



Going back to Galveston

ASBPA, *Shore & Beach* and Galveston have a long history. If ASBPA had been around in 1900, I am sure that at least one full issue of *Shore & Beach* would have been dedicated to the Galveston hurricane and likely a second issue to the rebuilding and recovery. Instead, some of the conference discussions and early issues of *Shore and Beach* (the “&” did not occur until much later) covered the Galveston Seawall and discussions related to private-public property issues that develop out of shoreline structures, as well as issues related to beach erosion and accretion and the costs for different protective structures. The earliest comprehensive discussion of the Galveston Seawall was included in Volume 29, Number 2, from 1961, but it was not until 90 years after the Galveston storm that ASBPA gave the 1990 Project Award to the Galveston Seawall.

The 2018 National Coastal Conference will be held in Galveston. Since the 1900 storm, the city has changed greatly, to keep up with the times and also as a response to 20th and 21st century storms. It has gone through several direct hurricane strikes, most recently Hurricane Ike in 2008, during which all but the western end of the seawall remained standing. Conference attendees will have an opportunity to see the award-winning seawall among many of the recent changes to the city and the beaches that have been restored in response to ongoing storm activity.

As an introduction to the conference site, we are republishing the *Shore and Beach* article that accompanied the 1990 award. On our website, we are also providing links to the entire 2009 issue that was dedicated to Hurricane Ike and links to two articles from the 2013 issue that were intended to entice folks to attend the 2013 ASBPA conference on South Padre Island. One of these articles is about the geology of Texas beaches (by Richard Davis Jr.) and the other details hazard mapping of Mustang and North Padre Islands (by Eleonor Taylor and James Gibeaut).

Top: West end of Seawall Boulevard post-Ike. The wall is still intact (on left), but the roadway and sidewalks collapsed due to erosion caused by storm surge. Above left: A Galveston beachfront home west of the seawall. The foundation shown was about 5 ft (1.5 m) above the beach, and the structure was in the surf zone. Left: Damage from Ike to Galveston’s seawall. All images are from the Spring 2009 Hurricane Ike edition.

III. Protection of Galveston, Texas, From Overflows by Gulf Storms: Grade-Raising, Seawall and Embankment

ASBPA COASTAL PROJECT AWARD FOR 1990

BY ROBERT L. WIEGEL

THE GALVESTON SEAWALL AND GRADE-RAISING was designed and constructed to protect the people and property of Galveston, Texas, from hurricane storm surges and waves. The planning started shortly after the great hurricane of 8 September 1900 took an estimated 6,000 lives. The project, with additions has been eminently successful. The ASBPA recognizes this achievement by presenting the 1990 Coastal Projects Award to the County of Galveston, the City of Galveston, and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District.

THE COASTAL PROJECT

On 8 September 1900, Galveston, Texas, was struck by the storm surge, waves and wind of a severe hurricane. About 6,000 of the city's population of 38,000 were killed. It has been reported that 3,600 (one article states 2,600) buildings were destroyed^{1, 10, 11} and that the damage amounted to about \$25,000,000.

Such storms had occurred in 1834, 1837, 1847, 1854, 1867, 1875, and in 1886, but this one was more severe by far. In the 1900 storm, water reached an elevation of 15.7 feet at Eighth Street and Avenue B, and at least 10 feet at the Southern Pacific Wharf on the Bay. In about 1875 a survey of levels had been made: the natural surface of the ground in the streets was a maximum of 8.9 feet above the ordinary high tide level of the Gulf; the average elevation from 6th to 39th Street was about 5.8 feet and the the ground west of 39th Street was approximately 3.7 feet.² During the "phenomenal storms" listed above, the city had been completely or extensively submerged, but not to such great depths as during the 1900 storm.

In November, 1901, the Board of Commissioners of the City of Galveston appointed a Board of Engineers (Brigadier General (retired) Harry M. Robert¹, Alfred Noble, and H. C. Ripley) to prepare a plan for the "protection of Galveston from overflows by Gulf Storms."² The report was presented on 25 January 1902 and printed in full in the Galveston *Daily News* of 26 January 1902. The objectives of the Board were:

- "1) To protect the city from the force of the waves and the currents in the severest storms known to occur in the Gulf.
- 2) To protect the city entirely from the water of the Bay and the Gulf in all such storms as occurred during the 50 years preceding 1900.
- 3) To prevent the water in the severest storms, such as the one in 1900, from ever reaching a depth in the city dangerous to life or property.
- 4) While providing for the above, to arrange the filling so as to secure sufficient elevation for drainage and sewerage."

