

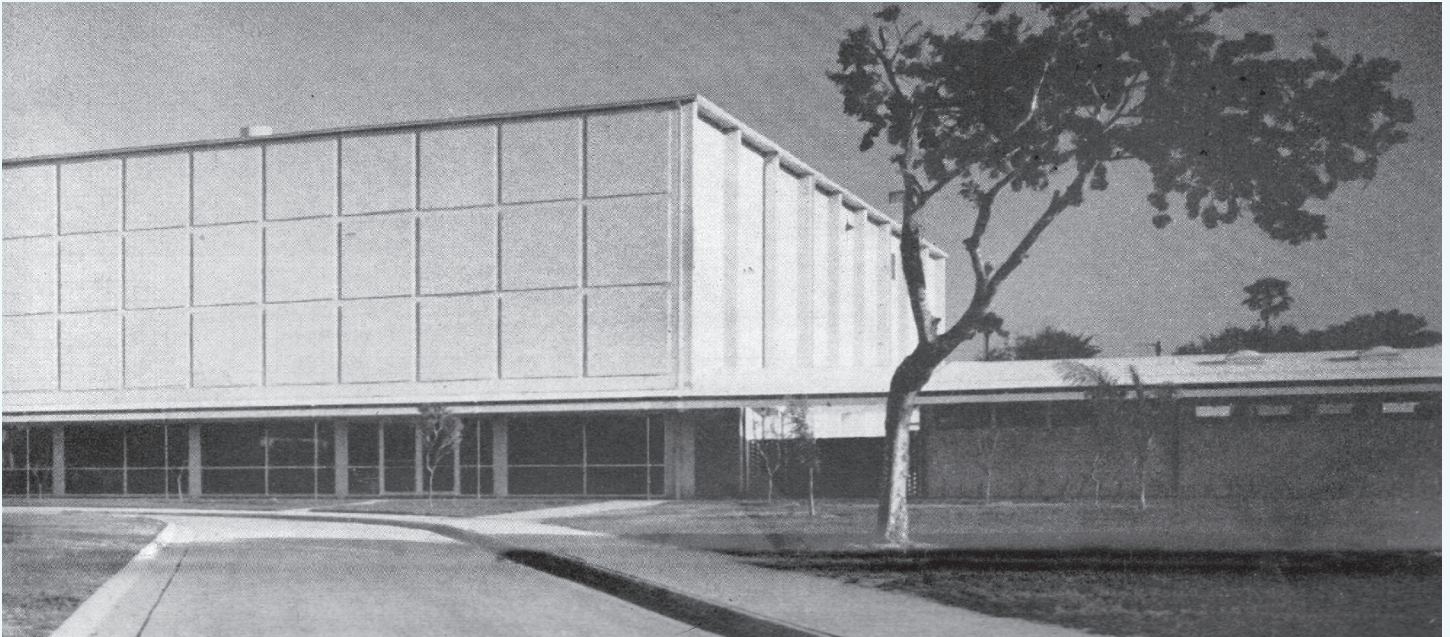
BHA Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

Volume 4, Issue 2

April 2018

The Campaign for the Fort Brown Memorial Center (Part 1)



BHA Archives

U. S. Army troops left Fort Brown for the last time in 1944, when the 124th Cavalry, one of the last horse cavalry units, departed for World War II action in Burma. At the end of the war military officials concluded that there was no longer a need to maintain frontier forts along the Mexican border and several were closed, including Fort Brown. In 1948, the government turned over most of the old fort to Texas Southmost College for its campus, but a small portion was awarded to the City of Brownsville for the “Fort Brown Memorial Park”.

It’s difficult for many people today to appreciate the impact that Fort Brown had on our community from its origin in 1846 through World War II, as it served as the center of social life in the city. Dinners, dances, parades, concerts, athletic contests and even polo matches provided entertainment for many. No less important was the economic impact of local purchases by the fort commissary and soldiers with their payroll money. The closure of the fort was a blow to the local economy. Considering its long history and involvement with the community, Fort Brown was clearly an institution worthy of a memorial.

As the 1950’s began, both the national and local economies began to grow. Local civic leaders recognized that meeting infrastructure needs was crucial to Brownsville’s continued growth. A

survey conducted by consulting engineers and completed in late September of 1950 recommended several improvements requiring funding through bond issues. A city election would determine the fate of proposals for funding projects for improving the city water and sewage system, increasing light and power production, improving and paving streets (only half of Brownsville’s streets were paved), and a drainage system involving the resacas. The preliminary cost of the projects was computed at \$6,500,000, a substantial burden for a small city of that era to assume.

To raise public awareness and promote the bond projects, city officials scheduled a public meeting, inviting representatives of thirty civic organizations. Sam Perl, haberdasher and lay rabbi for the Jewish community gave the keynote speech at the meeting, calling for a civic center that would “put Brownsville on the map” and “bring top-flight entertainment and more conventions to our city.” A swimming pool and library were to be included in the civic center proposal at a total cost of \$800,000. The delegates in attendance agreed to add civic center bond funding to the other issues to be voted on in December.

By Dr. Anthony Knopp, *BHA Board member and UTRVG professor emeritus*

(The second part of this article will appear in the next issue).

From the Executive Director...



The spring season comes as a warm welcome after experiencing an unusually cold winter for deep South Texas. I hope that you were

able to take advantage of our Winter Walking Tours and visit our Charro Days exhibits over the last few months. Staff is busy preparing for our next series of programs and we hope that you join us for our Historical Happy Hours, May's Preservation Month events, and our 3rd Annual Car Show in June. Please see our calendar insert for more details on all of our exhibits, programs and events.

