

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received FEB 4 1986
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Fort Brown

and or common Fort Brown

2. Location

street & number South edge of Brownsville off International Blvd. — not for publication

city, town Brownsville — vicinity of

state Texas code 48 county Cameron code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Texas Southmost College

street & number Gorgas Hall, TSC

city, town Brownsville — vicinity of state Texas

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cameron County Courthouse

street & number 1150 East Madison Street

city, town Brownsville state Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

National Survey of Historic
title Sites and Buildings has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1959 federal state county local

depository for survey records National Park Service 1100 L Street

city, town Washington, D.C. state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The National Historic Landmark (NHL) of Fort Brown consists of three discontinuous historic districts. One comprises the approximate parameters of the original earth fortification. The second encompasses Fort Brown's remaining historic Cavalry Barracks, and, the third consists of a number of surviving historic buildings that date from 1868.

The buildings at Fort Brown reflect three distinct phases of construction. The initial phase began in 1846 with construction of an earth fortification. The second phase began in 1848, with the construction of the Brownsville Barracks and the beginnings of a permanent post along the southwest side of the lagoon. During this second phase the post was occupied by a garrison of one to four companies, except for a brief evacuation in 1859. Fort Brown was occupied by Confederate troops on March 20, 1861. The post was eventually burned by Confederate troops on November 6, 1863 prior to abandonment of the fort to federal troops. Additional permanent buildings were begun in 1867, only to be destroyed by a hurricane on October 8, 1867. Major William Wainright initiated the third phase of construction along the north side of the lagoon beginning in late 1867. The buildings constructed during this last phase of building constitute the majority of the NHL's contributing buildings. A hurricane destroyed many buildings at the fort in 1933, and necessitated the remodeling of others.

Earth Fortification:

The original Fort Brown was established in 1846, in the form of an earthen embankment, or breastworks. It was similar in concept to medieval fortifications, complete with moat and draw bridge. Prior to May 17, 1846, the earthworks were variously known as "Camp Taylor" and "the fort (or camp) opposite Matamoros".

The breastworks consisted of six bastion walls with a perimeter of 800 yards. The nine and one half foot high earthen walls were capped with a 15 foot thick parapet, an 8 foot deep moat which was 15 foot by 20 foot wide, a gate, and a drawbridge.

Today, only a small portion of the earthwalls remain undisturbed. A golf course and two levees have impacted the site's integrity. The first levee extends parallel to the breastworks (the east-west levee) and another (the north-south levee) extends perpendicular to the first levee, across the breastworks site.

Portions of the earthworks have been preserved within the levees and possibly beneath them (see map), but outside of the levees, the earthworks appear to

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1846-1917 **Builder/Architect** Gen. Zachary Taylor (fortifications)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

An earthen breastwork fortification was established across the Rio Grande River from the Mexican port of Matamoros on March 28, 1846 by General Zachary Taylor. On May 17, 1846, the fortified camp was named Fort Brown, in honor of Major Jacob Brown of the 7th Infantry who was killed in its defense on May 9, 1846. It was in the lower Rio Grande Valley and in the immediate vicinity of Fort Brown that American armies first engaged Mexican troops and demonstrated that the United States would be taking its place among the world powers.

Although the most important activity at Fort Brown was in connection with the Mexican-American War, the fort has been active in the direct campaign or in the training of troops during the Civil War, Spanish-American War, and the Mexican Bandit trouble of 1913-1917. During the Civil War there was much Union and Confederate activity in and about Fort Brown and the troops stationed at the post are believed to have fought the last battle of that war. In 1882, Major William Crawford Gorgas, later to become Surgeon General, first began his historic experiments on Yellow Fever at the hospital. Fort Brown was also a center for troop activity during the Mexican bandit trouble of 1913-1917 when thousands of troops were concentrated in the area. Throughout its early history, Fort Brown contributed significantly to the defense of the nation, and aided greatly in the westward expansion of the United States.