To accomplish this, the Board proposed raising the city grade so the streets and lots would be sufficiently high for safety to life and property during severe storms, together with a seawall to protect the fill from wave and current forces. They proposed:

- "1) The building of a solid concrete wall, over three miles long, connecting with the south jetty near Eighth St., thence to Sixth and B, then across the island and down the beach as far as 39th St. The top of this wall to be 17 ft. above mean low water, or 1.3 ft. higher than the highest point reached by the water in the storm of 1900.
- 2) The raising of the city grade to 8 ft. at Avenue A, 10 ft. at Broadway, 12 ft. at Avenue P, and continuing this slope to the seawall. This corresponds to a rise of 1 ft. in 1,500 ft. from the Bay toward the Gulf.
- 3) The making of an embankment on top of this fill adjacent to the wall, and rising to a height of 18 ft. above lower water at a distance of 200 ft. from the wall, and thence sloping down on a grade of 1 in 50 to the surface of the fill."

¹BG Robert was Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, 30 April – 2 May 1901. He became famous for his *Pocket Manual of Rules of Order*, now known as *Robert's Rules of Order*.

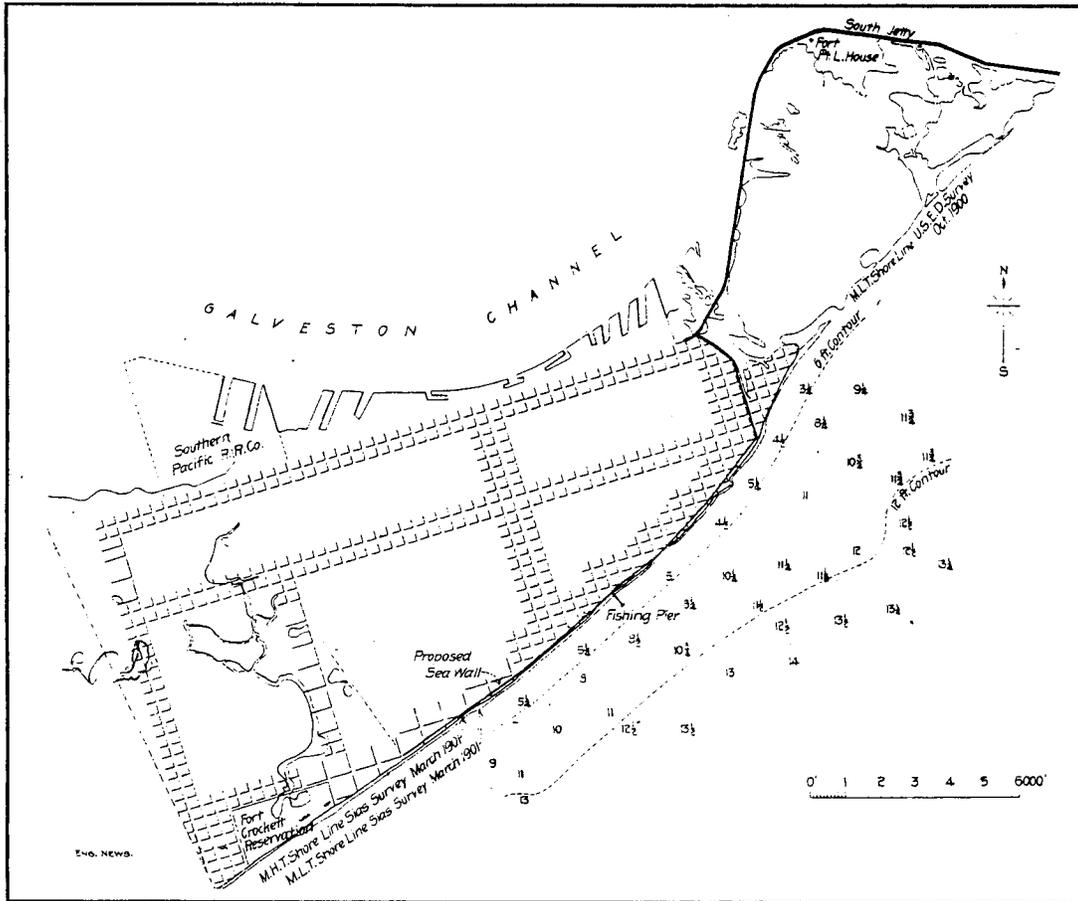


Figure 1a. Map of the City of Galveston, Showing Proposed Sea Wall for Flood Protection.²

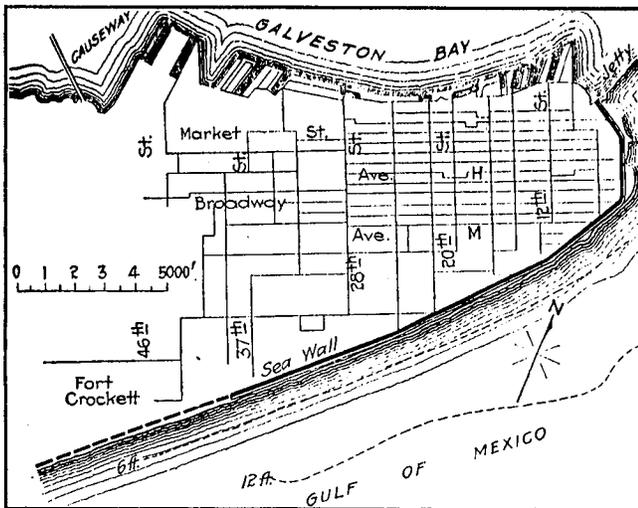


Figure 1b. Map of Galveston, Texas, Showing Seawall Main seawall shown by black line along south and east coast. Dotted line at west end of city is the wall built later by the Federal Government.⁴

The proposed location of the seawall is shown in Figure 1a, and a cross-section of the seawall shown in Figure 2. Location of the constructed seawall, both county and federal, and the street plan, are shown in Figure 1b. Cross-sections of the Board plan seawall and embankment are shown in Figure 3a, with the "as built" in Figure 3b.

Work on the seawall was started in October 1902, with the Galveston County's wall (about 3-1/3 miles) completed in July 1904 and the federal government extension (about one mile) along Fort Crockett Military Reservation completed in August 1905.³ The City of Galveston was responsible for the grade-raising within the city, with the extension of 100 feet along the seawall right-of-way to be carried out by the County³. As of August 1905 the grade-raising had been in progress 15 months and was expected to be completed in early 1907 (according to Walden¹⁷, it was actually completed on 8 August 1910 -- this was probably due to the additional work after the 1909 hurricane - Editor).

The fill material, about 12 million cubic yards of sand⁴, was obtained from the Bay and from between the government jetties. Hydraulic dredges were used, and a canal dug along the inside of the city limits and along the inside of the seawall for transporting the sand; the canal was filled at the end of the project³. More than 2,100 houses and other

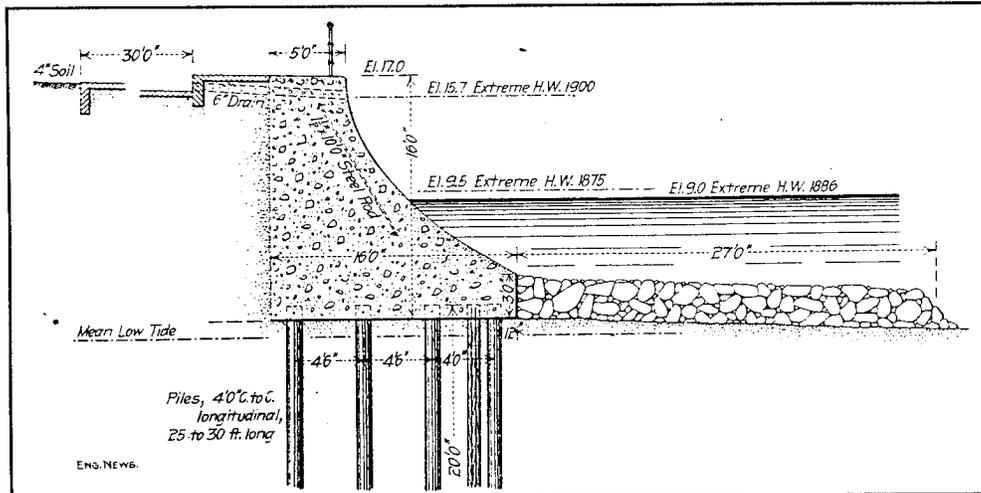


Figure 2. Cross-Section of Proposed Sea Wall on Gulf Side of Galveston.²

buildings had to be raised as part of this³. The county seawall cost a little over \$1,581,000, and the federal seawall \$295,000¹⁶ (or perhaps \$250,000¹⁰). The raising was estimated to cost about \$2 million^{6, 17}. Owners had to pay for the raising of their own buildings to the new grade. The federal project included an enlarged reservation up to a grade of 18 feet (\$750,000 was appropriated by Congress for the federal seawall and the grade-raising¹). Many interesting photos of the grade-raising project are in the article by Walden.¹⁷

The County embankment behind the seawall was actually built only 100 feet wide, with a maximum elevation of 16.6 feet, as shown in Figure 3b.^{10, 11}

A hurricane occurred on 21 July 1909 with a storm surge of about 6.6 feet above mean low tide. The county embankment behind the seawall severely scoured in places, and the storm water drained across the fill into the city rather than back into the Gulf as was the intent of the Board plan. The 200-foot wide embankment at Fort Crockett, which sloped from the 17-foot elevation seawall crest to 18 feet on the inland side performed as expected.^{1, 10} The county section was repaired and modified in a similar manner, as shown in Figure 3c.^{10, 11}

The hurricane of 16-17 August 1915 was as severe or perhaps even more so than the 1900 hurricane, owing to its making landfall about 30 miles south of Galveston.¹¹ The loss of life and property in Galveston was comparatively small^{4, 6}, being 12 deaths and total property damage of about \$4.5 million^{10, 11}. The storm surge reached to about 14 feet above mean low water, and was of long duration with the storm surge inundating the city for over 40 hours¹⁰. The grade-raising and seawall served their function well.⁵ According to an editorial in the *Engineering News* on 26 August 1915⁵:

“The wall admirably served its primary purpose -- to keep the Gulf waves from battering down the structures that line the south shore of Galveston Island; but its secondary function -- to act as a dam

to keep the high water out of the streets -- was successful only by the aid of the less spectacular but equally efficient grade elevation, which was in reality the most important work following the disaster of 1900. The fact that most of the flood damage seems to have been on the north side of the island where grades are still nearly as low as they were before 1900 points the way to future work.”

