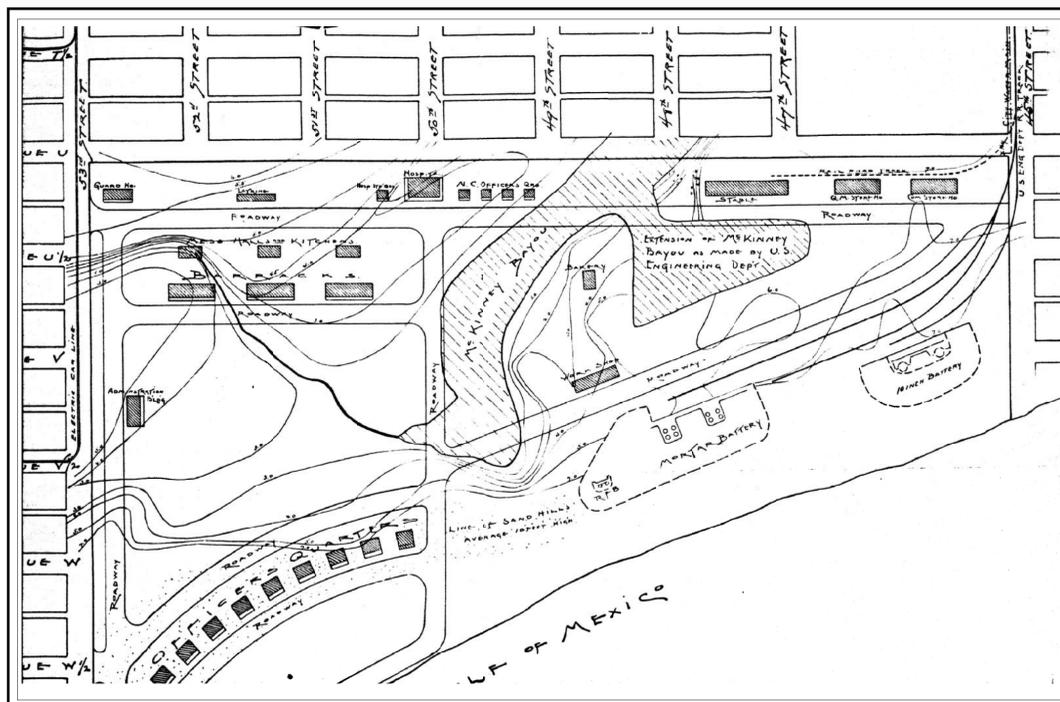
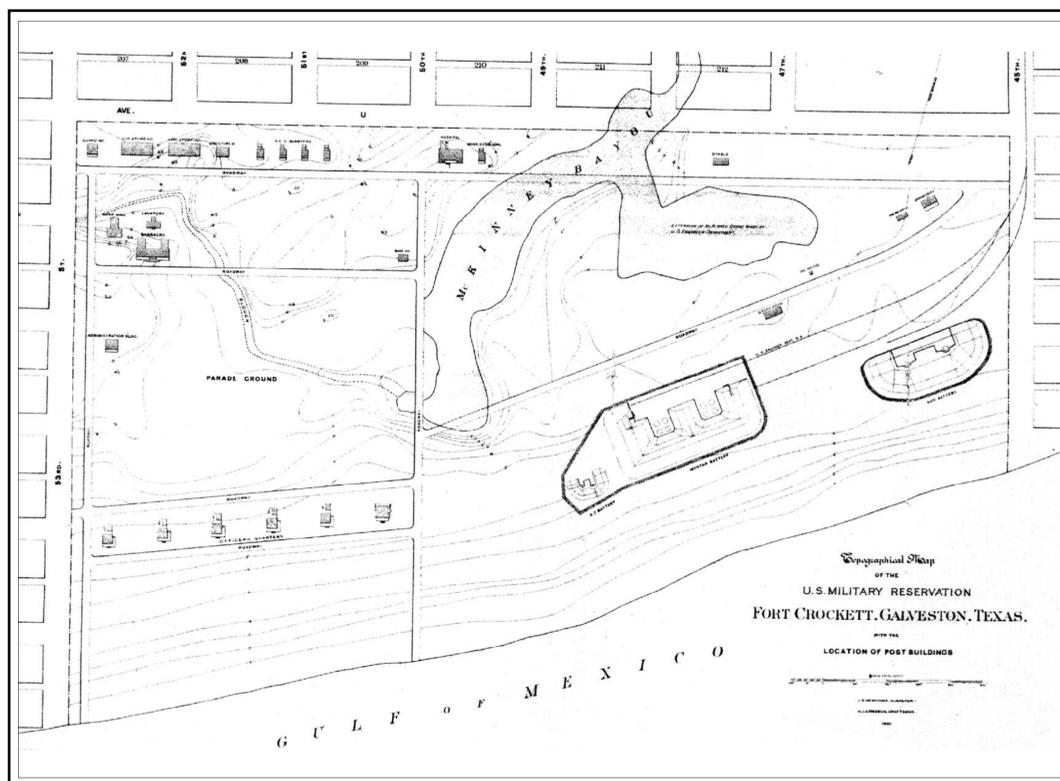