History

The first United States Military post in Texas, Fort Brown, was established in March 1846, when the army of General Zachary Taylor constructed an earth fortification on the north bank of the Rio Grande River. In early May, General Taylor left a garrison of fifty men under the command of Major Jacob Brown to defend the earth fortification; meanwhile General Mariano Arista crossed the Rio Grande, determined to drive Taylor from the territory. Leaving a large force and seven cannons to lay siege to the fort, the rest of the Mexican army proceeded north to Loma Alta in pursuit of the main American army. Hearing the Mexican guns bombarding the fort, Taylor marched back to its relief. Enroute, he encountered the Mexicans, defeating them at the battles of Palo Alto (May 8) and Resaca de la Palma (May 9). Fort Taylor, as it was first named, had held

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 20

Quadrangle name East Brownsville, Texas

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See Continuation Sheet.

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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E

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F

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G

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H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Westerhoff

organization National Park Service

date August 1985

street & number 655 Parfet
P.O. Box 25287

telephone (303) 236-8675

city or town Denver

state Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date

6/12/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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have been destroyed during levee construction.

The intact part of the earthworks was observed in November 1985 as linear mounds about 8 feet tall (see photographs). Two bastions were also clearly visible. The parade ground within the intact earthworks appears to be undisturbed. The eastern part of the earthworks within the levee has been destroyed; a low swampy area attests to the dirt removed.

Plans of the earthworks (see map) are on file at the National Archives. However, it is not known whether the fortifications were actually built according to these plans; they were constructed in haste, and some features like the moat may never have been completed. The site promises to provide important information on the technology of construction of these earthworks, which could contribute to studies of U.S. Army earthworks constructed in the mid-19th century.

The intact parade ground area promises to contain artifacts relating to the May 1846 conflict, and also may reflect the occupation of the fort from March 1846 to 1848. Unsystematic excavations in February 1975 determined the presence of historic artifacts in deposits within the fort walls, although the results of testing have never been reported. Little is known of the layout of the 1846-48 fort; excavations in the parade ground could identify habitation areas and other activity areas dated to this period.

Permanent Post:

The permanent post of Fort Brown was constructed 1/4 mile north of the earth fortification in 1848. By 1893 this post had accommodations for two batteries of artillery, one garrison of cavalry and eight companies of infantry. (See attached map for the location of buildings at historic Fort Brown, along with the circulation pattern of the post.) Also located within the reservation was the resaca or lagoon -an old channel of the Rio Grande River- which enclosed a small island of 25.5 acres. After the chaparral was removed in 1846, to prevent its use as possible cover for Mexican troops, a national cemetery was located on the island. The cemetery was closed in 1911, with the removal of the remains to Louisiana. A hotel was later built on the cemetery site.

In 1944, the military abandoned the post and the property was purchased by the City of Brownsville. Subsequent dispersal of the property by the city and its further division caused serious modifications to the integrity of Fort Brown. Subsequently Texas Southmost College (TSC) acquired possession of the

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historic buildings at Fort Brown (ca. 1960). However, the majority of historical resources still remain and reflect the architectural and historical character for which the NHL was originally designated.

Contributing Buildings:

A contributing building at Fort Brown consists of a building that was constructed within the period of national significance (1846-1917), and that retains the historical and architectural character of that same time period. The contributing buildings at Fort Brown, with the exception of the Infantry Officers' Quarters and the Colonel's House, fall into a Military Territorial architectural style which consists of:

Common bond brick buildings resting on low brick foundations with a high parapeted, pendentive brick cornice which hides either a low gable or a low hip roof. The roofs are covered with asphalt shingles (originally

covered with wood shingles). The windows are predominantly rectangular, wood, 6-over-6 single hung sash with weights and true muntins and are capped with either jack (flat) or segmental arches. Most of the windows in the historic buildings at Fort Brown are covered with wood frame screens.

Following is a description of the contributing historic buildings:

Hospital (1869):

The Hospital is a central block with symmetrical wings. The central block is 2-stories in height while the symmetrical wings are 1-story in height. The symmetrical wings are separated from the central block by a nine foot breeze way. A nine foot wide brick gallery surrounds the central block and the symmetrical wings on all elevations. The windows on the first elevation are rectangular 9-over-9, double hung sash. The windows on the second story are rectangular, wood, 6-over-6 double hung sash. All of the windows in the hospital are covered with wood frame screening.

Three additions appear to have been constructed to this building. Two separate, 2-story additions were added on the east elevation to the central block. A third addition was attached to the north wing. This brick addition

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is two-story, with a 1-story breezeway infill. These additions were all constructed within the period of national significance. This building is used by Texas Southmost College (TSC) as administrative offices at the present time, and retains the name of "Gorgas Hall", in honor of Major William Gorgas.

Medical Laboratory (1870):

This rectangular, 2-story brick building rests on a low brick foundation and is topped by a low gable roof with asphalt shingles which is partially hidden by a high corbeled parapet. There is an interior end chimney located on the west elevation, and a 2-story concrete porch on the north elevation allows access to the second story.

This building was originally designed to be the medical office, but soon became used for a variety of uses including orderly quarters and isolation wards. The Medical Laboratory is located approximately 45 feet southeast from the south wing of the Hospital. It houses part of the TSC Administration at the present time, and has been given the name A.A. Champion Hall.

Dead House (ca. 1870s):
(morgue and linen storage)

This building consists of two historic buildings, the morgue and the linen storage which were connected by a 1-story, brick addition in the 1930's. Also, a one-story brick addition was attached to the north elevation of the morgue at the same time (ca. 1930s). Today, this rectangular 1-story, brick building rests on a low brick foundation and has a high corbeled parapet around the historic linen storage building and the historic morgue; the 1930s additions do not have corbeled parapets. The dead house is located approximately 75 feet northeast from the north wing of the hospital.

Bachelors' Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters (ca 1868):

This brick building is rectangular, and is a 1 1/2 story structure with clerestory. It rests on a low brick foundation with a gable roof covered by asphalt shingles. The windows are rectangular, wood, 6-over-6 double hung sash with wood screens and true muntins under a segmental arch, and have 1/2" round bars covering the windows. The building was also utilized as the Sergeant of the Guard Quarters, and later the Communications Office. It is occupied by part of the TSC Art Building at the present time.

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Commissary (1904):

The Commissary is a rectangular, 1 1/2-story, brick building with a full basement resting on a low concrete foundation with a gable roof covered by asphalt shingles. There are two bulk head cellar entrances on the west, rear, elevation. The original porch has been removed, with the exception of the shed porch roof, and replaced (in recent years) by two separate concrete porches with concrete steps. These porches are on the east, front elevation. The windows are rectangular, wood, 6-over-6 double hung sash with wood screens and 1/2" round bars over all the windows. This building was in use as the Guard House when the reservation was evacuated in the 1940's. It is used by TSC as the Art building at the present time. This building has been joined with the Bachelors' Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters, located to the north (approximately 30 feet) by a wood addition with vertical siding, and a flat roof.

Cavalry Barracks (1869):

The Cavalry Barracks is located toward the east end of the TSC campus along Gorgas Drive (between Gorgas Drive and Gaeland Drive). The Cavalry Barracks is a large T-shaped, 2-story, brick building with a central sallyport, resting on a low brick foundation. The structure is covered by a gable roof with asphalt shingles which hides behind a high corbeled parapet. The windows are rectangular, wood, 6-over-6 double hung sash with true muntins under flat arches. Two paneled garage doors are located on the west side. An addition, year unknown, has been added to the north side of the "T". This brick addition retains the corbeled parapet detailing, but has a flat roof. The building was used as the post Commissary when the fort was closed in 1944. TSC has recently purchased this building, but has yet to occupy it.

Colonel's House (1868):

After the hurricane of 1933, the Colonel's House was remodeled extensively. However, the building has retained its historical and architectural character and is unchanged from the date of the original NHL designation. This house is located just north of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, facing Taylor Avenue. The Colonel's House is a rectangular, 2-story, wood frame building resting on a low foundation. The roof is gable with asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are covered with horizontal wood siding. There is a stuccoed exterior end chimney on the north elevation. A two tier screened veranda or

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porch wraps around the north, west, and south elevations. The upper story of the veranda or porch has horizontal wood shutters on the exterior. On the east elevation there are three, 1-story, gable roof secondary rooms, and on the southwest corner there is a two car, flat roofed garage. The entire building has been painted white.

