part of the general knowledge or imagery associated with Palo Alto.

Contract Number C1141050011

Order Number T1141050031

Task Order Number 1

Page 7 of 11

Time for the illustration is sunset on 8 May 1846.

The location for this wayside exhibit is on the Port Isabel-Matamoros (unpaved) road, near the intersection with the U.S. battle line. Future visitors will walk a trail from the main battlefield overlook to this exhibit site.

For this illustration, an elevated birds-eye point of view may be the most effective way to show the great volume of wagons present for Taylor's army.

There was a large, shallow pond just west of the Matamoros road in 1846, but this feature does not remain on the present landscape.

The illustration shall be developed as a rough preliminary concept sketch to define composition. Size is 26 x 24 inches.

B. OPTIONAL PHASE II – Final Illustrations

Upon completion and acceptance of Phase I and a modification to the contract authorizing Phase II, the contractor shall proceed with the following:

The contractor shall provide complete original reflective illustrations in full color based on the rough preliminary sketches approved in Phase I for the follow:

- (1) Exhibit - PAAL-205 - **TAMPICO BATTALION** - at Resaca de la Palma (Mexican Army POV)
- (2) Exhibit - PAAL-17 - **THE PRICE OF BATTLE** - (Mexican Army POV)
- (3) Exhibit - PAAL-12 - **PROTECT THE WAGONS** - (U.S. Army POV)

4. **DELIVERABLES**

The contractor shall submit all work in stages for the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) review and approval before proceeding to the next phase. Those review stages are specific to presentation and content as follows:

A. PHASE I – Preliminary Sketches

- (1) Preliminary revised pencil.
- (2) Rough preliminary concept sketches.
- (3) Revised pencil illustrations.

B. OPTIONAL PHASE II – Final Illustrations

- (1) Full color illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.
- (2) Final illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.
- (3) Revised final illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.

5. **TRAVEL**

Not Applicable.

6. **TIME FOR COMPLETION**

All work shall be completed on or before August 28, 2008 in accordance with the following schedule:

A. PHASE I – Preliminary sketches

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>NOT LATER THAN</u>
(1) Travel to Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia	November 19, 2007
(2) Submission of the preliminary revised pencil illustrations for Exhibits 14, 15, and 16.	February 28, 2008
(3) Submission of the rough preliminary concept sketches for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.	February 28, 2008

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>NOT LATER THAN</u>
(4) Submission of the revised pencil illustrations for Exhibits 14, 15, and 16.	April 30, 2008
(5) Submission of the full color illustrations for Exhibits 14, 15, and 16.	August 31, 2008
(6) Submission of the final illustrations for Exhibits 14, 15.	September 15, 2008
(7) Submission of the final illustrations for Exhibit 16.	October 15, 2008

B. **OPTIONAL PHASE II – Final Illustrations**

(1) Submission of the revised pencil illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.	March 6, 2008
(2) Submission of the full color illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.	June 26, 2008
(3) Submission of the final illustrations for Exhibits 205, 17, and 12.	August 14, 2008

7. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

The COR will notify the contractor, in writing, of approval or rejection of the work in accordance with the following schedule:

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVAL TIME (CALENDAR DAYS)</u>
A. PHASE I – <u>Preliminary Sketches</u>	
(1) Submission of the preliminary pencil illustrations.	14 days
(2) Submission of the revised pencil illustrations.	14 days

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVAL TIME (CALENDAR DAYS)</u>
B. PHASE II – <u>Final Illustrations</u>	
(1) Submission of the full color illustration.	14 days
(2) Submission of the final illustration incorporating any changes or refinements.	7 days

Any additions or corrections shall be completed and returned to the government within three calendar days. In the event the government delays beyond the period specified, the contractor shall be entitled to a day-to-day extension in the final completion date.

8. **CONTRACTING OFFICER’S REPRESENTATIVE**

The Contracting Officer’s Representative for the purpose of this order is:

Mark Johnson
Visual Information Specialist
(304) 535- 6231

9. **GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED PROPERTY**

The government will provide the contractor with a hard copy map of the area. Upon completion and acceptance of the final illustrations, the contractor shall return all government-furnished property.

10. **PAYMENT SCHEDULE:**

A. PHASE I – Preliminary Sketches

Upon completion and acceptance of all work and receipt of a proper invoice, the contractor will be paid a firm-fixed-price of \$_____, in accordance with the following schedule:

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------|
| (1) | Upon completion and inspection of the preliminary and revised pencil illustrations and the rough preliminary concept sketches. | \$_____ |
| (2) | Upon completion and inspection of the full color illustrations for Exhibits 14, 15, and 16. | \$_____ |
| (3) | Upon completion and acceptance of the final illustration for Exhibits 14, 15, and 16. | \$_____ |

B. OPTIONAL PHASE II – Final Illustrations

At the option of the government, this contract may be modified to increase the Scope of Work and extend the Time for Completion for the final illustrations. If this option is exercised, the firm-fixed price of the contract will be increased by \$_____, from \$_____ to a new firm-fixed price of \$_____. Payment will be made in accordance with the following schedule:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| (1) | Upon completion and inspection of the revised pencil illustrations. | \$_____ |
| (2) | Upon completion and inspection of the full color illustrations. | \$_____ |
| (3) | Upon completion and acceptance of the final illustration and return of all government-furnished property. | \$_____ |

11. **ATTACHMENT**

The following attachment is incorporated into this order:

- Map, 1 page.