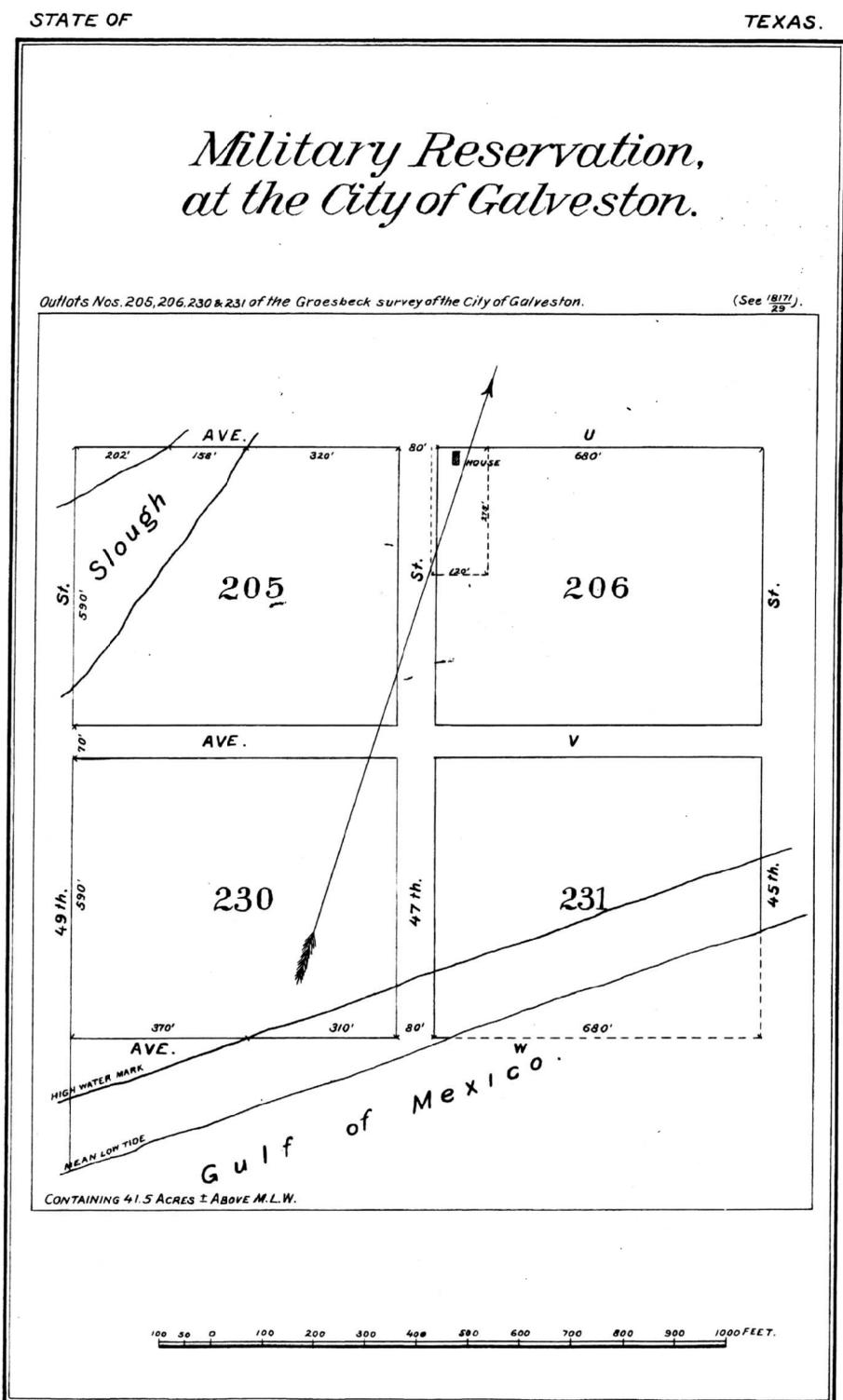


