

# BHA Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

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April 2021

## The BHA and The Costumes of the Americas Museum

We are delighted to announce that the Costumes of the Americas Museum recently merged with the Brownsville Historical Association. This “new addition” enhances our mission of promoting the cultural arts and history of our region.

The museum is the result of the Pan American Round Table (PART) movement that began in San Antonio in 1916. The Table was founded to help promote friendliness and understanding among the women of the Western Hemisphere. The movement began to grow, and in 1932, an honorary member of the Mexico City Round Table, Bessie Kirkland Johnson founded the 5th Table in Brownsville. Mrs. Johnson brought a collection of authentic Mexican costumes and handicrafts, thus becoming one of Mexico's leading authorities on that country's folklore and native dress. Mrs. Johnson challenged each member of Brownsville PART to acquire a costume from her assigned country. She saw the acquisition of costumes from different parts of the Americas as a method of learning more about these countries and their women. The ladies took up Mrs. Johnson's challenge, and thus began one of the finest costume collections in the Western Hemisphere. The collection was protected in suitcases and stored in garages, closets and living rooms all over the city of Brownsville.

In 1997, PART was approached by the Dean Porter Park Renovation Committee and offered the opportunity to occupy part of the Mitte Cultural Education Center within Dean Porter Park. In

order to protect the Table's collection, the Pan American Round Table I Costume Corporation, a recognized tax-exempt corporation, was formed. The Table transferred their entire collection to the Corporation

for safekeeping and management of Costumes of the Americas Museum (CAM). The Mitte Cultural Education Center opened its doors on May 6, 2005. The Museum has shared its unique collection with the public ever since.

Over the years, the collection has grown as a result of acquisitions, gifts and bequests such as that of Mrs. Johnson. It is now one of the

largest collections of authentic North, Central, and South American costumes. Complete with petticoats, shoes, jewelry, headpieces and accessories each costume has a story to tell and an authentic manner in which to wear it.

For over 80 years, Brownsville women have collected, preserved and exhibited over 600 indigenous costumes, textiles and folk art of the Americas. The CAM was operated by a volunteer Board of Directors and they took great care and sentiment to build a museum dedicated to the appreciation and preservation of the history and cultural heritage embodied by these costumes;

currently over 3,000 unique and priceless pieces.

The Costumes of the Americas Museum will move to its new location on 6th Street (formally the Old City Cemetery Center) this summer. This historical building is an ideal location to revitalize a



*Continued on page 2*

## The BHA and The Costumes of the Americas Museum *(Continued)*

collection showcasing the life's-work of Brownsville women since 1938. Years of dedication to collect and preserve indigenous costumes will continue to be shared, strengthened by the merger with the BHA. Some former CAM board members, many of whom still volunteer today, will serve on the Costumes Museum Committee and provide invaluable information and historical reference for the costume collection.

Liza Nuñez  
BHA Staff



*Future home of the Costumes of the Americas Museum, 1004, E. Sixth Street, Brownsville, Texas*

# Welcome!

**NEW BHA MEMBERS**

Maria Roussett  
Wendy Berger  
Teddy Renfrow  
Miguel Roberts

Delma Tercero  
Chuck & Cristina Tijerina  
Yoland Pizano  
Victor Lozano

Natalia Moore  
Evelyn Perales  
Tim Barry

## INTERN SPOTLIGHT

We are fortunate to have interns and volunteers whose time and effort help support the BHA's mission. In this issue we would like to introduce to you one of our spring semester interns.

**Cassandra Ramirez** is a senior majoring in anthropology at UTRGV. One of the things she enjoys about her studies is the ability to apply the skills she has learned in everyday by making observations and drawing conclusions. In the future, she hopes to use her degree to work as a consultant for a business in which she would take an anthropological approach to issues by observing, surveying, and proposing solutions. Over the course of this internship, Cassandra has enjoyed the opportunity to learn something new every day, work with collections, and examine daily museum operations. She also learned about the amount of work that goes into maintaining and tracking the inventory of documents, artifacts, and displays. Cassandra commented, "It's a lot, but fun to be able to hold history right in the palm of your hands and Brownsville is rich in history." Overall, she felt her internship allowed her the opportunity to see the BHA's internal organization and observe it as she would a business in the future.

### Sponsorships help make this newsletter possible!

Please call us at 956-372-1515, to inquire about newsletter sponsorship opportunities, or visit our website at [www.brownvillehistory.org](http://www.brownvillehistory.org) for more information.



Darling-Mouser Funeral Home

## In DETAIL: Architectural Drawings of Robert Velten (Exhibit)

**When:** May 4, 2021 to July 31, 2021

**Where:** Heritage Museum, Vezzetti Room  
1325 E. Washington Street

**Cost:** Included with paid museum admission.

In honor of Preservation Month, the Brownsville Historical Association will exhibit a collection of architectural drawings by local architect Robert Velten. Learn about Velten and the various buildings he designed, including some notable structures in Brownsville that still stand today.

## Memorial Day at the Old City Cemetery



**When:** Monday, May 31, 2021

**Where:** Old City Cemetery  
Corner of 5th Street & E. Madison Street

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

**For more information or if you would like to volunteer please call: Dave Parsons 956-541-5560.**

Join us as we honor the veterans buried at the Old City Cemetery. Over 450 identified veterans representing wars from the Indian Wars, World War I & II and the Persian Gulf War are buried in the Old City Cemetery. Those buried represent both Union and Confederate Soldiers and several from the Mexican Revolution of the early 1900s. A U.S. flag will be placed on each identified veterans' grave. If you would like to volunteer by placing flags on veteran graves, please call Dave Parsons.



## International Museum Day - FREE Admission Day!

**When:** Tuesday, May 18, 2021 – 10 am to 4 pm

**Where:** Heritage Museum/Stillman House Museum and Historic Brownsville Museum

**For more information call: 956-548-1313**

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) established International Museum Day in 1977 to increase public awareness of the role in museums in the development of society, and it has been steadily gaining momentum ever since.

**Thank you for supporting the BHA!**

**7,000+ LIKES!**

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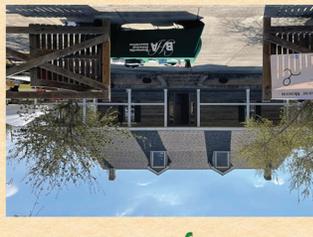
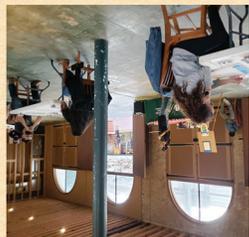
In early March, we reached over 7,000 likes on our Facebook page! Thank you to everyone for supporting the BHA. Remember you can also follow us on Instagram and Twitter. We hope to keep sharing more content with you and keep you up to date with our latest events.

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Sip N' Paint

Ranch Days at Laureles



Behind the Badge: Exhibit and Reception

Cocktails with a Curator



**HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS**