



# Brownsville Historical Association

1947 - 2022

# Banner Newsletter

## *Happy 75th Anniversary!*

*A message from Calvin Walker, Immediate Past President of the BHA Board of Directors*

When I think of things and people that have reached 75 years I think of Dr. Tony Knopp and, of course, myself. It takes a certain amount of grit and determination to survive this long.

I moved to Brownsville in 1967 right before Hurricane Beulah, after completing my architectural degree at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette. My plan was to work here for a year before returning to New Orleans to live with my folks and continue my architectural career. As one person told me, "you made the mistake of drinking the water here".

I'm a native-born Texan being born in Houston, but grew up in New Orleans. It didn't take me long to fall in love with bi-cultural Brownsville.

I joined the Brownsville Historical Association in the early 70s, becoming President during the Bicentennial year of 1976. Then serving as President the second time when the Historic Brownsville Museum and the BHA joined together a few years back. What I have witnessed and appreciated here during these past 55 years is absolutely amazing.

Allow me to relay some of the events that have occurred during these years... and the people who have championed our cause...

1. 1969 - Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon.
2. 1976 - The celebration of the USA's 200 year anniversary.
3. Hurricanes in 1967, 1978, 1980, 1983 and probably a couple I've forgotten.

And during recent years who has been responsible for specific achievements related to the BHA?

4. Tony Knopp: for tours of Brownsville and Fort Brown.
5. Larry Lof: for his expertise in saving and salvaging historic buildings doomed to be demolished if he hadn't stepped in to lend his enthusiasm and knowledge to renovate and restore many treasures in our city.

6. Harry McNair: for taking over the Presidency of the BHA and guiding us forward.
7. Cristina Tijerina: for agreeing to combine the Costumes of the Americas Museum with the BHA creating a world-class native costume collection, the envy of the Smithsonian.
8. Sandy Stillman: for supporting the BHA in so many ways, including gifting the Laureles Ranch House, Alonso Complex and loaning a world-class art collection destined for Market Square.
9. Elon Musk: for choosing this area for SpaceX and his planned community, StarBase.
10. The Brownsville Historical Association is proud to be

*"... as we begin another year of our legacy in Brownsville, may the citizenry embrace our mission ..."*

the caretakers of some of our most important treasures in Brownsville:

- a. Stillman House and Heritage Museum Complex
- b. Market Square
- c. Historic Brownsville Museum, soon to be our new Transportation Museum
- d. New Costumes of the Americas Museum
- e. Laureles Ranch House
- f. Alonso Complex
- g. Old City Cemetery

11. And finally, last but not the least important, is our Executive Director, Tara Putegnat, who has her feet imbedded in Brownsville's soil as a family member whose roots were established here in the 1870s. Tara has juggled the responsibility of all the properties under her leadership with grace and professionalism.

So, in conclusion, as we begin another year of our legacy in Brownsville, may the citizenry embrace our mission and join our effort to keep our historical fabric strong and vibrant for the next 75 years!

# Historical Happenings

Texas  
History Month  
Celebration



Historical Happy Hour  
"Viva Charro Days"



Old City Cemetery: Winter Walking Tour



Sip N' Paint



Fort Brown: Winter Walking Tour



**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.brownsvillehistory.org](http://www.brownsvillehistory.org) for more information.

## BROWNSVILLE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

1325 E. Washington Street, Brownsville, Texas 78520  
956.541.5560 Fax: 956.435.0028  
[www.brownsvillehistory.org](http://www.brownsvillehistory.org)

*Welcome!*

## NEW BHA MEMBERS

Sally Ali  
Alexander Campbell  
Gary & Eilene Cox  
Roberta Dotterer  
Rosendo Escareno  
Lizette Garcia  
Michelle Garcia  
Mr. & Mrs. George Gause

Blanca Gonzalez  
Richard Hernandez  
Dan Hoobler  
Dennis & Faith Johnson  
Tamsin Kelley  
Abraham Longoria  
Douglas Mainhart  
Madelyn S. Marchessault

Olga M. Mendez  
Marby Moreno-Sweeney  
Bruno Arturo Sanchez  
Ron & Sharon Sickles  
Jeff Stanley  
Nancy & Jaime Villanueva

## Progress and Preservation



Photo credit: Brownsville Historical Association



A family visits the Stillman House Museum in 1987 to learn how the founder of Brownsville, Charles Stillman, used to live.