# In The Beginning...



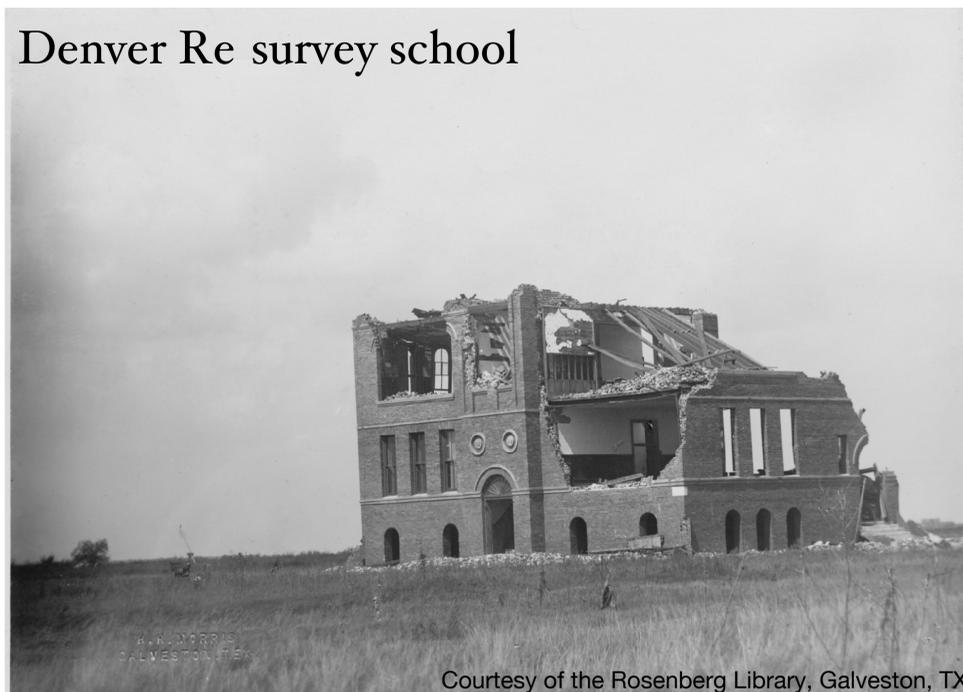
The history of Fort Crockett began in January 1897 when the U.S. government purchased 125 acres of land between 45th and 49th Streets on the beachfront of Galveston Island for 35,000. The adjacent parcels from 49th street to 53rd street were acquired for 126,000 in April 1900. Fort construction was still in progress when the hurricane of September 8, 1900 struck the island. The men were housed in temporary barracks and the officers in rented houses in the town.

# The 1900 Storm.



Courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX

Denver Re survey school



Courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX

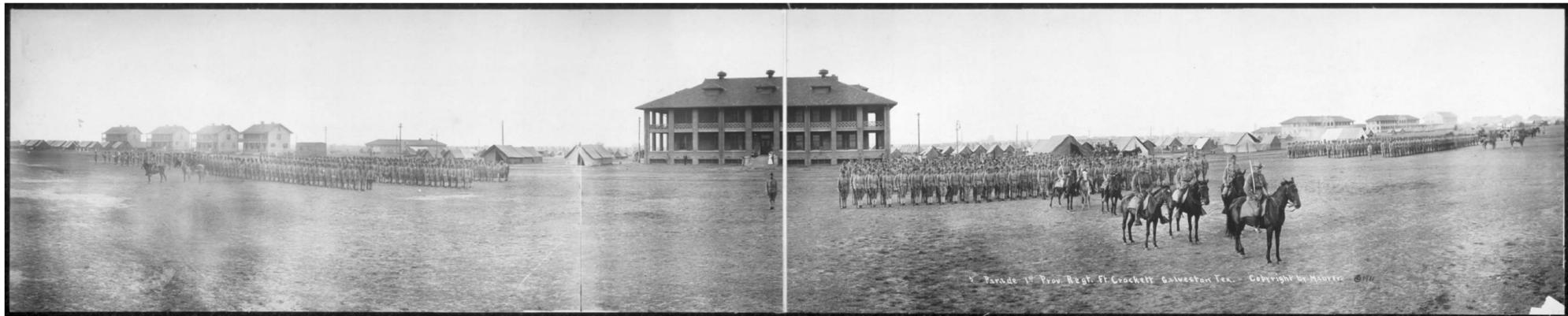
When the hurricane of September 8, 1900 struck the island, only the huge concrete casemates were finished, housing the long ten inch rifle, eight ten inch mortars, and several smaller caliber rapid fire guns ready to protect the seaport. The guns stood on an artificial hill that raised the works fifteen feet above sea level in order to provide a better field of fire and to give some protection against unusual high tides. As the violence of the storm increased cracks developed in the concrete and large chunks fell off. One of the mortars wrenched loose from its mountings and fell into the surging sea. The commanding officer and his wife and children survived by taking refuge in the shell hoist room beneath the ten inch gun.

All improvements, temporary buildings, property and stores were swept clean. Twenty nine of the 129 soldiers housed at the fort lost their lives. Seven men died when the temporary barracks collapsed. Others lost their lives trying to swim to safer buildings.

About 30 men decided to go to the Denver Re survey school building, a short distance away. Three were lost on the way, carried by the waters down the island and into the bay. The others reached the school. Two hours after the men took possession of the school building, the water was five feet deep on the first floor. Then one of the walls fell and killed three men. The question of abandoning the building came up. Sixteen men declared they preferred to take their chances in the water rather than remain and be crushed. Eight decided to stick to the building. The sixteen had no plan except to leave and proceed to the nearest buildings. Wreckage was floating about and in some places they could walk but for a moment. Just one of the sixteen escaped. The current swept fifteen across the island into the bay, and their bodies were buried at Virginia Point.

Of the survivors, one soldier reported being blown around in the Gulf of Mexico and had floated nearly fifty miles going and coming, on a door. Another one declared that he owed his life to a cow. It swam with him nearly three miles. The cow then sunk and the soldier swam the balance of the way to the mainland himself.

