



The Palo Alto Battlefield - Song and Vocabulary

Tune-The Ants Go Marching One by One

2,300 men and 400 wagons¹ marched
 2,300 men and 400 wagons marched
 Zachary Taylor² led his men
 From Point Isabel to Fort Texas³ again
 But they stopped at Palo Alto Field⁴
 A battle was about to begin

March, March, March, March,
 March, March, March, March

The Mexican General Arista⁵
 Had cannon blocking the road.
 They sat in the prairie waiting for Taylor
 Is what I have been told.

They fired cannons and they missed.
 The U.S. responded and hit and hit.
 And they fought for hours in the prairie.

(Motion: Ram cannon.)

Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom,
 Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom

The Palo Alto Battlefield
 A National Historic Site⁶
 On May 8, 1846 our troops had quite a fight.
 The Mexican forces withdrew their strike.
 Resaca de la Palma was their new sight.⁷
 Taylor fought the Battle of Palo Alto.

1. **2,300 men and 400 wagons:** The U.S. General Zachary Taylor was traveling with 2,300 soldiers and 400 supply wagons. His goal was to bring supplies to the soldiers stationed at Fort Texas.

2. **General Zachary Taylor** (1784-1850): Zachary Taylor – an honored Army General – wore a plain uniform and straw hat. Having been a soldier his entire life, he understood the hardships of his men. Unlike other Generals, Taylor fought alongside his fellow soldiers, earning their loyalty and respect. His modesty and dedication to the troops earned this leader the nickname “Old Rough and Ready.”

After the Battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Taylor was a national hero. However, after slow progress, arguments over supplies and **tactics**, President Polk replaced Taylor with General Scott – a man who wanted to be President. To the public, Taylor was still a patriotic hero and he was offered a Presidential **nomination**. Even though he had no desire to be President, he said that he would honor the people’s decision and serve his country if elected. In 1849, the people elected this loyal leader to be the next U.S. President.

Vocabulary

- **Unassuming:** Modest; Not boastful
- **Tactics:** The science and art of arranging and moving soldiers in battle
- **Nomination:** The process of choosing a candidate for election

3. **Point Isabel to Fort Texas:** General Taylor had traveled to Point Isabel (today Port Isabel) from Fort Texas to gather supplies and **fortify** the U.S. supply **depot** Fort Polk. Taylor left Fort Texas under the command of Major Jacob Brown. While at Point Isabel, the Mexican Army bombarded the Fort with cannonballs. After securing his supplies, Taylor traveled on the Point Isabel-Matamoros road to break the **siege**.

Vocabulary

- **Fortify:** To strengthen
- **Depot:** A place where military supplies are kept

4. **Stopped at Palo Alto Field:** The Mexican General Mariano Arista and 3,200 soldiers put cannon on the Point Isabel-Matamoros road – the road Taylor was traveling on. The Mexican infantry battleline stretched across the prairie.
5. **General Mariano Arista** (1802-1855): As a loyal leader of Mexico’s Northern Army, General Mariano Arista refused to support General Paredes’ government takeover. After becoming President, Paredes forced Arista into early retirement and chose Pedro Ampudia to be the new General of the Northern Army.

Citizens in the North didn’t trust Ampudia and demanded the return of their dedicated leader. Paredes complied and returned Arista to power only weeks before the Battle of Palo Alto.

Arista’s first order resulted in a Mexican victory in a **skirmish** at Rancho de Carricitos. But success was short-lived. As Mexican forces lost at Resaca de la Palma and abandoned Matamoros, Ampudia was put back in power.

Arista refused to give up and demanded that a military **tribunal** review his **strategies**. They did and declared “Perdío peleando” (he went down fighting). Arista determination led him be Secretary of War and, in 1851, to become President of the Mexican Republic.

Vocabulary

- Ambitious: Showing ambition (Eager desire for fame, power, or to achieve a particular goal)
- Skirmish: A minor fight between small bodies of troops
- Tribunal: Court of justice
- Strategy: Plan of attack

6. **Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site:** Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park Service. Palo Alto preserves the site of the first battle of the U.S.-Mexican War and educates visitors about the causes and consequences of Battle and War.

Palo Alto Battlefield NHS has a visitor center with museum exhibits and a video. A trail leads to an overlook of the battlefield with flags and cannon marking the battlelines. Picnic facilities are available.

7. **Resaca de la Palma:** Resaca de la Palma, fought on May 9, 1846, the day after the Battle of Palo Alto, was the second battle of the U.S.-Mexican War. The Mexican Army moved down the Point Isabel-Matamoros road and blocked the road at Resaca de la Palma, a dry abandoned river channel of the Rio Grande. U.S. and Mexican troops fought in the dense chaparral surrounding the Resaca. Today the Brownsville Community Foundation works with the National Park Service to preserve this battlefield.



The Palo Alto Battlefield – Song and Motions

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²¹Taylor fought the Battle of Palo Alto.

7. March in place.
8. Stop.
9. March forward.
10. March backward.
11. Salute.
12. Put one hand out as if to stop someone.
13. Put the other hand out as if to stop someone.
14. Pretend to sit.
15. Sweep arms out.
16. Put arms out.
17. Put finger out, as if telling someone something.
18. Cross your right arm over your chest.
19. Move your right arm over, sweeping over your head.
20. Move your left arm over, sweeping over your head
21. Hit the air in front of you three times on the beat.
22. Put your right and left arms up (horizontal). Take a step to your right keeping your right arm up and your left hand pretends to hold and push a stick.) (This is the motion for ramming a cannonball.)
23. Step in place.
24. Put arms out in front.
25. Put arms back.
26. Pretend to be looking through a telescope.
27. Salute.



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