

USIBWC SECTION 3 PROGRESS REPORT: 2020 – 2023

The United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is proud to report on the last three (3) years of Cultural Resource work at the USIBWC. Our mission is to provide binational solutions to issues that arise during the application of United States – Mexico treaties regarding boundary demarcation, national ownership of waters, sanitation, water quality, and flood control in the border region. We have submitted this report as a land management agency. We have chosen to answer each question individually as stated below. When reference is to IBWC, this is for both the United States and Mexico Sections of both countries. Answers to questions as requested are below.

1. How many, and what percentage of your assets, are historic as reported in: (a) your bureau or agency's proprietary database and/or (b) your bureau's or agency's reports to the Federal Real Property Profile MS (FRPP MS)?

The USIBWC has over 300 properties that we administer along the borderlands. As of now the majority of our properties are historic or greater than 50 years of age. These consist of shared border structures, two International Dams and border monuments along the U.S. – Mexico land and river border. We also have numerous levee and flood control structures built during the New Deal time frame of the 1930s into the 1940s. Many of these flood control levees are in historic districts in Texas and New Mexico.

2. Have your identification methods changed during this reporting period? Approximately what total percentage or portion of inventory have now been surveyed and evaluated for the National Register, and does this represent an increase from your agency's 2020 progress report, if applicable?

The USIBWC in the last three (3) years has identified two (2) new historic properties based on contractor surveys for project work under Section 106 and one internally. One property, known as Smelertown, was determined eligible after evaluation for the National Register. The total number of historic sites we have are over 1000 prehistoric and historic sites, with over 950 at Falcon Reservoir. The others vary from 10 to 20 in California and Arizona, and around 25 in New Mexico. This does not include the International Boundary Monuments located from El Paso, Texas to San Diego, California, a total of 258 out of 276 monuments. In Texas, USIBWC has the Fort Brown National Historical Landmark (NHL) at Brownsville and several National Register Districts along the International Border with Mexico.

Our identification procedures have not changed in the last three (3) years. We use Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contractors for our cultural projects unless we can perform them in-house. The USIBWC has one Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) for the agency and handles the United States - Mexico border where USIBWC properties exist. As

projects arise, and feasible in scope and scale, the CRS conducts limited surveys and report writing. The USIBWC will use IDIQ contractors for most projects. As of September 2023, we have at least 95% of our lands surveyed. This is an increase of USIBWC properties surveyed but also includes easements and areas on private land for soils needed for levee building. At Fort Brown NHL, we had evaluated the area for an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a future transfer of 166 acres of land to the National Park Service. As part of this, NPS has been working on adding all or part of the 166 acres to the NHL that are not currently in it and this will soon be in review with the Landmarks Committee in November for concurrence. In early 2023, the NHL had been impacted due to a Customs and Border Patrol migrant (CBP) camp in and near the Fort Brown NHL. The CBP camp has since closed and the area was monitored by NPS under our MOU with Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park. We also had an MOU with CBP for this location, especially for land disturbing activities in the NHL and avoidance measures to the breastworks and archeological discovery. An archeological damage assessment survey is planned in late 2023 or early 2024 to the breastworks and locations where earth disturbance occurred. An Environmental Assessment (EA) for Falcon Dam and Reservoir is in the final stages and will be completed by mid-2024 that will pertain to grazing and impacts to cultural resources besides other environmental factors.

As stated in our prior report for 2020, USIBWC heritage assets vary in scope and location. The international land boundary monuments, 276 monuments, that run from El Paso, Texas to San Diego, California have not been evaluated for National Register Eligibility by the agency. It was found that other federal and state land management agencies have recorded them as their property and evaluated them. The CRS is working on nominating these monuments as a National Register Multiple Property Historical District which will entail formal evaluation as Eligible for the National Register. This is being conducted in California, Arizona, and New Mexico where the Border Wall was being constructed. This includes photography and surrounding site documentation as many of the areas where cut stone monuments were installed had construction camps near them in the 1890s. Other artifacts may be found nearby from work completed on the monuments in the years since as trash was left there that are now considered artifacts today.

Unfortunately, since border wall construction stopped in 2021, damage to many of the original Emory (1850s) and later Barlow-Blanco monuments (1890s) has occurred. This damage (destroyed, broken off base, fallen off of hillside) has impacted the once stable border as some of the historic monuments have been removed for safekeeping that were impacted. A few have been fixed and replaced in the same location from where removed (Figures 1 and 8). Other damage has been intentional vandalism to monuments in Arizona and California. This damage had the monuments pulled over and the concrete base smashed to then haul the monuments away. Fortunately, the weight of the cast iron monuments prevented them from being moved as heavy equipment would have to be used to haul them away.



Figure 1: Monument 30 after removal when base was broken and reinstallation after base was fixed and concrete base height was extended.

3. Has your agency implemented any new policies or programs that promote awareness and identification of historic properties over the last three years?

USIBWC has continued to evaluate all properties under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) is in contact with all our offices and stakeholders to make sure USIBWC follows all Federal policies and guidelines. The CRS makes an effort to keep our local, state, federal and stakeholders aware of any projects of historic importance.

The USIBWC mission is centered on flood control and other issues along the border regions. We follow Section 106 and 110 of the NHPA and 36 CFR 800. We have developed several Programmatic Agreements (PA) with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPO) for specific areas of land owned by USIBWC. This is for properties that our levees and other projects will impact. USIBWC has conducted archeological and architectural surveys for projects pertaining and funded to our mission objectives. We have completed around 95% of our 106 undertakings for funded projects and our Section 110 work is estimated at 75%. The Section 110 information is for projects that are discussed at professional conferences and in publications or on the website that is publicly available under law.

In New Mexico and Texas along the Rio Grande, we have years of sediment buildup in the river channel. USIBWC is excavating this and disposing of it at various local locations. All of this falls under consultation with the NMSHPO under our PA with New Mexico or consultation with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for lands in Texas. Archeological surveys are conducted by the CRS for areas of known sites and then updates are recorded, and sites are avoided. Additionally, we have levee rebuilding projects that require concurrence with NMSHPO or THC. Examination of areas outside the floodplain are field checked as many cultural sites are found above the Rio Grande River. Some archeological sites have been

incorrectly located in the past and field checking can help verify and correct site maps or SHPO databases.

USIBWC measures progress with annual reports to our PA partners and reports to Congress or in this report every three years. We do not use benchmarks as many of our projects are based on funding or unfunded due to maintenance and replacement of resources as identified. The Cultural Resources Specialist keeps a log of project work and consultation for the individual projects, consultations, and PA actions.

In areas along the border where we see many underserved communities that could suffer from climate impact, the USIBWC works to resolve situations based on cultural resources and the history of these areas. One such location is near San Diego, California where a cement and brass marker was emplaced in the 1970s. This marker was to mark the location for the “International Project for Control of Floods in the Tijuana River” dedication ceremony on January 22, 1978 (Figure 2). The border wall in this location is to be expanded and the monument will be removed to a new location off of Dairy Mart Road in the future. In the past we have reconstructed the northern levee along the Tijuana River to Dairy Mart Bridge for flood control. Currently we are expanding the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) and locations of wasteway systems to the SBIWTP for future use. This has included archeological survey in the Tijuana River corridor of which this localized community along the river to the ocean may be impacted by climate change or sea level changes.



Figure 2: Dedication Marker for Tijuana Flood Control Project.

As for involvement of underserved communities, we actively promote involvement from all communities along the U.S. – Mexico borderlands in meetings and our USIBWC Citizens Forums. In our Falcon EA, we are working with many of the local descendants of lands acquired from the formation of the Falcon Project that displaced these largely Hispanic communities along the rivers edge. The USIBWC hopes that working with them on the now historic archeological sites of former communities, we can involve them in oral history and the archeological history of the area before Falcon Project and into today.

4. Federal agencies are encouraged to share information regarding the number and percentage of historic property identification completed in the context of Section 106 for specific undertakings and programs versus that completed for unspecified planning needs (Section 110 survey). In a given year, what percentage of your agency's identification of historic properties occurs due to Section 106 planning and compliance versus regular stewardship and unspecified planning needs (Section 110)?

At the USIBWC, over 95% of our projects are historic in nature because of the history of agency and the borderlands going back to the end of the Mexican – American War (1848) and the establishment of the U.S. – Mexico border. The other 5% of projects occur due to local historical organizations, partnerships, volunteer efforts and working with State SHPOs. This last part is important as many projects may not be USIBWC, but the proponents may cross USIBWC lands and our CRS is involved under Section 106 and 110 reviews. Several 106 projects did occur at borrow pit locations for soils for levee rebuilding, disposal sites of river sediments, survey for an Environmental Assessment at Falcon Reservoir, migrant camp at the Fort Brown NHL, and helping local non-profits or historical organizations in the El Paso, Texas area.

The USIBWC manages the Fort Brown National Historical Landmark on a former golf course in Brownsville, Texas. In 2023, a migrant surge in this area of the former Golf Course required CBP to deal with this situation. Work for a temporary migrant camp was set up by CBP but on the NHL footprint. Once USIBWC was aware of this, we moved to mitigate any damage that could occur to the NHL. Our CRS worked with the staff at the USIBWC Mercedes Field Office to install along the perimeter of the NHL orange safety fencing and metal poles this would attach too (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Orange Safety fencing to prohibit foot and vehicle traffic over NHL Fort Brown breastworks. These were constructed in 1846 at the start of the Mexican – American War.

Measures along the land border west of El Paso has seen drastic changes to the international border over the last several years. The International Boundary Monuments along this area have now been isolated behind the border wall. Monuments have been recorded in each state as archeological sites, objects or structures depending on who or what agency completed this. Unfortunately, many of the monuments have fallen off former hills, mountains, or slopes. The problem was the construction of the border wall undermined the stable geological land base and now nature has taken over to stabilize this landscape. Some monuments have been vandalized, presumably for the metal but have been left in place due to the weight of the monuments as they are over 800 lbs. and could not be moved. These are cast iron monuments that were cast in the 1890s in El Paso, Texas and then hauled to their current locations by horse and wagon. The border wall has isolated them on the southern side of the border wall and vandalism has occurred from Mexico. Currently the CRS is hoping to nominate the original 258 Barlow – Blanco monuments for the National Register of Historic Places as a Multiple Property Historic District, as stated previously. When available, the CRS is documenting the monuments, construction camps and if the original Emory monuments (rock piles mostly) are still in place and not destroyed from border wall construction.

The USIBWC continues to preserve our binational American and Mexican history of the borderlands. Part of the CRS project work is professional speeches, publications and working with local, state, and federal partners for this task. USIBWC has a Programmatic Agreement with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office and is working on renewing new MOUs with other state and federal borderland agencies, parks, and Universities. Over the last three

years the CRS has co-edited one book, published several articles and given over 15 speeches at professional conferences on the cultural resources and history of the USIBWC.

5. How has your agency employed partnerships to assist in the identification and evaluation of historic properties over the last three years?

USIBWC properties are smaller land holdings than most Federal agencies and spread out along the U.S. – Mexico borderlands. The exceptions to this are our holdings that are more than one (1) acre in size for comparison. These are located along the border in San Diego, CA.; the Rio Grande River from Percha Dam in Central New Mexico down to the Gulf of Mexico in Texas. Large holdings are located at Amistad and Falcon Dams and Reservoirs. We update the various state SHPO databases with new site information and consult with these agencies under Section 106, 110 and our Programmatic Agreements (PA). USIBWC has specific contractors under our Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) service providers for projects related to ground disturbing activity. These contractors follow all federal laws based off the IDIQ with the CRS acting as a Contracting Officers Representative (COR) for historical and archeological based projects. Other projects in construction or other internal USIBWC divisions are reviewed by the CRS for compliance.

Partnerships are based on Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the National Park Service (NPS) at borderlands National Parks consisting of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park and Chamizal National Memorial. We have also added Texas A&M International University (TAMI), and Sul Ross State University in Texas and individual State Parks and Universities along the border. These MOUs are to work with these organizations on archeological discoveries, history, training, and geospatial data sharing that is beneficial to both them and the USIBWC. USIBWC is also preparing Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs), as applicable with federal and state agencies. We had a standing MOA with several Texas agencies for the Visual Impacts in the Chihuahuita Historic District in El Paso, Texas that expired in 2021. Programmatic Agreements (PA) are written to alleviate consultation for projects less than an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These partnerships have helped alleviate our consultation with the SHPOs but also allows us to conduct work for the projects to be completed reducing project timeframes for consultation.

USIBWC has partnered with Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park (NPS) for the protection and monitoring of Fort Brown in Brownsville, TX. We are working on establishing partnerships with University of Arizona for helping with the monitoring and maintenance of our monuments on the international border that USIBWC is responsible for under Minute 244 in Arizona. USIBWC is working with various Texas State Parks and other federal agencies on the border in writing MOUs and MOAs that will benefit the agencies for monitoring, education and compliance as stated before.

