



Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

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The Power of Place: Brownsville's Role in American History

As the United States of America prepares to commemorate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, Texans (particularly those in south Texas) may wonder how Texas played a role in our nation's history. Most of us think of the thirteen colonies when we think of American history and certainly that is justified. Cities like Philadelphia, Boston and Charleston played major roles in early American history and Brownsville, Texas, was not put on the map until decades after America won independence from Great Britain.

There are pivotal moments that made America what it is today and many moments in Texas history as well. Brownsville's multiculturalism, geographic location, and role in conflicts should be remembered during this year of observation and celebration. The first significant historical event was the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). The war pushed American soldiers south to Brownsville to fight for the U.S. boundary, the Rio Grande River. Brownsville played a primary role in the war with the siege of Fort Texas and first engagements of the war: the Battle of Palo Alto and the Battle of Resaca de la Palma. Following the war, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo set the southern boundary at the Rio Grande River, leading to the founding of Brownsville.

Brownsville also played a key role in the Civil War, where the city served as a smuggling point for Confederate cotton into Mexico to be shipped to Europe. The income from the cotton trade served as much needed financing for the Confederate Army. It is accepted by some historians that the cotton trade on the Rio Grande River sustained the Confederacy to continue

funding the military and in turn, prolonging the war. On May 15, 1865, the Battle of Palmito Ranch took place – 34 days after the surrender by Robert E. Lee to the Union – and is considered the last battle of the American Civil War. Once again, Brownsville's moment that made American history.

In August of 1906, what became known as the "Brownsville affair" took place. Shots were fired in downtown Brownsville on the night of August 13, 1906, and the townsfolk quickly accused the black infantrymen stationed at the Fort Brown. The entire regiment of 167 men were dishonorably

discharged without a hearing or trial by President Theodore Roosevelt. It was not until investigations in the 1970s revealed the soldier's innocence that the regiment was pardoned by the Nixon Administration. A controversial moment that made American history.

There are numerous other historical occurrences in Brownsville that would be too lengthy to share here but in more recent history, we remember the building of the border wall, natural disasters like hurricanes, the founding of the airport and the Port of Brownsville, and most recently – the arrival of SpaceX.

Preserving these important stories and moments in history are what give the BHA purpose. The power of our place, Brownsville, is an integral part of the American story. This summer let's celebrate our nation's birth and let's celebrate Brownsville's principal role in Texas, the United States of America, and beyond.

Happy 250th birthday America!



Brownsville early 1900's aerial photo.



Experience the BHA's latest exhibit ¡Bailamos!



¡Bailamos! explores Mexican dances as a vibrant and meaningful expression of culture. Through a dynamic presentation of traditional, ceremonial, and folklórico styles from across the country, the exhibition explores how movement, music, and costume come together to mark life's most meaningful moments, holidays, courtship, faith, and community celebration.

Featuring 12 costumes from throughout Mexico, ¡Bailamos! highlights the significance of each regional tradition while exploring the distinctive costume, choreography, and musical elements that celebrate and study dance. As a living tradition, each dance is continually practiced and preserved across generations. Additionally, the exhibit features two

new activity stations for mask making and dance tutorials. The mask station table includes paper masks for both adults and children to decorate with an assortment of craft items. The dance interactive is comprised of a small dance floor and video kiosk with step by step tutorial dance videos.

The exhibition will be on view at the Costumes of the Americas Museum from March 17, 2026 through August 21, 2026.

This program is supported by Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Portions of this exhibit were made possible by the partnership and support of the Consulado de México en Brownsville and Revival of Cultural Arts (ROCA).



Welcome New BHA Members!

Alan Benavidez
Teresa Kleiber Bolton
Joyce & Brad Branson
Ricardo & Paula Elena Diaz
Andres & Narce Gonzales
Noe Gonzalez
Anthony & Deyanira Jauregui
Donald & Judy Crouse

Maribel & Victor Leos
Emanuel Hernandez & Maren Fruia
Joe Medrano
Cecilia, Luis, & Miguel Noriega
Graciela Olivo
Arlen & Jean Schrum
Douglas & Bonnie Stanley

Thanks for your membership renewal!

Corina & Eddie Alaniz
Monica Avila
Arthur S Brown
Elnora & Daniel Zimmerman Colley
Gary & Eilene Cox
Rudy De La Garza
Enrique De La Garza II
Alan & Laura Duval
Bertita Elizondo
Mary Jean Garcia
Guillermo Gomez
Michael & Virginia Hale

Larry & Nancy Hodgson
Robert (Quinones) Jaime
Madelyn S. Marchessault
Bill & Sandy Maxwell
Jim McAllen
Steven & Sandra Morfitt
Bryan Quick
William Quinones
Victoria Rodriguez
Scott & Irma Sherman
Kevin Shropshire
Andrea V Ressler & Rita Vargas

BROWNSVILLE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Winter Walking Tour: Hebrew Cemetery & Historic Downtown



Winter Walking Tour: St. Charles District



Historical Happy Hour: Viva Order of the Brush!



UTRGV Charreada: Fiesta Y Cultura Exhibit Pop Up



IDEA Prep AP Art and Design Class: Liminal Space Art Exhibition Reception



Historical Happy Hour: Texas History Month



Thank You Beard Posse!



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