

BHA Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

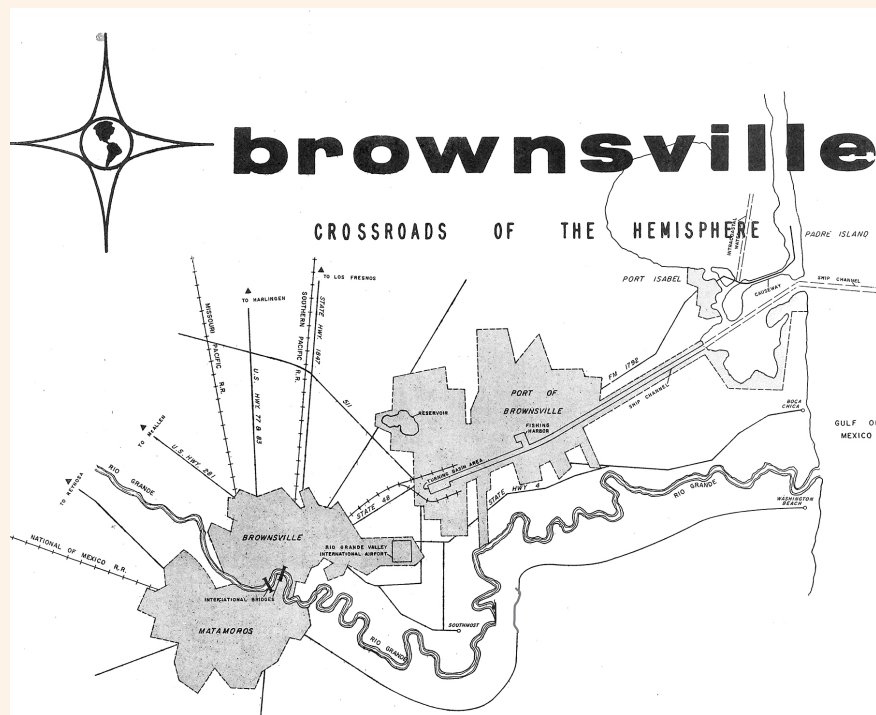
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Brownsville: Crossroads of the Hemisphere

Brownsville is an amazingly beautiful and immensely historic city in Deep South Texas. Although I may be biased, these claims are objective and quantifiable. From the verdant tropical vegetation and wildlife to the historical significance from military outposts and battlefields, Brownsville has it all. I believe the most intriguing facet of Brownsville's existence, is the unique culture that sets us apart from almost any other place. Culture, a term that can be used to describe so many different features, but it is the collective of those features that makes us distinctive. Some cultural intricacies often are shaped out of geographic location, and such has happened with shaping our cultural identity, here in Deep South Texas.

A few summers ago as I was sorting through the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Collection, which includes documentation and correspondence about all things Brownsville, I kept coming across a catchphrase that caught my attention. "Brownsville: Crossroads of the Hemisphere," which stayed in the back of my mind for some time. Geographically speaking I understood what this meant, Brownsville is situated in a fantastic position for national and international commerce. "The city is a major trading center and one of the principle import-export cities on the Texas-Mexico border. Also, Brownsville is the international gateway between



Front cover of *Study of Brownsville 1965*.

the United States and the Republic of Mexico." Connecting over land through various means such as railroad was not the only importance of Brownsville's location. The other major factor was The Port of Brownsville, which is the southwestern boundary of the Intercostal Waterway. The port, which even at an early onset was able to accommodate large cargo vessels, provided economical seafaring transportation along the coast and connects with

the Mississippi River system and far beyond.

This idea of being a crossroads, where so many people, mechanisms, beliefs, and the like intersect with each other is the basis of what Brownsville was built on. When the topic of culture comes up in my Social Studies classes, I teach about the uniqueness of the Brownsville culture. A United States, Mexican, and Texan culture that is all blended into something distinctive, different, and cannot be found anywhere else. From the foods we eat, the events we celebrate, and the music we listen to, Brownsville composes a matchless range of what is now a culture that we can call our own. This culture has become a part of Brownsville's heritage, one that we must all continue to cultivate and pass on to generations to come.