As this newsletter goes to print, the BHA is pleased to announce that due to the generous support from sponsors and attendees at our 8th Annual Taste of Texas fundraiser, we were able to reach our funding goal for the restoration of the 1832 Battle of Velasco flag, donated to our collection last year. Next year at this time we hope to unveil the flag and our new Texas Revolution exhibit in observance of Texas History Month.

As a valuable member of our organization I hope that you are able to visit us often at our museums and I sincerely thank you for your patronage.

Happy Spring!

Tara Putegnat

Executive Director

Brownsville Historical Association

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BROWNSVILLE ARCHITECTURE A VISUAL HISTORY SHAH AND MATTEI

Please join us May 18 at 5:30pm for a lecture and book signing at the Heritage Museum.

Brownsville Architecture: A Visual History reveals the heritage and history of Texas's southernmost city as told by its buildings. Outstanding architectural images by Pino Shah show the influence of diverse cultures and regional styles that have shaped the border city's built environment since 1841. Eileen Mattei weaves architectural details and Brownsville history into a narrative that illustrates how buildings mirror the people, the place and the times.

Pino Shah @ArtByPino is an architecture, world heritage, and, performing arts photographer based in McAllen, Texas, and Ahmedabad, India.

A freelance writer based in the Rio Grande Valley, Eileen Mattei writes travel, nature and history articles for Texas Coop Power, Texas Highways, and other magazines. She is the author of *At the Crossroads: Harlingen's First 100 Years*; *Leading the Way: McAllen's First 100 Years*, and *For the Good of My Patients: The History of Medicine in the Rio Grande Valley*.

Welcome!

NEW BHA MEMBERS

Berta Almaraz	Diane Nolan	George Tolentino
Brandon J. Anderson	Ruben & Sylvia O'Bell	Priya Trakai
Mary Behsman	Mrs. Vanessa Ochoa	Maria Treviño
Christopher & Joel Brotz-Gonzales	Kiko & Krista Rendon	Rolando Treviño
Raul Garza Jr.	Alejandro Rentas	Lydia M. Villarreal
Miguel Gomez & Imelda Ramirez	Cathy Shelton	Patti Wrench
Dorothy Hablinski	Stephanie Smith	

Sponsorships will help make this newsletter possible!

Please call us at 956-541-5560, to inquire about newsletter sponsorship opportunities, or visit our website at www.brownsvillehistory.org for more information.



Market Square Renovation Exterior Completion

February marked the completion of the Market Square landscaping project. After almost two years of construction, Market Square has been transformed into a pedestrian friendly area with brick paved

walkways, lush trees, grass, improved lighting and benches for visitors to sit and enjoy the Old City Market/City Hall in the heart of downtown Brownsville. The BHA plans to host numerous events and programs here in the near future.



Texas Historical Foundation Grant Award

With the help of a grant awarded to the BHA by the Texas Historical Foundation, repairs will be made to the Historic Stillman House Museum. A tour of the house was given to the THF Board members after the check presentation ceremony on January 19, 2018. Those in attendance included two Stillman family members, the BHA Executive Director, the Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Brownsville, the BHA Board President and several BHA Board members.

2018 Winter Walking Tours

In March, we concluded our Winter Walking Tour Series. The series began with a tour of the Old City Cemetery, followed by the St. Charles District, Downtown Brownsville, Fort Brown, the Old Charro Days Parade Route, and concluded with a second tour of the Old City Cemetery. Thanks to all who attended and to our tour guides, Professor Jim Mills and Dr. Anthony Knopp!

Vaqueros Programming

Exhibit Opening Reception: Vaquero: Genesis of the Texas Cowboy
Date: Tuesday, April 10, 2018 | Time: 5:30pm
Location: Historic Brownsville Museum, 641 E Madison Street
Cost: Free

The Brownsville Historical Association will host an opening reception for our latest exhibition Vaquero: Genesis of the Texas Cowboy. Dr. Karen Benavente will discuss how the vaquero is not only a symbol of Texas but also (and perhaps more importantly now) a 'border figure' whose ways of life transgress the static frontier of boundaries, fences and walls.

“Frank Yturria...A Legacy of Wildlife Conservation” Screening with Richard Moore

Date: Thursday, April 26, 2018 | Time: 5:30 pm
Location: Historic Brownsville Museum, 641 E Madison Street
Cost: Free

The Brownsville Historical Association is excited to welcome Richard Moore to the Historic Brownsville Museum for a screening of his latest documentary film “Frank Yturria...A Legacy of Wildlife Conservation.” Richard Moore is a South Texas native and a professional wildlife photographer and writer. As an independent photo/journalist, Moore has complete control of story selection and does all videography, writing, voicing and editing. This is a rare feat in today’s television market where numerous assignment editors, producers, reporters, and video editors often contribute to any given story.

Beard Posse

The Brownsville Historical Association would like to thank the Beard Posse - Order of the Brush for their continued support and donations! We had another successful Charro Days.

Incarinate Word Academy
165th Anniversary Exhibit
Dates & Location- March 7, 2018 – April 28, 2018
Brownsville Heritage Museum Vezzetti Room
1325 E. Washington Street



March 7, 2018 is the 165th anniversary of the founding of Incarnate Word Academy by four sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament. Incarnate Word Academy was the first organized school of any kind in Brownsville, and the second Catholic school in Texas. We will document the history and undertakings of Incarnate Word Academy from its establishment and through the years by exhibiting pictures, yearbooks, uniforms and artifacts from the IWA collection.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!



SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2018

WINE, BEER & SPIRITS TASTING

TASTE OF TEXAS SPONSORS:

WELLS
FARGO
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LONE STAR



YELLOW ROSE



BLUE BONNET



TASTE OF TEXAS IN-KIND SPONSORS:



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& Carne Guisada

Salad

Paella