

MEDINA DAM  
Mico vicinity  
Medina County  
Texas

HAER TX-130  
*HAER TX-130*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## MEDINA DAM

### HAER No. TX-130

- Location:** Mico vicinity, Medina County, Texas
- Dates of Construction:** 1910-1912
- Engineers:** G. White Caldwell, supervising engineer  
Clint Kearney, chief engineer  
Willis Ranney, resident engineer at dam site
- Current Owner, Use:** Bexar-Atascosa-Medina County Water Improvement District Number One; irrigation and recreation in southern Texas
- Significance:** When it was completed in 1912, Medina Dam was the fourth largest dam in the United States and the largest in Texas. The project was one of the largest water supply systems built in the United States with private capital.
- Description:** Medina Dam is a gravity-type design that contains 292,000 cubic yards of concrete and impounds 250,000 acre-feet of water. It is 1,580' along its top and 164' high above the river bed. The thickness of the dam ranges from 25' at the top to 128' at the base.
- Water for irrigation is released from the reservoir (Medina Lake), diverted 4 miles downstream, and carried by a canal south 24 miles to the Natalia area, a town named for the daughter of Dr. Pearson.
- History:** Dr. F.S. Pearson formed the Medina Irrigation Company in 1910 with the backing of British capital. The plan of the venture was to build a dam to impound a large supply of water that could be carried south by a canal and used for irrigation when needed. Edward Wegmann, a well-known New York consulting engineer, selected the profile for the dam, and construction began in July 1911. Using large numbers of laborers imported for the purpose from Mexico, dam construction (together with work on the smaller diversion dam and the canal system) progressed through 1911 and into 1912. Over 292,000 cubic yards of concrete were poured until its completion in November 1912. It was one of the largest water-supply projects ever financed by private capital and cost over \$1.5 million in 1912.

**Sources:**

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Kuehne, Reverend Cyril Matthew, S.M. *Ripples from Medina Lake*. San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1966.

McGough, Lorna Elaine. "Chronicle of Natalia, Texas." *Junior Historian* XII, no. 3 (December 1951): 9-10.

Miller, Walter Bedell. "The Medina Valley Development Project." *Junior Historian* IX, no. 2 (November 1948): 24-34.

Wegmann, Edward. *The Design and Construction of Dams*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1927.

**Historians:** Steve Rae and T. Lindsay Baker, November 6, 1971 and January 11, 1972

**Project**

**Information:** The Medina Dam was inventoried for the Historic American Engineering Record as part of the Southwest Water Resources Project, a joint project with the Texas Tech Water Resources Center. The survey was subsequently published as *Water for the Southwest: Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites* by the American Society of Civil Engineers in September 1973.