The seawall was undermined in places, exposing the wood pile foundation, but some of these gaps were refilled naturally with sand by the receding tide, with no damage to the seawall^{6, 9}. High waves caused much scour along the foot of the seawall. The granite riprap apron in front of the wall dropped in many places and the sand beach scoured away to the depth of as much as three feet, exposing the wood sheet-pile foundation (and to the possible attack by *Terredos*); this was repaired with more than 24,000 tons of riprap placed along the toe of the wall. Essentially, no damage was done to the wall itself. Damage occurred to portions of the backfill and streets by water overtopping the seawall. The original backfill project had not been completed as far cityward as needed, but where there was sufficient backfill to prevent the water overtopping the wall from getting under the pavement, damage to the pavement was prevented.⁶ The storm surge did sweep around the city, and backed up in the Bay to the northeast and submerged streets to an approximate depth of six feet, choking sewers with sand and silt, and putting the gas and electric light system out of commission.⁶ Major damage was done to the causeway across Galveston Bay.⁶

General Robert was asked to review the problem and to make recommendations for improvement of the protecting works. He recommended the paving on top of the revetment be extended to a width of 100 feet, install a reinforced concrete sheet pile bulkhead along the landward side of the pavement with its top at elevation of 19 feet, and that the embankment be raised for the remaining 100 feet to an elevation of 21 feet, see Figure 3d. The work was started

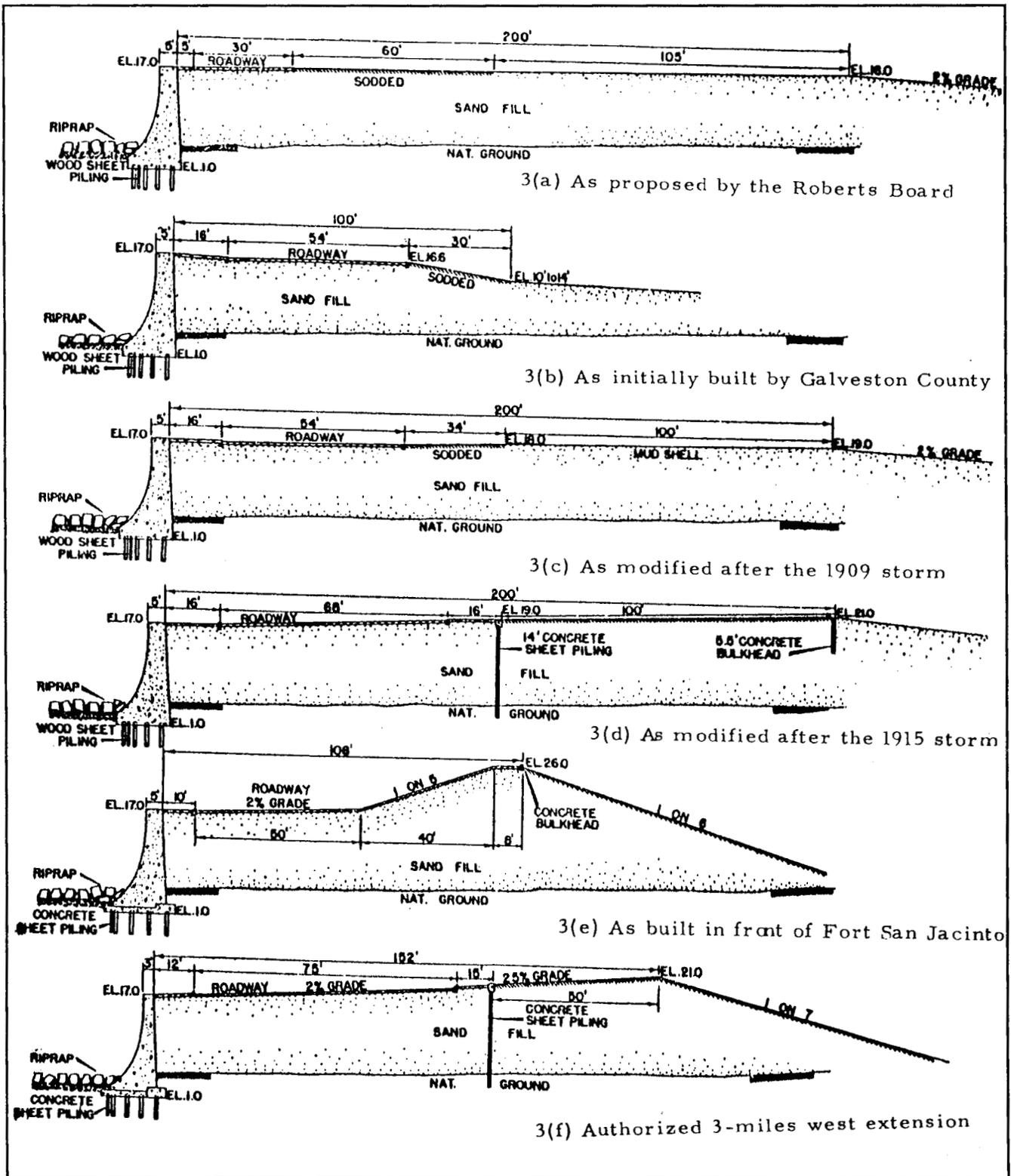


Figure 3. Cross-Sections of the Sea Wall and Embankment.¹¹

immediately. In addition, a concrete bulkhead, five feet high and one foot thick, was built along the landward side of the embankment.^{10, 11}

A special board of engineer officers (Col. Edward Burr, Lt. Col. Lansing H. Beach, and Lt. Col. C. S. Riche) met in Houston, Texas, in January 1913, and their report printed in House Document No. 1390, 62nd Congress, 3rd Session. In regard to the safety of Galveston Harbor and Fort San Jacinto they stated, as given in Henderson:¹⁵

“The most desirable method, one which would not only support this narrow part of Galveston Island from being breached by a storm, but also provide suitable communications to and from Port San Jacinto and protection for its garrison, would consist of an extension of the Galveston seawall from its angle at 6th Street and Broadway to and around the Fort San Jacinto batteries, thence following the south jetty and just inside thereof, to the intersection of said jetty with the present southern boundary of the reservation. Such a sea wall, with a suitable fill behind it, would not only afford all necessary facilities for a garrison at Fort San Jacinto and for its communications, but would render Galveston Harbor safe from obstruction by such a storm as that of 1900. It would also render impossible any flanking of the jetties by the cutting of a channel to the south

of them and would permit the erection of wharves along the channel from the eastern end of the present wharves to the boundary line of Fort San Jacinto Reservation.”

The special board recommended a 10,300 foot extension of the seawall, as shown in Figure 4. The county of Galveston was to pay for the first 3,300 feet (to the boundary of the military reservation) and the U. S. for the remaining 7,000 feet. Authority to proceed was dated 20 October 1917 and actual construction started on 20 June 1918. During construction, approval was given to change from wood sheet piles to reinforced concrete sheet piles (the last 4,600 feet of the wall).

Typical cross-sections of the seawall are shown in Figure 5¹⁵, and a cross-section of the wall and revetment in Figure 3e. During construction, a hurricane occurred, on 13-14 September 1919, with a maximum water level at Galveston of 8.8 feet above M.L.T. The storm passed about 180 miles south of Galveston.¹⁰ Considerable scour occurred, and about 250,000 cubic yards of fill had to be placed in the scoured portion.¹⁵ The seawall was completed in March 1921.

Another federal project was the extension of the seawall eastward across Fort San Jacinto Reservation to the south jetty, a length of 2,860 feet. The wall and revetment were constructed between May 1923 and January 1926. The