Our partnerships in Historic Preservation help our agency owing to having a large land and river border USIBWC covers, but limited budgets for travel and program work. Our success has been limited due to the slow progress of review and approvals of the MOUs, MOAs, and

PAs in both state and federal review. It is noted that our PAs and MOUs have aided in historic preservation by increased monitoring, inspection and compliance at sites that are not checked by our office on a yearly basis due to distance and travel costs. By having our partners monitor and keeping USIBWC informed as to what is happening locally, this has been a benefit for Section 106 and 110 compliances. These partnerships have helped to educate the public in these regions about the integrity of sites, Section 106 and 110 and how they can take a personal responsibility in site protection and monitoring for the USIBWC.

One site for example, in Presidio, Texas (41PS16) has potential but was not evaluated in detail. Sul Ross State University Center for Big Bend Studies is monitoring this site, as it is on private land, but RP 26A is located in this site. This is also in conjunction with the Presidio County Historical Commission (PCHC) that our CRS is working with. USIBWC is examining the Reference Point (RP) Markers along the river in this location as many are still standing and preserved. We did lose our contact for the PCHC in 2022 but are working to reestablish a new contact in this region.

In our previous report, our CRS contributed to the Walking Tour – Socorro Mission pamphlet in Socorro, Texas as RP 8 is located here. This was installed with many other RPs in the 1910s traversing down the Rio Grande on both sides of the river by the IBC and for demarcation of Bancos in the upper and lower Rio Grande valley. USIBWC works with the National Park Service National Trails Intermountain Region (Santa Fe) on many of the historic trails that cross the U.S. – Mexico border or through USIBWC properties. All of this entails updating of geospatial databases and information to find some of the missing RPs and possible prehistoric and historic trails that cross USIBWC lands.

USIBWC falls under the guidance of the State Department and works directly with our Mexican counterpart on Treaty and Minutes issues. For projects in the United States, we use MOUs, MOAs, PAs, or Interagency Agreements. It has been found that these agreements work well in archeological discoveries as many agencies can react within a day of a discovery to evaluate the cultural resource. Because we have one Cultural Resource Specialist in El Paso, Texas at the USIBWC Headquarters, local agencies can act as a representative for evaluation.

6. Have the policies and programs your agency has in place to protect historic properties changed over the reporting period in ways that benefit historic properties?

The policies and programs over the last reporting period has not changed in how we maintain best practices and consultations with communities in our purview. As for climate change on our cultural resources, drought is the biggest factor that impacts sites at Falcon Reservoir. Drought exposes previously buried sites because of lower water levels and wave action eroding the shoreline. USIBWC CRS inspects the sites yearly along the shoreline and has local, state, and federal law enforcement and USIBWC Security Services on site when there. Our MOU with Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas allows us to have a qualified archeologist on scene as available during an emergency.

7. How has your agency used program alternatives such as programmatic agreements, program comments, and other tools to identify, manage, and protect your agency’s historic properties over the last three years, if at all?

USIBWC uses the various state SHPO databases for updating and adding new site information and consultation. USIBWC has specific contractors under our IDIQ for projects related to ground disturbing activity or completes the work in-house under Section 106 and 110. As stated before, partnerships we have or are working on establishing are Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the National Park Service (NPS) at borderland National Parks, Texas A&M International University for the lower Rio Grande Valley and Falcon Reservoir. We are developing MOUs with United States Forest Service in New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Sul Ross State University (Texas) for the Presidio Field Office area of operations along the Rio Grande. University of Arizona, Texas Parks and Wildlife Division (TPWD), and with individual State Parks and Universities along the border. These MOUs are collaborations with these organizations on archeological discoveries, training and data sharing that is beneficial to all. USIBWC is also preparing Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs), as applicable with federal and state agencies. Our last MOA was with El Paso County on the demolition of the Fabens – Caseta International Bridge in 2016. We had a standing MOA with several Texas agencies for the Visual Impacts in the Chihuahueta Historic District in El Paso, Texas that expired in 2021.

Programmatic Agreements (PA) are written to alleviate consultation for projects less than an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These partnerships in the past have helped alleviate our consultation with the SHPOs but also allows us to conduct work for the projects to be completed in a timely manner by allowing our CRS to document reportable actions in an annual report to NMSHPO. The USIBWC views our PA alternatives as a cost savings as the NMSHPO PA allows some projects to proceed with CRS concurrence. Any project based off Section 106 or 110 will be put in an Annual Report to NMSHPO for those with and without consultation with NMSHPO, as stipulated in the PA.

Our NMSHPO PA was extended in an Amendment in 2022 for one year and will be extended again in the next few months. This will be Amendment No. 2, for an extension of 10 years. We hope to have new Programmatic Agreements within Texas with Texas Historical Commission (THC) for the Rio Grande River in 2024. Our PAs for Falcon and Amistad Reservoirs expired in 2021 and are being rewritten. The MOU with TPWD expired in 2023 for our Presidio Field Office area of operations. This is in review currently along several other MOUs. MOUs are crucial to our Cultural Resources at the USIBWC as they help in keeping an “eyes and ears” approach to our properties that the CRS may not get to inspect each year.

8. How does your agency coordinate historic preservation and sustainability/climate resiliency goals in project planning?

Over the last three years, USIBWC has not used sustainability / climate resiliency goals on our historic properties for rehabilitation measures. USIBWC currently has no work completed as we have replaced our older buildings with new ones over the last 10 years. We are using

sustainability, energy efficiency and climate resiliency criteria for new buildings and upgrades that we are constructing now and in the future.

9. How do your agency's historic federal properties contribute to local communities and their economies, and how have their contributions changed over the reporting period?

The USIBWC is currently in the Public Draft EA phase of the Falcon Grazing Leases Environmental Assessment (EA). We have had our Scoping meetings for the start of the EA and at these meetings have discussed historic preservation of old Ranchos / Ranches from before Falcon Project was completed in 1954. Falcon Reservoir and Dam in southwest Texas is known as a recreation lake for fishing and boaters but initially designed for flood control and irrigation storage based off the 1944 Water Treaty. The towns, ranchos, cemeteries, and homesteads were relocated and abandoned when the reservoir started to flood.

Today, many of these local Falcon reservoir descendants have a tie and history to the areas where many generations of family members lived. The Falcon EA provided meetings and the CRS formed relationships with these descendants to discuss emplacement of future THC historical markers or work with them on nominations. These markers would pertain to important Civil War history of the submerged locations and local prominent Hispanic families of the area back to when this was part of New Spain and later Mexico. New historical documentation of archeological sites and updates of those previously recorded and the impacts of cattle grazing on them will be completed. We are also looking at how the lake is now an important economic source to the community in recreation but will work with the public on preserving the submerged sites when exposed by lower lake levels. We hope to see this information used in local heritage tourism of the Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail which can be found here, <https://www.utrgv.edu/civilwar-trail/civil-war-trail/index.htm>.

10. Provide specific examples of major successes, opportunities, and/or challenges your agency has experienced during the past three years.

In the last three (3) years and earlier, our duties in historic preservation have improved and what USIBWC is providing in leadership on historic preservation in the borderlands. We now work hand in hand with all the State SHPOs to a point that our consultations are approved within the 30-day time frame or less. Our CRS, Mark Howe, has worked to fix our compliance so that USIBWC is known for quality and timely work and consultation. Mr. Mark Howe is the only person on staff at USIBWC in Archeology but works with other staff for training and administrative compliance. This training with USIBWC staff and associated MOUs, MOAs, and PAs with other agencies, has allowed him to be able to manage a wide range of locations of lands and projects of the USIBWC from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Declining travel budgets only allow travel when specific projects need him to be there, ARPA violations or for Native American Graves and Protection Act (NAGPRA) related items are an issue. Training is conducted if requested by our CRS and funding dependent or completed by online webinars and associated with other agencies in cross training. Our CRS did participate in the Advanced Archeological Resources Protection Act Training (ARPA) in 2020 with an online class

sponsored by the National Park Service. In all, the CRS responsibilities have increased in working not only in Cultural Resources, but also with other Environmental projects in the Environmental Management Division (EMD) at USIBWC.

Chamizal Two Sister Parks Agreement

The USIBWC participated in and is part of the Chamizal Two Sister Parks agreement and the signing ceremony that the IBWC Commissioners from the U.S. and Mexico both signed in February 2023. Another aspect of working with Chamizal National Memorial (NPS) was collaboration on historic maps of the Rio Grande River and its course in the El Paso / Ciudad Juarez locale since 1848. This collaboration with NPS and UTEP along with other organizations will allow more detailed studies of the borderlands in geography, history, and archeology.



Figure 4: Chamizal Two Sister Parks Ceremony on February 14, 2023. IBWC Commissioners, Mexican Commissioner Adriana Resendez, P.E (fourth from left) and United States Commissioner Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E. (fourth from right). U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Ken Salazar is center.