Officers' Quarters (1868):

The Wainright era, Officers' Quarters were 1 1/2 -story, frame buildings resting on brick piers. These Officer's Quarters were heavily damaged in the 1933 hurricane and remodeled in 1934. However, the appearance of the Officers' Quarters has not changed, to any great extent, since the 1960 NHL designation. There are a total of six Infantry Officers' Quarters, two of the buildings are oriented toward Taylor Avenue, while the remaining four are oriented toward Gorgas Drive. All follow a basic plan with only minor differences.

Officer's Quarters are used by Texas Southmost College for a variety of purposes, including the Music Annex, Campus Police, staff housing, and a student resource center.

The present Officers' Quarters are generally rectangular in plan, 1-story, white stucco buildings resting on low foundations with asphalt shingled hip roofs. A porch is located along each of the buildings two primary elevations. The porch is enclosed with either glass or wood frame screening. The windows consist of rectangular, wood 6-over-6 double hung sash with true muntins, flat arches and wood frame screening. These windows tend to be located in pairs.

Noncontributing Buildings:

Noncontributing buildings were differentiated from contributing buildings by their respective dates of construction, and by their loss of historical or architectural character through remodeling or by relocation from their historical context.

Several buildings including the frame hospital barracks (ca. 1940), now TSC building number 95, the wood frame teacher resource center (ca. 1963), and the wood frame addition that connects the Bachelor's Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters with the Commissary (ca. 1960's and now a part of the TSC art building) were determined to be noncontributing due to their recent construction dates.

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Chapel:

The building that is now called the chapel, and used by the U.S. Customs Department for offices, was historically used as the Officers' Guest House and was historically located along the northern edge of the parade ground. The building has been moved behind the U.S. border station immediately adjacent to a levee and a parking lot, and is enclosed by chain link fencing. The move has resulted in the complete loss of the chapel's historic context. The building is currently located outside of the NHL boundary.

Bandstand:

The Bandstand has also been removed from its historical context. It was originally located on the parade ground. It is presently located near the Fort Brown Resaca and the Fort Brown Art Museum, and is surrounded by palm trees and shrubbery at the present time. The bandstand is not located within the boundaries for Fort Brown NHL.

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out, but during the siege, Major Brown had been killed. On May 17, 1846 the name of the fort was changed to Fort Brown.

A permanent post was established in 1848, 1/4 mile north of the earth fortification and was heavily garrisoned for the remainder of the war, and in 1848 became a permanent U.S. Military installation. During the 1850's the fort's command protected the area from hostile Indians and deterred border disputes. Colonel Robert E. Lee was stationed there for a short time during this period.

In March of 1861, the Union troops evacuated Fort Brown and were replaced by Confederates. With the southern Atlantic coast blockaded, Brownsville became a major Confederate port, with cotton passing south through Mexico on its way to Europe and war material for the Confederacy passing north into Texas. To eliminate this trade, a Union Army landed at the mouth of the Rio Grande in November, 1863, successfully occupying Fort Brown and Brownsville. Eight months later, however, the Union forces were driven out by a strong Confederate Army which held the fort until the end of the war. Nearby at Palmetto Hill (May 13, 1865) Confederate and Union troops engaged in the last battle of the American Civil War, a month after Appomattox.

After the Civil War, the post was reoccupied by United States troops and expanded into a sizable installation, guarding the border and playing a minor role in the Indian Wars. In 1882, Lt. William Gorgas, later Surgeon General of the Army, began his experiments with Yellow Fever at Fort Brown. Later the post was a focal point in the efforts to control border disturbances during the border troubles with Mexico beginning on February 26, 1913. With the end of the border hostilities and the recalling of General Pershing from his vain pursuit of Francisco "Pancho" Villa in early 1917, Fort Brown period of significance can be said to have ended. The fort, however, remained a regular army post until 1944, when it was abandoned. At that time, the property was sold to the City of Brownsville which used the historic buildings for city offices. The area now houses various functions including the civic center and Texas Southmost College (TSC).