# Rebuilding and another storm .



Parade, 1st Prov. Regt., Ft. Crockett, Galveston, TX

Joseph M. Maurer  
May 22, 1911



19th Infantry Camp, Fort Crockett, Texas

Blandford & Henningsen  
July 26, 1915



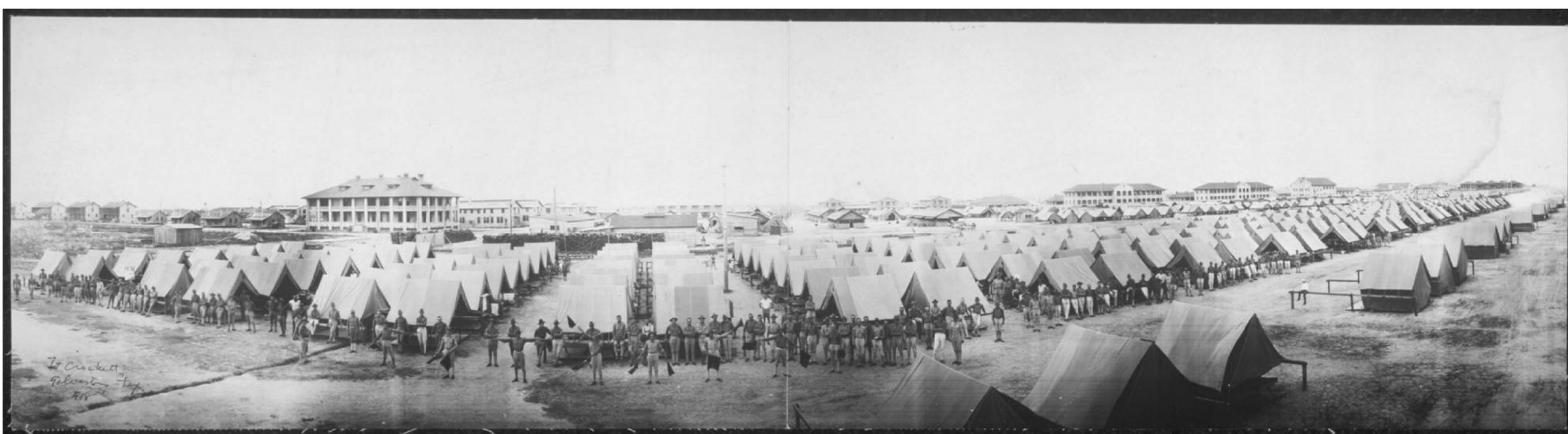
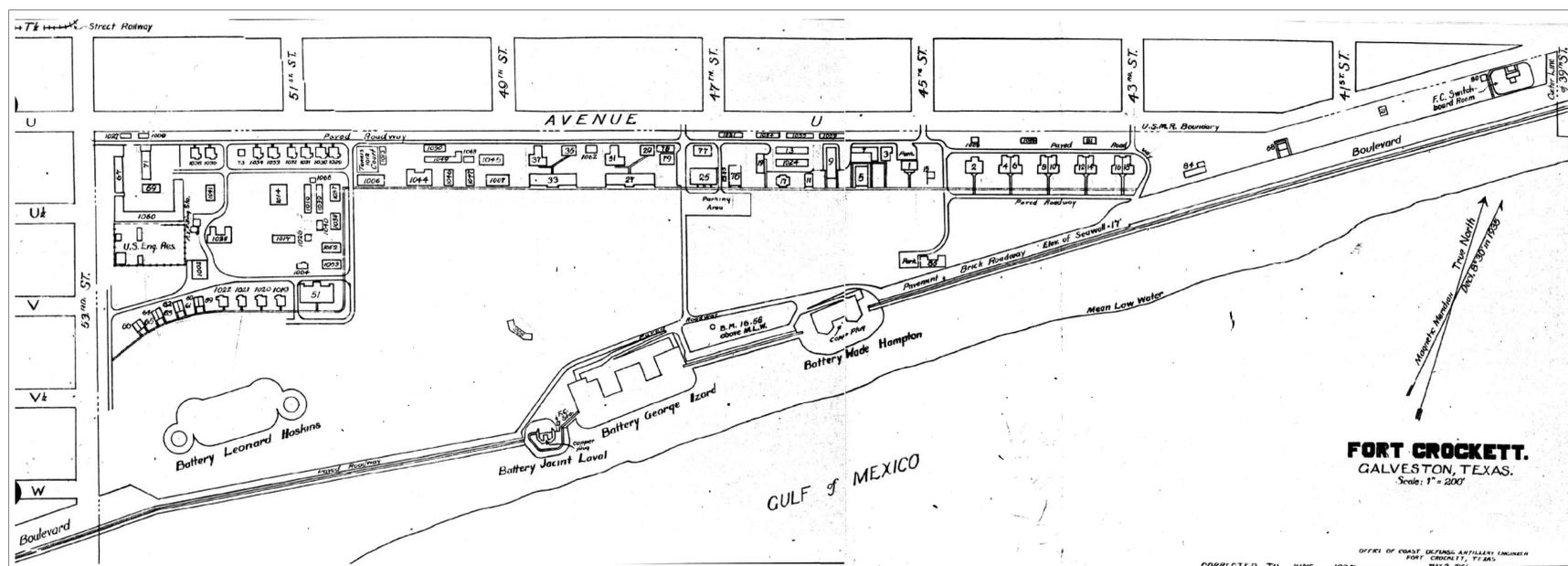
Destruction of 28th Infantry Camp, Fort Crockett, TX by Hurricane of August 16-17, 1915