The various New Deal projects from the 1930s along the border are also critical as heritage assets but are still used today for flood and irrigation operations. Along the Rio Grande River, our levees, and Reference Point (RP) monuments have been evaluated as eligible but not currently nominated for the National Register. They are located in various locations along the border in the U.S. and Mexico. These RPs were emplaced under the International Boundary Commission (IBC), the agency name until 1944 when formally changed to the IBWC. These monuments and the border changes from river migration and the International Border were nullified and replaced with the 1970 Treaty. The Treaty of November 23, 1970, resolved all pending boundary differences between the two countries and provided for maintaining the Rio Grande and the Colorado River as the international boundary. It provides procedures designed to

avoid the loss or gain of territory by either country incident to future changes in the river, from the USIBWC website.

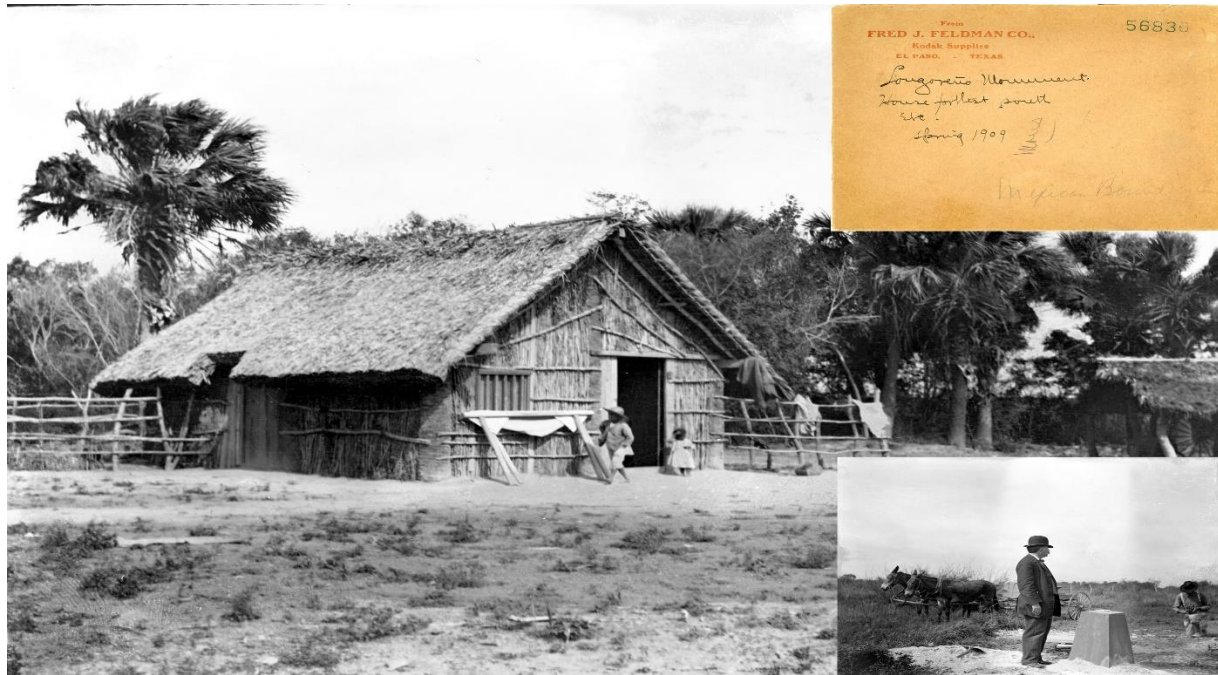


Figure 5: Longoreño Banco and installation of Banco RP Monument. Notice man in bottom right picture on the right taking picture. This person is presumably from the IBC, Mexican Section.

Banco Monuments and Photos

An interesting find were large 5x3” negatives from the early 1900s of the IBC. These negatives show installation and construction of the RP markers but are Banco Monuments in the lower Rio Grande River corridor. Banco Monuments were to demark the new international border after the river changed course. These photos are of the Lower Rio Grande River from Roma, Texas to the Gulf of Mexico. One photo for the Longoreño Banco displays a house and people that are no longer there. Another image shows the result of the construction of a marker, presumably at this location in the combined photo (Figure 5). A recent article on the Banco Monuments was published in 2023 in *The Social Studies Texan*.

The Banco monuments are still located along the Rio Grande on both sides of the border. These were abandoned after the 1970 Treaty as the border reverted to its current location, defined by the river. USIBWC is actively working with landowners to find these markers and document them as many have been removed or destroyed. This is an important part of the history of the borderlands and preservation of how the border moved by the river is in itself a new story to be told all along the river.

Fort Brown NHL

In Brownsville, Texas we have the remaining earthen fortifications of Fort Brown on USIBWC lands. A “Star” shaped fort that is the location where the Mexican – American War started in 1846. This NHL was an active golf course under permit for the last 50 years with various local entities. The golf course closed a few years ago, and the land was left as is, in a state of acquiescence. The original levee system continued around the peninsula but was not part of the USIBWC levees. The area changed in the intervening years and in 2012, we reconstructed parts of our lower Rio Grande Levee system. Unfortunately, the levee went through the remains of the original Fort Brown (Figure 6). When USIBWC started to improve our levees in the area in 2012, we wrote a limited time MOU in 2012 and a five (5) year MOU with Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park for archeological monitoring in 2014. This MOU was continued in 2019 until 2024. When reconstruction of the levee through the fort was conducted, the NPS archeologist monitored the area for cultural resources. A few years later after the golf course closed, under the MOU, the NPS archeologist reported a looting incident at the site and this was investigated. Another incident occurred with damage to the breastworks by heavy equipment that was being transferred by CBP that inadvertently cut through part of the structure, but the damage was minimal. We are in the process of transferring the NHL and 166 acres of land associated here to the NPS as part of the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park. As part of this process, the NHL is being expanded to include all the peninsula and the expansion of the NHL will be reviewed by NPS Landmarks Committee in November 2023.