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UTM References:

Zone 14

Section A	Easting	Northing
Point A	650 740	2864 300
Point B	650 900	2864 280
Point C	650 900	2864 200
Point D	650 740	2864 210

Section B

Point A	651 420	2865 900
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Section C

Point A	650 840	2865 080
Point B	651 090	2865 190
Point C	651 210	2865 100
Point D	651 150	2865 020
Point E	651 860	2865 040

Approximate total acreage 20.

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Boundary Justification:

The large number of noncontributing and intrusive buildings within the military reservation prevented any delineation of a single contiguous boundary. Therefore, three discontinuous boundaries for Fort Brown National Historic Landmark (NHL) have been drawn to include the remaining historic buildings while minimizing the number of noncontributing elements. These boundaries have been drawn to include the breastworks, Cavalry Barracks, Colonel's House, Officers' Quarters, Deadhouse, Bachelor's Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters Commissary, Hospital, and Medical Laboratory.

Boundary Descriptions:

Section A:

The boundary for Section A has been drawn to include the remaining intact part of the breastworks constructed by General Taylor in 1846. The boundary forms a rectangle measuring 80 yards north/south by 170 yards east/west around the site.

Beginning at Point A at the intersection of the two levees, the boundary proceeds east-southeast (97°) along the top of the levee for a distance of 170 yards to Point B. Here the boundary turns south-southwest (187°) for a distance of 80 yards to Point C. The boundary then turns west-northwest (277°) for a distance of 170 yards to Point D, on top of the levee, then turns north (2°) along the levee for 80 yards to Point A, the beginning point of this section of the NHL boundary.

Section B:

The boundary for section B has been drawn to include only the Cavalry Barracks and forms a rectangle approximately 80 by 60 yards, which encloses the building.

Beginning at Point A, the intersection of the east curb of the short service street and the north curb of Gorgas Drive, the boundary extends due north for approximately 80 yards to Point B. Point B is located at the intersection of the east curb of the service street and the south curb of Heintzelman Road. From Point B the boundary turns east along the south curb of Heintzelman Road for approximately 60 yards to Point C. Point C is located on the south curb of Heintzelman Road on a line between the Cavalry Barracks and the single story offices located to the east of the Cavalry Barracks. From Point C the boundary turns due south for approximately 80 yards, along a line between the Cavalry