Martin Blandford  
September 24, 1915

The fort without a garrison was turned over to the Army engineers for repairs. In 1903, while under repair, the military reservation was officially named Fort Crockett in honor of Davy Crockett, a famous American pioneer who lost his life in the gallant defense of the Alamo. In 1904, after the construction of the Galveston seawall was underway, the county deeded the property from 39th to 45th streets to the federal government so they could be responsible for construction of the seawall to protect the fort. The work was completed the following year for 295,000. A total of 750,00 was appropriated for constructing this section of the seawall and raising the grade of the fort to 18 feet. In 1911, Fort Crockett was garrisoned with the Coast Artillery Corps. The Post Exchange, two barracks and adjacent lavatories and mess halls were completed in this time period.

The hurricane of 1915 blew into the encampment of a brigade, which had been stationed on the parade ground in tents since 1912; however, this time the troops could take refuge in the concrete barracks

# World War I



Ft. Crockett, Galveston, TX, 1918. Soldiers Standing in Front of Tents, Some Holding Signal Flags.

Joseph M. Maurer  
September 10, 1918



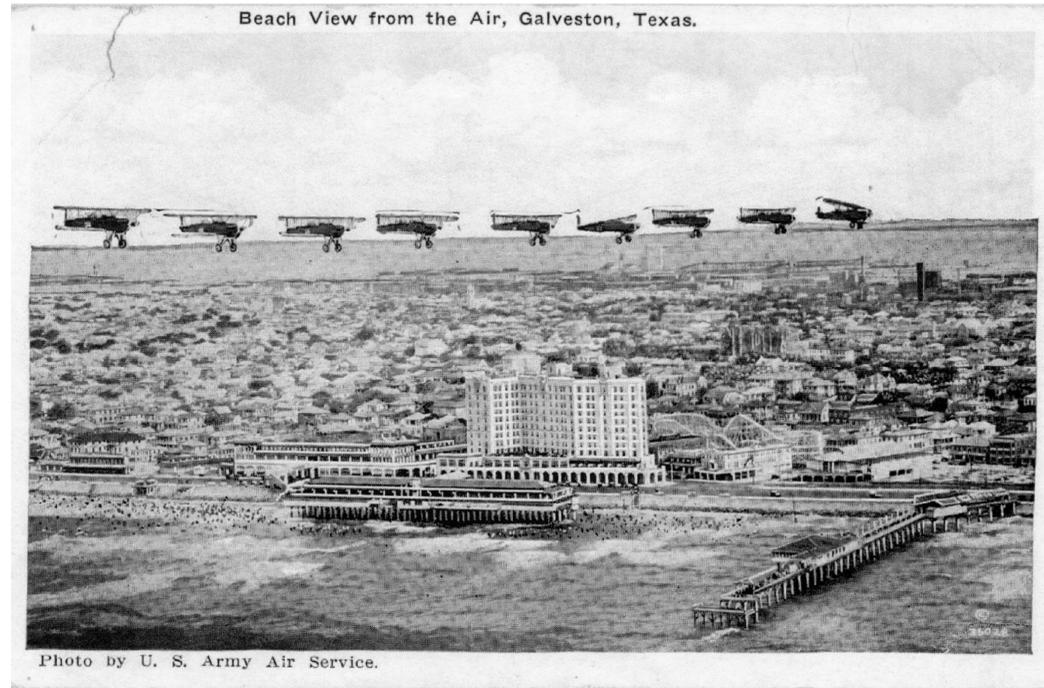
Ft. Crockett, Galveston, TX, 1918, Camp Lite Coast Army Corps and Marine Corps

Joseph M. Maurer  
September 10, 1918

During World War I, 3,000 troops were estimated to have been at the fort at one time. All available space was covered with cantonments, kitchens and warehouses and two regiments in tents occupied the parade ground. Trench mortar units, railroad artillery and Howitzer organizations were sent across to France, and steady stream of replacement batteries left the fort. It was estimated that Fort Crockett sent 100 to 200 replacements per month.

Besides training and organizing the troops for the European forces, the fort was alert to danger from German submarines in the Gulf of Mexico and held its batteries ready for action. Batteries at the fort were Battery Hampton, Izard, Laval and Hoskins.

# Interbellum.



Fort Crockett Aerial View circa 1932

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In 1922, the fort was to be put on caretaker basis, but the orders were revoked in 1926 when Galveston's congressman succeeded in getting the plans changed. The Third Attack Group from Kelly Field was ordered to Galveston for their permanent station.

