

BHA Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

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Frank Yturria and the Preservation of History

Decades ago a phone call would come from Kathleen Hoover at Frank Yturria's office at Texas Bank and Trust: "Mr. Yturria would like to see you at his office." Of course I went, because it was bound to be interesting, if slightly mysterious. And usually it was about history. I can recall a meeting in that office sometime in the 1980's, when Frank voiced his frustration with writers who chose to disparage his ancestors while offering no substance for their claims. I also recall receiving a note from him during that time in which he expressed appreciation for the new book on local history authored by colleague Milo Kearney and myself.

Frank Yturria's interest in and commitment to local history and historic preservation came naturally to the descendant of a pioneer Brownsville family with deep roots in the land and the community. As a boy, Frank heard stories of a family history from his father, Daniel, and learned of a Mexican officer ancestor, Col. Manuel M. Yturria. In 1991 Frank began the search for the story of Col. Yturria, culminating in his writing and publication of a biography in 1999. Frank had caught the history "bug," and he soon produced a biography of his great-grand father: *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Extraordinary Times of Francisco Yturria*. A family trilogy was completed with the appearance of Frank's autobiography in the last year of his life.

Frank's commitment to the restoration of the historic Cameron County Courthouse (Dancy building), his support for preservation of the Palo Alto Battlefield, and his involvement in politics and public affairs raised his profile on the state and national level, leading to his appointment to the Texas State Historical Commission for a five year term. In 2010 he received the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation.

Along with his wife and life partner, Mary, Frank Yturria was

a staunch supporter of Brownsville's historical associations and their activities. In the early 1980's the Yturrias and others became concerned about the fate of the historic Southern Pacific Depot. I can recall attending a meeting involving the Yturrias to rally

support for a new organization and funding to restore the depot as an historical museum. The result was the creation of the Historic Brownsville Museum Association and the securing of funding to restore the depot as a museum for the story of Brownsville History. Only a few years after the museum opened in 1986 the Yturrias funded the construction of the Mary Yturria Education Center. Frank served on the HBMA Board of Directors for many years and organized fundraisers, including a fabulous dinner and auction at his ranch. And, of course, he and Mary continued to support the other fundraisers over the years.

In the latter years of the HBMA, Frank Yturria played a key role in recognizing the financial exigencies and clearing the way for exploration of merger possibilities with the

Brownsville Historical Association. After the merger Frank continued his long-term association with the BHA and agreed to hold the inaugural book-signing and presentation of his new autobiography, *The Amazing Life of a South Texas Cowboy*, at the Historic Brownsville Museum. In a final contribution to the BHA, Frank donated the proceeds from sale of the book to the BHA.

Frank Yturria provided leadership and support for many and varied worthwhile causes during his long life. The Brownsville Historical Association and antecedents are among those who benefitted greatly from this philanthropical commitment. We are very grateful and honor him for that commitment. Frank Yturria passed away on November 26, 2018 at the age of 95.

Tony Knopp, BHA Board Member



Frank Yturria and Kathleen Hoover, Office Manager

From the Executive Director...

We went “live” with our newly designed website on December 21st! Please visit us there for online shopping, membership renewal, information on collections and research, rental venue material, walking tours via Google maps and more.



You may also visit our social media accounts for updates on programs and the latest news from the BHA.

Staff has been working hard on the calendar of events and preparing for our Winter Walking Tours led by Anthony Knopp and Jim Mills. We are grateful for our volunteer tour guides and their extensive knowledge of Brownsville history. The BHA truly appreciates all the time spent by volunteers at the BHA and we thank them for their dedication.

Charro Days starts in February and you will receive your Grand Order of the Brush postcard soon warning the “clean shaven” of a fine. All donations collected by the Beard Posse are tax deductible; we thank the Beard Posse for their enthusiasm and generous support for the BHA!

In March, in honor of Texas history month, we host our 9th annual Taste of Texas. Join us for a delightful evening at the Laureles Ranch House Museum and enjoy sampling food, wine, beer and spirits unique to the Lone Star State.

I hope to see a lot of our new members and the Annual Membership Meeting on January 20, 2019, and I wish you a very happy new year!

Tara Putegnati
Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Presentation with guest speaker and author, Carl Chilton

When: Sunday, January 20, 2019 – 2 pm

Where: Historic Brownsville Museum, Mary Yturria Education Center, 641 E. Madison St.

For more information call 956-548-1313

Current members of the BHA are invited to attend the annual membership meeting and awards ceremony followed by a book signing and reception. The meeting will provide a year in review and honor citizens who make great contributions to our local history and the BHA. Carl Chilton will also present his latest book, *Brownsville's River and Resacas* and will be available to sign copies.