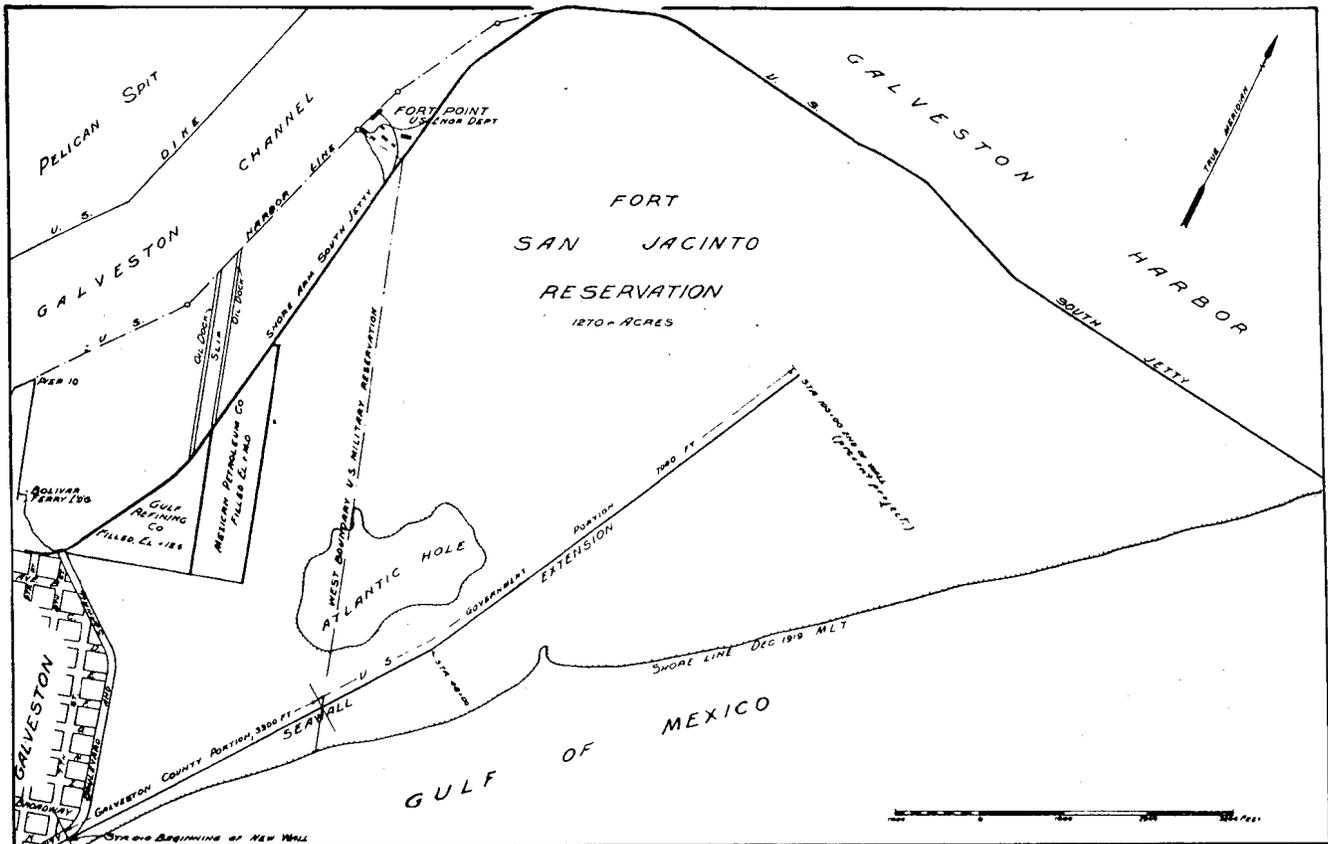


Figure 4. East End of Galveston Island, Showing Locations of Seawall Extension.¹⁵

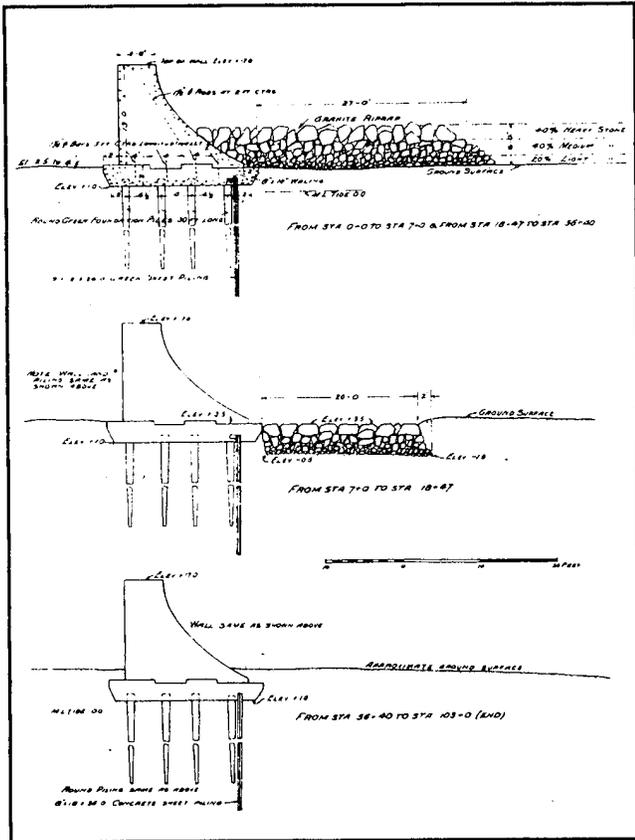


Figure 5. Typical Cross-Sections of Seawall as Constructed.¹⁵

cross-section was the same as for the previously built wall across the reservation.¹⁰ According to Alperin¹, much of the fill for the military reservation was dredged from the ship channel.

Owing to the growth of Galveston, the County built a 2,800 foot extension of the seawall between 53rd and 61st Streets, which was completed in June 1927. The city continued to expand to the west, and Congress authorized a three-mile extension. The County constructed the first mile between 1951 and 1953 for \$2,870,000. The remaining two miles were constructed by the U. S. between 1958 and 1963 at a cost of \$6,465,000.¹ The location of the wall is shown in Figure 6, and the cross-section of seawall and embankment is shown in Figure 3f.^{10,11}

The total length of the seawall is just over 10 miles¹⁶. Walden¹⁷ gives the total cost of the seawall as \$15,465,000.

The great storm Hurricane Carla struck the Texas coast on 9 September 1961. It made landfall approximately 100 miles southwest of Galveston. The highest tide registered at Galveston was 10 feet. Carla's storm surge and waves caused no loss of life or destruction of houses in Galveston.¹¹

Hurricane Alicia, a relatively small hurricane, made landfall on the western tip of Galveston Island at about 0700 GMT on 18 August 1983. The maximum water levels measured by tide gages in Galveston were: 9.0 feet above NGVD at Pleasure Pier, 5.8 feet at Pier 21, and 6.1 feet at Fort

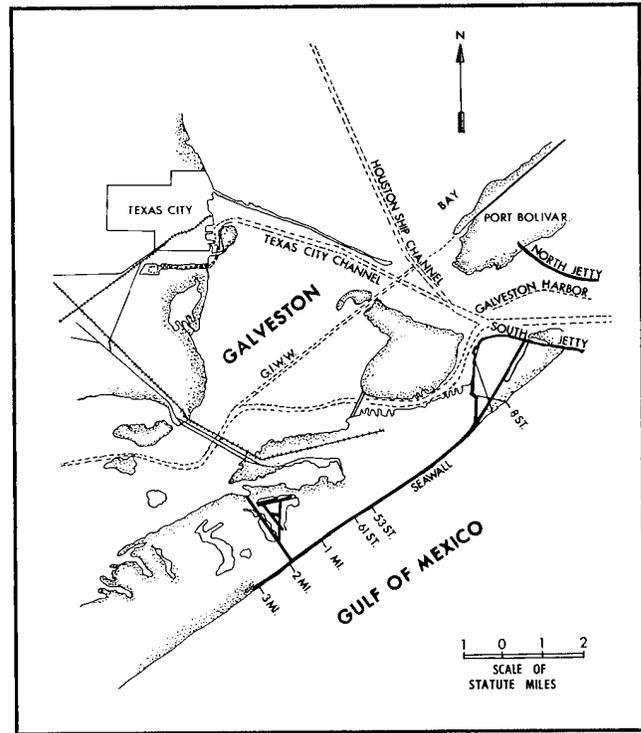


Figure 6. Location of the 10-mile Long Galveston Seawall.¹⁶

Point.¹³ The storm surge did not exceed the +15 feet NGVD elevation of the top of the seawall. According to Garcia:¹³

“Storm damage was limited to wind damage, some wave overtopping of the seawall, and flooding of low-lying areas near the causeway on the bay side. At East Beach, seaward of the Galveston seawall, the surge reached approximately +7 feet NGVD, causing extensive damage to residences and commercial buildings and leaving large debris piles at the base of the seawall. Surge levels on the Bolivar Peninsula reached +7 to +8 feet NGVD between the western end of the peninsula and Crystal Beach, rising from both the Gulf and Bay sides of the peninsula but failing to inundate Highway 87 and many homes built on high ground along the highway.”

Hurricane Jerry, a relatively small storm crossed the Texas coast on 15 October 1989. Three people were killed as a result of their pickup truck being washed over the Galveston seawall.⁷ Little damage was done to buildings, other than by wind.

A survey of the elevation of the top of the seawall was given by Davis, Jr.,¹⁰ with the survey date shown as 1951 (Davis's later, 1961¹¹ paper gives the same figure). At that time (1951) the settlement ranged from 1.45 feet near the east end of the seawall to only 0.1 foot near the central portion (at about 27th Street) which was built in 1902-1904. Portions of the Houston-Galveston region have had major subsidence owing to groundwater withdrawal^{12,14}, with as much as nine feet subsidence in one section between 1900

and 1987. The subsidence at Galveston Island appears to have been one-foot or less during this interval.¹⁴ In 1975, the Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District was created to regulate the withdrawal of groundwater for the purpose of controlling subsidence which causes or contributes to flooding.¹⁴ The program has been successful in some regions as a direct result of reducing groundwater withdrawals. Amongst other things, the District gathers data from 11 subsidence monitors, the one nearest Galveston City being at Texas City. The monitors at Texas City, Baytown, and Pasadena show almost no subsidence from about 1980 to the date of the report (1989).

There have been studies of the erosion of the beaches in the Galveston area (for example, Ref 8). Erosion has been a problem for a long time, preceding the construction of the seawall. Washington¹⁸ mentions that there was decided erosion at the east end of the island, and a slight accretion from First to Ninth Streets between 1838 and 1850, and other details. From 1850 to 1893 there was marked erosion from about two miles from the east end of the island west to about 23rd Street, with some accretion between 23rd and 29th Streets. The construction of the jetties began in 1887 and completed in 1910, with the south (island) jetty being built first.

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The ASBPA's 11th annual photography contest

The editors of *Shore & Beach* announce the ASBPA's 11th annual photography competition. The purpose of the contest is to highlight the beauty and natural wonders of America's magnificent coasts as part of celebrating more than 80 years of continuous publication of *Shore & Beach*.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE: The competition is open to all except ASBPA consultants and/or their immediate families (children, spouses, parents).

SUBJECT MATTER AND RULES: Any photographs depicting the coastal zone are appropriate. These include, but are not limited to beaches, bluffs, marinas, wetlands, marine life, recreational facilities, and engineered projects as long as they include the setting in which they were built (i.e. no portraits of dredges or your favorite armor unit).

Manipulated photographs (colorized, posterized, solarized, etc.) are also welcome if the photographer briefly describes the changes or procedure. The original base photograph must have been taken by the submitter.

Submissions must be made in one of the geographic categories listed below.

Winning photographs may be used as cover art on *Shore & Beach*. Therefore, VERTICAL-format photographs are highly preferred. Horizontal photographs can be submitted, too, but if a horizontal format photograph is a winner in one of the categories below, the editors of ASBPA may have to crop some of the scene, at their sole discretion, to fit on the cover of *Shore & Beach*.

Photographs must have been taken since 1 January 2017. Photographs can be full-color, black and white, sepia, or colorized.

CATEGORIES:

- U.S. East Coast
- U.S. Gulf of Mexico Coast
- Caribbean (Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands)
- U.S. Pacific Coast and Alaska
- U.S. Great Lakes
- Pacific (Hawaiian Islands, Guam, etc.)

SUBMISSION: Participants are to send electronic files in JPEG, TIFF or BMP format to the following e-mail address: contest@ASBPA.org. Please send:

The full-size JPEG file as created in your camera (note, minimum camera resolution of 3 megapixels to allow for sufficient printing quality for cover art) or a reduced-size file (800x600 pixels minimum). Winners will have to send the full-size file later.

Each participant may submit up to three (3) photographs total. Photographers may submit all entries in a single category or select different categories as long as the total does not exceed three photographs.

Do not submit RAW files because there are too many manufacturer-specific formats. Convert RAW files to JPEG or TIFF files.

Also, please do not submit prints or transparencies of any size. ASBPA simply does not have the facilities to properly scan materials and handle the logistics of physical submissions.

In the text of the email, please include the following information:

- 1) Your name
- 2) Physical address
- 3) Email address
- 4) Occupation and place of employment
- 5) Photograph title or description
- 6) Date taken
- 7) Category (see list above)
- 8) Indicate if submission is full-size original or reduced size file for contest purpose.
- 9) Other notes if necessary (what is happening if it is an unusual scene, why you took the photograph, etc.).

WHEN: Deadline for submitting entries is 11:59 p.m. EDT on 7 September 2018.

PRIZES:

Winner in each category will have his (her) name and photograph printed in either *Shore & Beach* or the "Coastal Voice" e-newsletter, or both.

A Grand Prize winner will be selected from among the category winners to have his or her photograph printed on the cover of *Shore & Beach* and receive a one-year annual membership renewal to ASBPA.

Other entries of outstanding merit may be printed in "Coastal Voice," *Shore & Beach*, or on the ASBPA website. (Note: The editors may contact you for more information).

THE FINE PRINT:

LEGAL CONDITIONS:

By entering the contest, photographers agree to the following entry rules and conditions.

Your entry in the contest constitutes your agreement to allow your photographs and your name, occupation, city and state of residence to be published as a selected award winner in *Shore & Beach*, used on websites owned by the ASBPA or otherwise displayed or published in association with ASBPA and its activities. The American Shore & Beach Preservation Association retains permission in perpetuity for future use of the photographs in any and all ASBPA publications, materials, or activities.

Your entry in the contest also constitutes your agreement that your name, likeness, city, and winning photograph(s) may be used by ASBPA for promotional and publication purposes without compensation.

Participant warrants that his or her entry materials are original, do not infringe on any third party's rights, and that the participant has obtained any and all necessary permissions and releases from any third party if such third party appears in the photograph. Permission may not be needed for persons depicted in photographs taken in public settings such as crowded beaches where the purpose of the photograph is to show the overall setting or the environment.

ASBPA reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to disqualify any entry, and/or to not name winners in any category where photos of sufficient quality or quantity have not been received.

ASBPA reserves the right to alter the photographs submitted as it sees fit.

By entering, participants release and hold harmless the ASBPA and its officers, contractors, attorneys, agents and representatives from any and all liability for any injuries, loss, claim, action, demand or damage of any kind arising from or in connection with the contest or any prize won, any use of the entry materials by ASBPA.

ASBPA is not responsible for any incorrect or inaccurate information by any technical or human error that may occur in the processing of submissions to the ASBPA, including but not limited to any misprints or typographical errors.

ASBPA reserves the right at its sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify, extend or suspend the contest.

ASBPA will not share or sell your personal information to any party, and winners' full addresses will not be printed.

All decisions by the ASBPA judges will be final and binding. Editors and officers of ASBPA will serve as the review and judging committee.