Eric Gonzales,
BHA Media/Collections Archivist

From the Executive Director

Dear BHA members,

I hope that this newsletter finds you all safe and healthy. Our museums re-opened on May 5th with new safety protocols and procedures for visitors and staff in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We had hoped to include a calendar of events this quarter, but due to uncertainty with the virus we decided to postpone gatherings through the end of July. Many museums are adjusting and moving to an online presence in order to increase outreach. This year, we are hosting our first ever virtual summer camp (details on page 3). Please visit our social media outlets for updates and museum information.

Another issue facing communities at this time is the destruction and removal of historic markers and statues. A country's history is the sum total of what is in it, good and bad. The BHA's mission is to preserve and protect history for generations to come, the good and the bad. We must ask ourselves: If nothing that came before us can remain, where do we go from here? How will our lives improve by the destruction of our past? Healthy societies do not destroy history, their own or anyone else's.

Our history can show us how far we've come. This can be said for advances in science and technology and not just in wars we have fought or nations that have succeeded or failed. Our duty as historians is not a political one. We are to document and provide the information needed to learn about our past and to preserve artifacts and structures. We should be careful about "airbrushing" out difficult parts of our history rather than learning about them and understanding them. Allowing historic structures, sites, markers and monuments to remain isn't to legitimize the views of years past but rather, they serve as part of the challenge of history to debate issues and confront them head-on.

Like any other town, Brownsville's history is not perfect. The people and events that shaped our past make for a great story – bilingual culture, waterways expanding commerce and trade, extensive agricultural land, border conflict, and the failure and success of many individuals. We cannot afford to ignore or delete the past; it explains who we are and why we strive to be better. Never before has preserving our history been more at risk and I hope that you continue to support our all-important mission.

I sincerely thank you for your membership. When you are ready to come visit, we look forward to seeing you!

My best,

Tara Putegnat
BHA Executive Director

INTERN SPOTLIGHT



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

José Carlos is a History major going into his second year as an undergrad at Columbia University. He believes that a deep and accurate knowledge of history can help us understand our present and guide our future. José is excited to take part in this internship being that he has a passion for history and the Rio Grande Valley as well as a longtime fascination with museums. He credits his time with the BHA for showing him the complexity of museum work and how much goes unnoticed by people. His favorite part of the internship was working with our collections and helping expand our digital collections website. He comments that, "From century old tax receipts to maps of early settlements of the region, I have truly loved to interact with these artifacts and become immersed in them. These objects tell the story of our past; they are the past. I cannot help but imagine what life must have been like during the time period of the artifact. Being able to share these artifacts, and hopefully my feelings of wonder, with people through the BHA's website is truly great." As a result of his internship, José now considers the possibility of one day working in a museum. In addition, he feels it has reaffirmed his love for history and the idea that working in the field of history could be something he will do in the long term.

Welcome!

NEW BHA MEMBERS

Jan Miller

Walter Wilson

The Brownsville Historical Association's

VIRTUAL TIME TRAVELERS CAMP 2020

July 30th–August 1st, 2020
Join us for three days of discovery!
Ages 8–12

\$20 for all 3 days, BHA Member Price \$15

Limit to 10 children. Sorry, no Refunds.

Deadline to register July 18, 2020 by 4pm.

For registration & more information call: 956-548-1313

or e-mail: info@brownsvillehistory.org

Visit our website www.brownsvillehistory.org or Facebook page for the latest details.

Day 1: Downtown Discovery Day (Virtual)

Watch a live tour of the Heritage Museum and virtually explore Historic Downtown Brownsville

Day 2: Battlefield Day (Virtual)

Learn about local battlefields: Palo Alto, Resaca De La Palma, and Fort Brown

Day 3: Old Brownsville Day (In-Person)

Experience the Historic Brownsville Museum, the Old City Cemetery, and the Laureles Ranch House Museum

Sponsorships help make this newsletter possible!

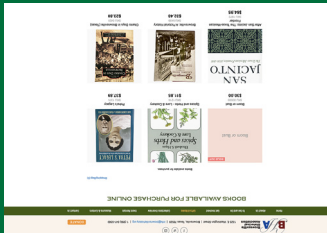
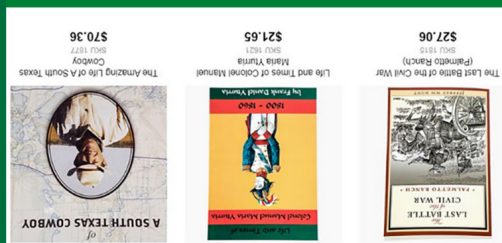
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