The first Fort Crockett airfield, from 1913 to 1918, was in the area where Alamo School and Cedar Lawn are today. There were seven planes at the field. The second airfield, 1927, was where the Gulf Crest and Gulf Village developments are today. In the mid 1930's, there were only 4 anti aircraft regiments located in the United States, one of which was in Galveston. Galvestonians congregated on the seawall and thousands of cars lined the Boulevard when the regiment was engaged in night target fighting. High intensity searchlights illuminated the whole western areas of the beach as the three inch guns and 50 caliber machine guns fired at targets towed over the water by airplanes.

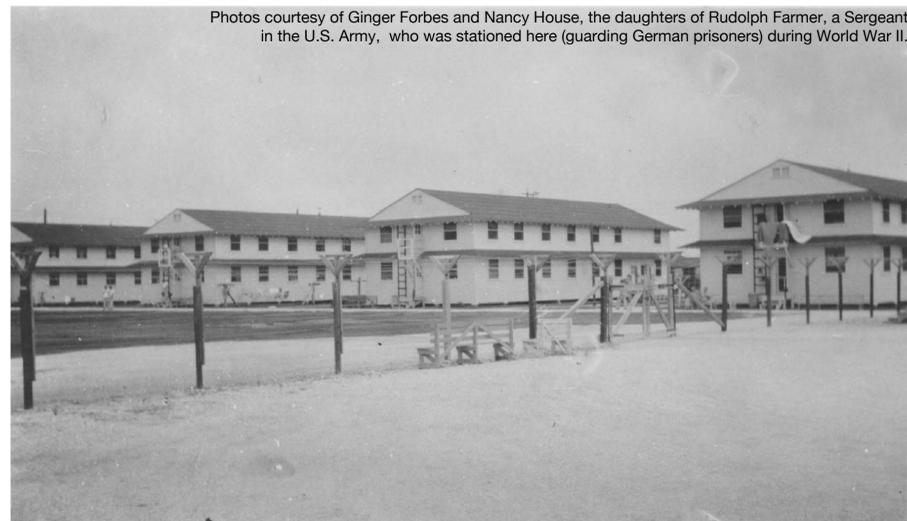
# World War II



Courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX



Courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX



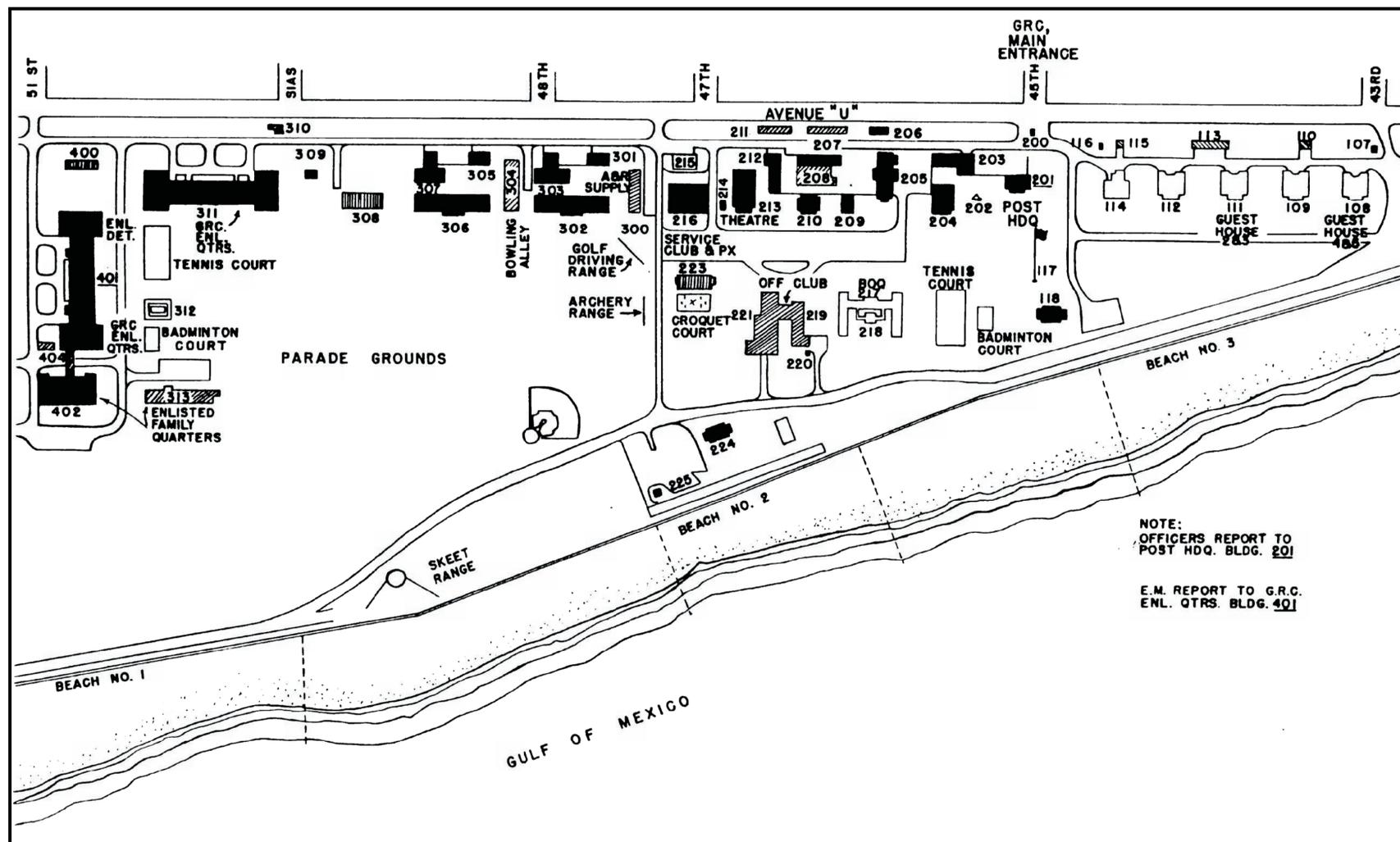
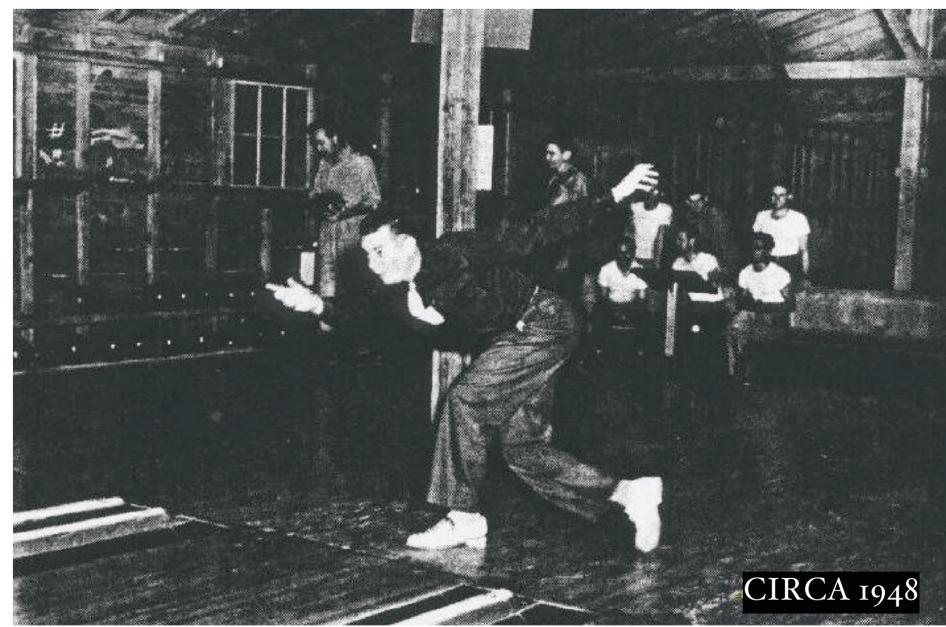
Photos courtesy of Ginger Forbes and Nancy House, the daughters of Rudolph Farmer, a Sergeant in the U.S. Army, who was stationed here (guarding German prisoners) during World War II.



Work on the fortifications of the fort was resumed in 1942 when the menace of German submarines entering the Gulf of Mexico, sinking merchant ships, and threatening the coastal ports and industries became apparent. The army engineers began by casemating Battery Hoskins to withstand an attack of 5,000 pound naval shells. Before casemating, the projectile rooms, powder rooms, and plotting rooms were covered by concrete and earth and the two 12 inch barbette guns stood in the open. Two heavy casemates and the mechanical and electrical equipment necessary to update the guns were designed. The work was done in complete secrecy and was finished in 1943.

Fort Crockett became a prisoner of war camp in 1943 when the first group of 165 POWs arrived in Galveston. The compound was from 53rd Street to 57th Street and from Avenue Q to Seawall Boulevard. The compound fence went across the Boulevard, down to the beach and across the beach into the water. A total of 650 POWs were detained at the camp until it was deactivated May 8, 1946.

# Post World War II.



After having been blocked off from traffic at the start of the war in 1941, the Seawall Boulevard was reopened past the fort on July 22, 1948. From 1948 to 1951 the fort served as the Galveston Recreation Center for the Fourth Army. Single enlisted GI's could stay at the Recreation Center for 2 a week. There was an additional charge of 50 cents per day for dependents over the age of sixteen. Entertainment included tennis, fishing, bowling, dancing, bingo, archery, baseball, golf, sunbathing, horseback riding and much more.