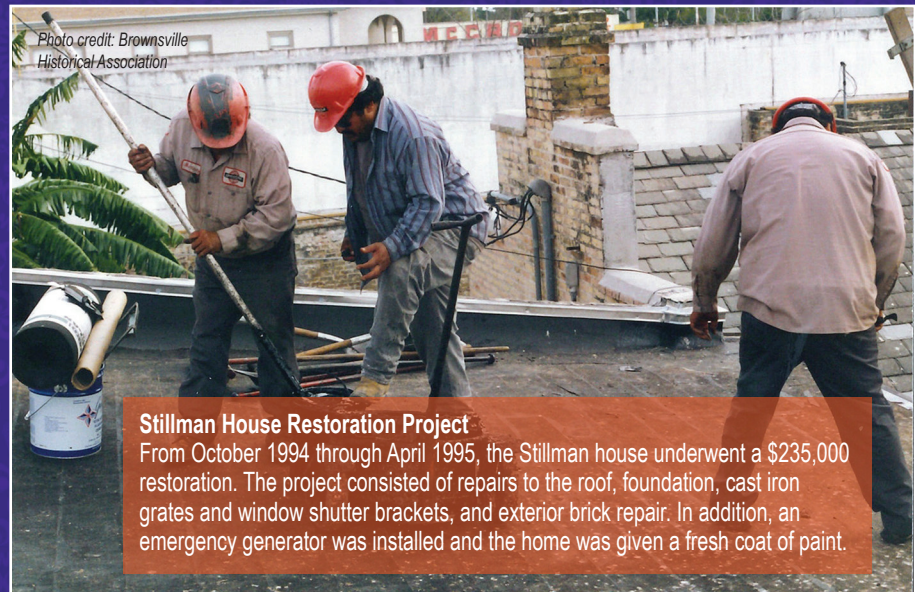


Photo credit: Brownsville Historical Association

### Stillman House Restoration Project

From October 1994 through April 1995, the Stillman house underwent a \$235,000 restoration. The project consisted of repairs to the roof, foundation, cast iron grates and window shutter brackets, and exterior brick repair. In addition, an emergency generator was installed and the home was given a fresh coat of paint.

## UPCOMING EXHIBIT



### Exhibit: War & Peace on The Rio Grande, 1861-1867

Location: Historic Brownsville Museum

641 E Madison Street

Duration: April 5 - July 30, 2022

Description: The Brownsville Historical Association, in collaboration with the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, will host "War and Peace on the Rio Grande, 1861-1867," an exhibit designed, developed, and produced by the Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools (CHAPS) and regional museum consultants. The exhibit recounts the Civil War era from 1846-1876 and how it affected the Rio Grande Valley, using panels, pictures, artifacts and mannequins dressed in the attire of the era.

### Easter Holiday Hours

All BHA museums will close at 1 p.m. Friday, April 15, 2022, and all-day Saturday, April 16, 2022, in observance of the Easter holiday.



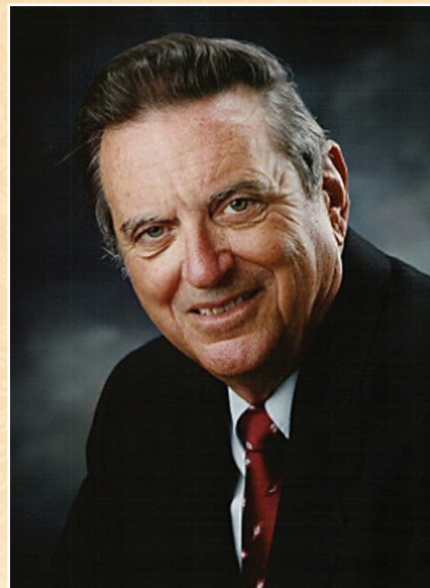
Photo credit: Brownsville Historical Association

Pictured (L-R): Flo Benavides, Henry Krousse, Dr. James "Doc" Stillman, Ruby Wooldridge, Kino Camarillo (Center), Mayor Nacho Garza, Robert Vezzetti, (unidentified man), Dr. Anthony Knopp on June 27, 1991.

**Dedication of the Brownsville Heritage Resource Center** In the early 1990s, the Brownsville Historical Association purchased the 1880 building and lot located next to Stillman House Museum. The newly annexed Brownsville Heritage Resource Center would serve as a space to house the growing collection of documents and photographs, and a place for patrons to research the history of the area.

## With Much Gratitude, We Thank You

Robert "Bob" Vezzetti, a native of Chicago, graduated from the famed VanderCook College of Music in 1954 and obtained a position as a middle school band director in Brownsville. After a stint with a US Army band, Bob returned to Brownsville and became Director of Bands in 1958. In 1974 he was appointed Director of Music Activities for BISD.



Robert Vezzetti

Bob was committed to the Brownsville Community, serving on the City Planning and Zoning Commission and twice as President of Charro Days. A primary aspect of his commitment involved the history of Brownsville, and he served several terms as President of the Brownsville Historical Association in the 1980s-1990s. In 1982, Bob and Ruby Wooldridge co-authored *Brownsville A Pictorial History*, and Bob later published *Tidbits*, a collection of historical articles about the City.

In recognition of his decades-long leadership of the BHA, the events and exhibits room in the Heritage Museum is named in his honor.

BEFORE



Photo credit: Brownsville Historical Association

AFTER



Photo credit: Brownsville Historical Association

### Stillman House Exhibits

**Upgraded (Before and After)**

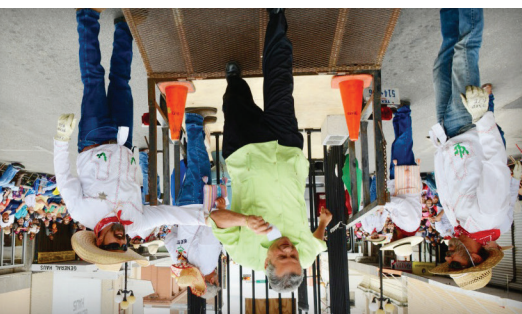
In 1997, the BHA hired Southwest Museums of Houston to transform the 147-year old Stillman House into a modern educational museum. The new 26 panel exhibit focused on the life, adventures, and business dealings of Charles Stillman.

**Brownsville Historical Association**  
1325 E. Washington Street  
Brownsville, Texas 78520

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*...Order of the Brush for  
your continued support  
and fundraising efforts  
on behalf of the BHA.*



*Thank You...*  
Photo Credit: Ric Moore/Beard Posse