The book will be available for purchase on the day of the event.

2019 Winter Walking Tour: St. Charles District

When: Friday, January 25, 2019 @ 11:00 am

Where: Historic Brownsville Museum, 641 E. Madison Street

Cost: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members

Register today by calling: 956-548-1313

Led by Dr. Anthony Knopp, visitors will explore one of the most historic neighborhoods in Brownsville and see the variety of architectural styles that residents and business owners adopted throughout the years. Tours are limited to 25 people so please register soon.

UPCOMING EXHIBITS

Fort Brown Exhibit

When: January 8, 2019 – March 30, 2019

Where: Historic Brownsville Museum, 641 E. Madison Street

This temporary exhibit is available to visitors with paid museum admission.

For more information call 956-548-1313

Many themes in U.S. history pertain to the Fort Brown. These include: the Mexican American War, The US Civil War, World War I, yellow fever research, women in the military and Tejanos in the military. The bi-lingual panels in this exhibit highlight these themes with an introduction and conclusion included. This student project contains a total of 20 free-standing banners and is on temporary display at the Historic Brownsville Museum from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Brownsville Raid Exhibit

When: February 1, 2019 – March 30, 2019

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

This exhibit is in partnership with the Office of Congressman Filemón Vela.

For more information call 956-548-1313

The Brownsville Raid was a controversial and historic event involving the 167 Buffalo Soldiers of the 25th Infantry, on August 13, 1906. This exhibit will include maps, never before seen images of Army/civilian correspondence, military pardon addendum and more. Through the help of Congressman Vela's office and special research access to the National Archives, we present this unique exhibit.

Welcome! NEW BHA MEMBERS

Delina Barrera
Martha & Taylor Blanton
Ed & Lali Serna Castillo
Jessica Cavazos
Yelena Cisneros
Bridgett Collis
Christopher Escobar
Bianca Gonzalez

Cynthia & Miguel Gutierrez
Miguel Gutierrez
Michael Martinez
Blanca Massad
Luis Massad
Luke Massad
Madison Massad
Ryan Massad

Angela & Patrick McCauley
Alfredo & Virginia Molina
Yessica Iracheta & Rodrigo Quintero
Maybet Reyes-Estudilla
Amber Rodriguez
Phil Hardin & Margaret Salinas
Ricardo Santoyo
Adrian Serrano

Sponsorships 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.

FROM THE VAULTS

The Brownsville Historical Association's collection contains some very interesting historical artifacts. One such artifact that held my curiosity was a thin glass water filled globe being held in an off white plastic conical shaped holder. The globe is held in position by a slender metal clip. Upon first



inspection, I was unaware of what this item was, or what it could be used for... I later learned that this object was used as a fire extinguisher. Glass grenade-

style fire extinguisher "bombs" were used between the years of 1870 and 1910. They would be stored on metal brackets on the wall. If there was a fire a person would be able to take it out of the holder, and throw it at the fire. The fire would either be put out by it, or it would help to manage the fire long enough for the person to escape the flames. The BHA acquired the artifact from a private donor in 2009.

Eric Gonzales
Collections/Media Archivist



Walking Tour: Historic Market Square



Historical Happy Hour: Loteria



Walking Tour: Murder, Mystery & Mayhem



First Annual Christmas Tree Exhibit

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

We are excited to proudly highlight a staff member in each newsletter and introduce you to our committed team.

In this issue we introduce you to **Juan C. Duran**, *Administrative Professional*.

Juan Duran spends much of his time handling the bookkeeping and office work for the BHA. He assists in day-to-day operations and helps ensure that our museums run smoothly. The favorite part of his job is the occasional interaction with visitors and opportunity to learn something new about Brownsville history.

Juan first came to the museum as an intern in 2016. Since then, Juan has assisted with accounting, event planning, public program assistance, organizing temporary exhibits and performing various other duties for the Association. His love and commitment to Brownsville is the driving force behind his hard work.

Thank you for all that you do, Juan!



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9TH ANNUAL TASTE OF TEXAS

When: Saturday, March 30, 2019
Where: Laureles Ranch House Museum
 1501 E. 7th Street (Linear Park)
Cost: Tickets \$50.00

Sponsorships available – Call Us! at 956-548-1313

Join us in celebration of Texas History Month for a sampling of wine, beer, liquor and food pairings unique to the Lone Star State. Fundraising efforts for this event help support BHA programming. Sponsored in part by L & F Distributors.



New BHA Mobile Friendly Website Launched December 21st!

The mobile friendly website will feature membership renewal, online shopping, a guide to walking tours via Google maps and more! Visit us at: www.brownsvillehistory.org

Discover our History, Heritage & Cultural Arts