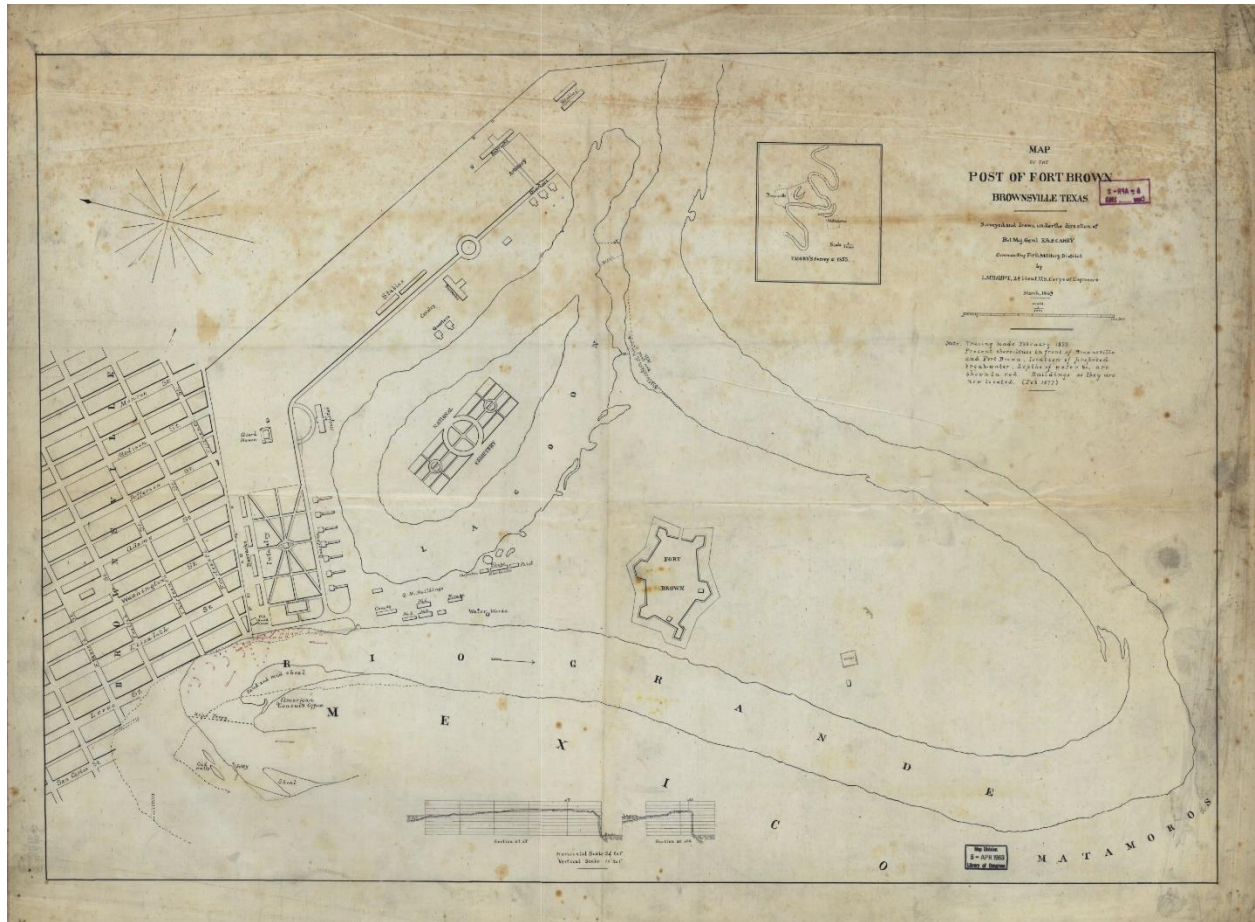


Figure 6: Fort Brown and Brownsville in 1869.

Recently in early 2023, a migrant surge in the Brownsville, Texas area on the southside of the Rio Grande and the amount of people here had consequences to Fort Brown. CBP set up a processing camp at the old Golf Course parking lots, buildings and around the NHL. Because of this and the driving of vehicles through the Breastworks, we installed the poles and orange safety fencing to protect the breastworks as seen in Figure 2. This was crucial to protect the NHL from any further damage until the crisis was over and protect this important part of U.S. history in south Texas. Once we installed this and forced all foot and vehicle traffic off the NHL, we were able to avert more damage to the location from vehicles and foot traffic (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Vehicle traffic across breastworks of Fort Brown. Photo courtesy of Rolando Garza, 2023.

International Boundary Monuments

The International Boundary Monuments / Markers start from El Paso, Texas, west of the Rio Grande River in New Mexico at Monument 1. They continue west to Monument 258 in San Diego, California ending close to the Pacific Ocean. A total of 276 markers are present, some are obelisks and others are markers placed as points of reference. It has been discovered that many of the Monuments have been recorded on the United States side by other State and Federal agencies as their property. USIBWC is still in the process to correct site forms with accurate information, history, and record. We are also working on a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination for the 258 monuments from the 1800s. This is a lengthy process due to the number of them and the locations. A portion of USIBWC work under Minute 244 with Mexico is maintenance of the International Boundary / Border Monuments. USIBWC is responsible for those in Arizona and we are monitoring them during the Border Wall construction as possible. Our CRS has been out in the borderlands to monitor and to work with

CILA representatives and during this time has helped them to identify cultural resources along the borderlands.

After the Border Wall was built and then construction stopped in 2020, we began to have problems with the monuments. Many were falling off the now undermined hill locations and some were damaged by construction activity. As discussed before, Monument 30 was broken off at the base but later replaced with an improved and higher base than before (Figures 1 and 8).

Other monuments have been vandalized or fallen off the hills. USIBWC is working with the Mexican Section of the IBWC to resolve and fix these issues in a binational cooperation of our shared heritage. We continue to monitor and address these issues as they arise and because of this work, it is a success story of cultural resource protection even though damage has been done. We check our border monuments frequently so we can avert any more damage or anticipate such in the future and mitigate it now before it has a chance to evolve.



Figure 8: Monument 30 from when established, broken, fixed, and replaced on new raised concrete base.

La Hacienda / Hart's Mill

USIBWC is working with local and private groups in historic preservation along the border. At the La Hacienda / Hart's Mill location in El Paso, Texas our CRS spent a day monitoring the La Hacienda for an Adobe Reconstruction Project for Abara, Inc, the owner of the building and non-profit in 2023 This resulted in an archeological monitoring report and concurrence letter on the report from the Texas Historical Commission. This volunteer effort by USIBWC with our local community for historic and archeological protection measures is an opportunity and success on our helping in preservation of cultural resources (Figure 9).



Figure 9:
Adobe Restoration expert Pat Taylor working on examining the original adobe wall behind modern concrete, brick, and chicken wire cover. This project was to examine the effects of moisture on the mid 1800s building and what can be done for restoration and preservation. This is next to the USIBWC American Canal, U.S. – Mexico International Boundary and part of old Fort Bliss from the 1870s.

These are only a few successes, opportunities, and challenges over the last three years the USIBWC has had. We have many more in the Cultural Resources and History of the IBWC along the borderlands and continue to provide in this report every three years of what USIBWC is doing and as a binational agency with Mexico in protecting not only U.S. but Mexican Cultural Resources.