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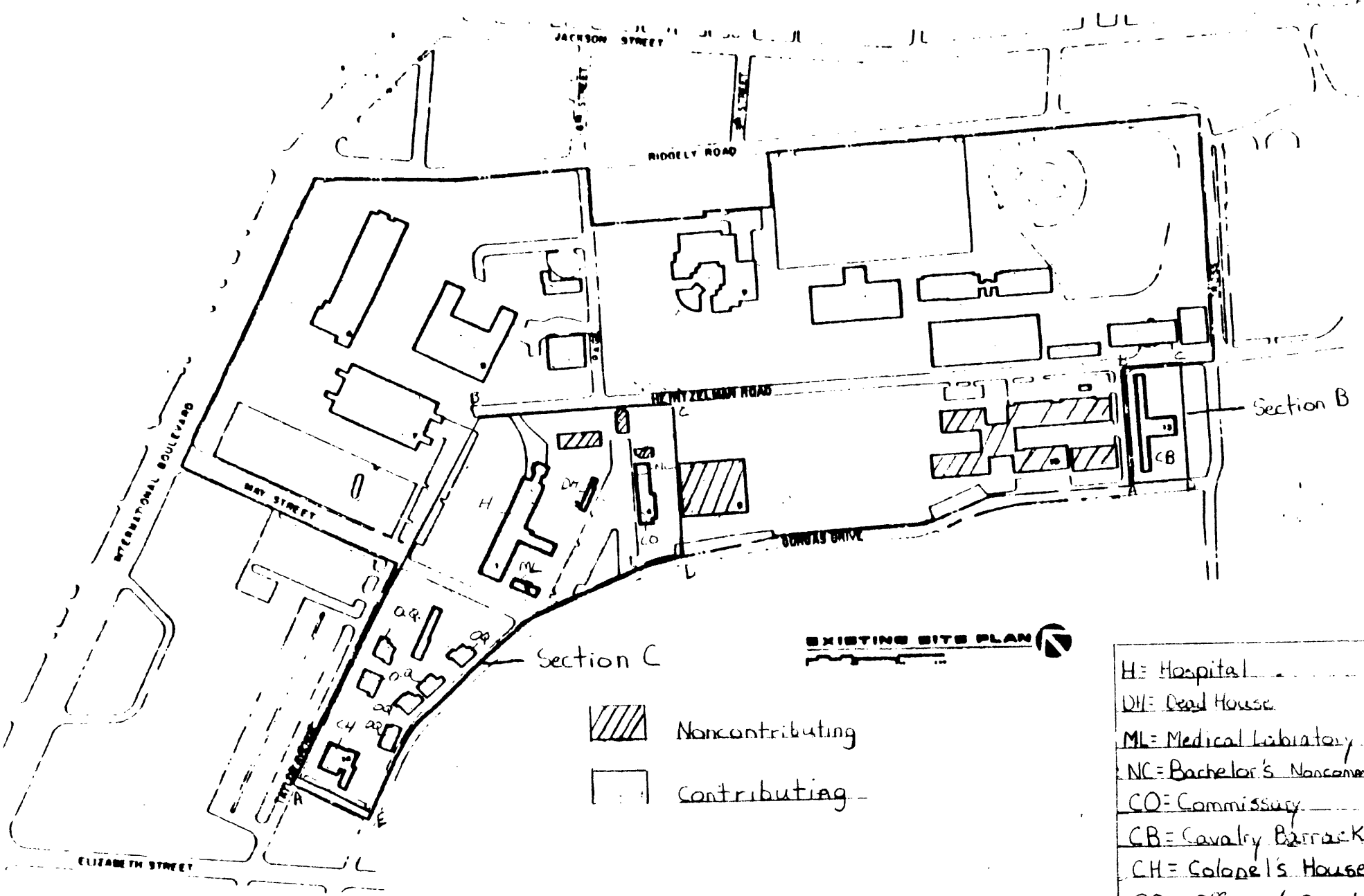
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Barracks and the offices, to Point D. Point D is located at the intersection of the eastern boundary line and the north curb of Gorgas Drive. From Point D the boundary turns due west for approximately 60 yards, along the north curb of Gorgas Drive, to Point A and the beginning point of section B, Fort Brown NHL.



Section C:

The boundary of section C has been drawn to include the Hospital, Medical Laboratory, Dead House, Bachelors Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters, Commissary, Colonel's House and Officers' Quarters.

Beginning at Point A, the intersection of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce parking area and Taylor Avenue, the boundary extends northeast along the east curb of Taylor Avenue, crossing May Street, and along the eastern edge of the TSC faculty parking area to Point B. Point B is the intersection of the TSC faculty parking area and the sidewalk between the college library and Gorgas Hall. (The sidewalk becomes Heintzelman Road in approximately 60 yards, and the eastern edge of the TSC faculty parking area is a continuation of the east curb of Taylor Avenue.) From Point B, the boundary continues due east along the southern edge of the sidewalk for approximately 300 yards to the junction of the south curb of Heintzelman Road. From Point C, the line extends southwesterly along the TSC tennis court fence, the TSC Gym and across the TSC Gym parking area to Point D. Point D is the intersection of this line and the north curb of Gorgas Drive. From Point D the boundary extends along the north curb of Gorgas drive crossing a TSC faculty parking area and May Street to Point E. Point E is located at the intersection of the near curb of Gorgas Drive and the northern edge of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce parking area. From Point E the boundary follows the northern limit of the Chamber of Commerce parking area to Point A.



EXISTING SITE PLAN 

-  Noncontributing
-  Contributing

- H = Hospital
- DH = Deed House
- ML = Medical Laboratory
- NC = Bachelor's Noncommissioned
- CO = Commissary
- CB = Cavalry Barracks
- CH = Colonel's House
- OQ = Officers' Quarters

Boundaries 1985