# Where Are They Now?

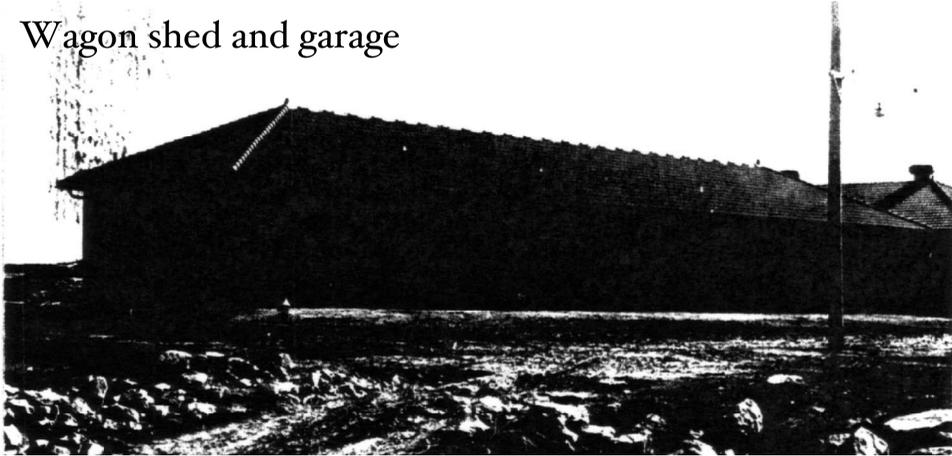
Administration Building



Beach View Apartments



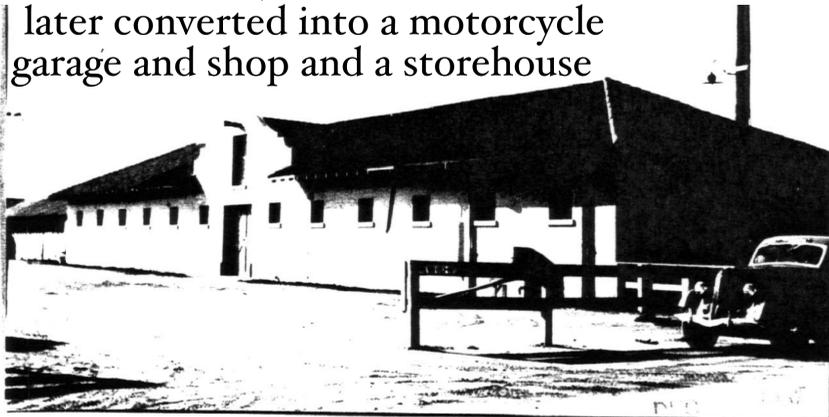
Wagon shed and garage



LuLu's Salon and Day Spa



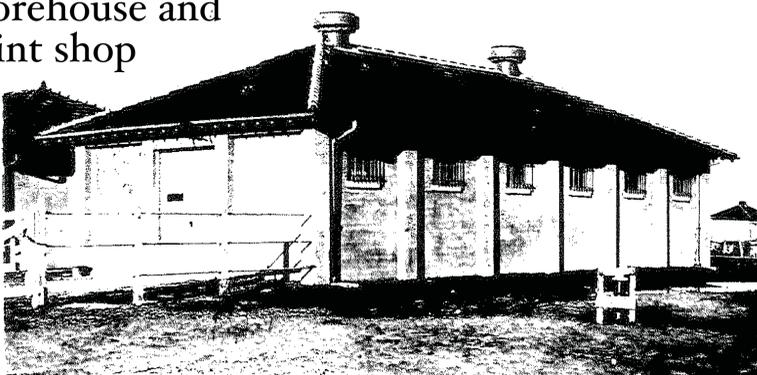
Harness room, officer's saddle room  
later converted into a motorcycle  
garage and shop and a storehouse



First Step Learning Center



Storehouse and  
paint shop



By 1951 the fort was again on a caretaker basis. In 1953 the fort was declared surplus, and three years later was released to the General Services Administration for disposal.

Fishery Research at Fort Crockett began in 1950 when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gulf Fishery Investigations were housed in a single building just east of the Post Exchange. In 1956 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Service acquired 10 buildings at our current site.

1957 the GSA began to auction off tracts of the reservation. Some of the property was cleared and sold to private parties for the construction of apartments and commercial establishments. Two large hotels, The San Luis and the Holiday Inn, now occupy this part of the Fort Crockett Military Reservation. The remaining buildings and property were transferred to the National Marine Fisheries Service within the Department of Commerce in 1970.

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to acknowledge the following organizations, individuals, and documents for providing the source for the materials in this display.

Information on Fort Crockett was paraphrased from information provided by the Galveston Historical Foundation  
Research by Betty Hartman

*The Great Galveston Disaster : Contaning a Full and Thrilling Account of the Most Appalling Calamity of Modern Times*  
by Paul Lester  
(Published circa 1900)

Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX

*Fort Crockett (Before and After the 1900 Storm)*  
Compliments of Mr. Dale A. Manuel  
Chairman, Coastal Defense Study Group

*Documents Recording Construction and Maintenance of Buildings at the U.S. Army Ft. Crockett (now NOAA Fisheries) During the 1900's*  
Provided by Mr. Bolling Smith

*Galveston Recreation Center, Fort Crockett, Texas*

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Ginger Forbes and Nancy House