

# BHA Banner Newsletter

Brownsville Historical Association

Volume 7, Issue 1

January 2021

## Honoring Walter Plitt

The BHA was sad to hear of Walter Plitt's passing this fall. As a long-time board member of the Historic Brownsville Museum and then the Brownsville Historical Association, Mr. Plitt was passionate about preserving our local history.

In the 1970's, Walter Plitt played an integral role in forming the community's grassroots effort to bring the three U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848) National Historic Landmark sites under the administration of the National Park Service (NPS). Eventually, Mr.

Plitt would assume the lead role towards this effort, and served as the Chairman of the Palo Alto Battlefield National Park Committee from the 1990's up until his death.

Mr. Plitt joined forces with Frank and

Mary Yturria, as well as other members of the community, in their effort to get the site of the ruins of the 1846 earthen fortification of Fort Brown designated as a national park. He played a key role in engaging local, state, and national elected officials, along with National Park Service leadership. Early on, it was decided that the effort should focus of the battlefield of Palo Alto first, since it appeared to possess the most site integrity and was most vulnerable to development. The initial legislation establishing Palo Alto Battlefield a National Historic Site passed in 1978. This legislation created a 50-acre boundary northeast of the intersection of FM 511 and Paredes Line Road.

Over the years, Mr. Plitt would work closely with NPS historians and archeologists as they conducted research on local sites. Later, Mr. Plitt focused his efforts to the 34-acre Resaca de la Palma Battlefield Unit. Walter also played an instrumental role in bringing well-seasoned "Living Historians" from around Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma so the park could host large-scale educational Living

*Continued on page 2*



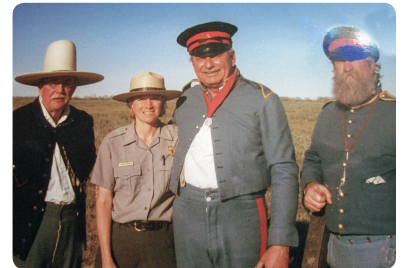
**Walter E. Plitt III**  
February 22, 1941 ~  
October 28, 2020



*Walter Plitt on right raising flag at ceremony.*



*Palo Alto historical marker dedication.*



*Walter Plitt with other Living History participants.*

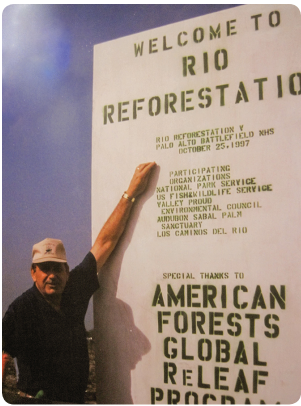


Photo from 1998 Rio Reforestation event.

## Honoring Walter Plitt, continued

History Encampments for the community. This included serving on a cannon crew from Oklahoma representing a Flying Artillery Unit, a technique that was developed by Major Samuel Ringgold, first employed at the battle of Palo Alto and persisted beyond the U.S. Civil War 1861-1865.

Essentially, it is hard to separate Walter Plitt from the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park. Every year, Walter's presence at the park's annual Rio Grande Delta International Archeology Fair and Memorial Illumination was guaranteed. Walter was always the park's biggest supporter and champion. More recently, Walter was actively reaching out to Senator John Cornyn's staff and other state and national political players to ensure a companion bill supporting U.S. Representative Filemon Vela's

house bill, designed to expand the boundary of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park to include the site of the 1846 earthen fortification of Fort Brown.

Walter was a big supporter of our local history museums and attended our programs and events regularly – he will be missed. We thank those who contributed with monetary donations in his name and we send his family our condolences.

Rolando Garza,  
BHA Board Member



Photo from 1998 Rio Reforestation event.

## Special thanks to those who donated in memory of Walter Plitt

Frank M. & Jane E. Mckinney

Burton McCumber & Cortez

Tony & Alma Knopp  
Harry McNair

Glen & Phyllis Balch  
Karen & Erich Wolz  
Shea's & Shulers  
Steven Butler

Christina & Patrick Achleitner



## Winter Walking Tours

Brownsville is one of the most historic cities in the state of

Texas. Venture out with Dr. Anthony Knopp through some of Brownsville's most historical sites.

Check out the dates below and join us in walking through Brownsville history!

Tours are limited to 25 people.

\$5 for BHA members \$10 for non-members.

Call 956-548-1313 to RSVP or for more information.

**Historic Downtown - Friday, January 15, 2021**

**Fort Brown - Saturday, January 23, 2021**

**Mitte Cultural District - Friday, February 5, 2021**

**Old City Cemetery - Saturday, February 20, 2021**

## Cocktails with a Curator

**When:** January 28, 2021

**Time:** 5-7 PM

**Where:** Market Square Building,  
625 East 12th Street

Individual Tickets:

Cost: \$20 for members & \$30 for non-members

\$30 couple with membership

\$40 couple non-members

Sorry, no refunds.

**RSVP by calling: 956-548-1313**

Let's mix things up! Join us for "Cocktail With A Curator," a program that toasts amazing works of art and historical artifacts with deliciously themed cocktails. Drinks will be prepared by Dacey Garza, owner of The Library at La Rioja. Price includes admission and three drink tickets per person. There is a 25- person limit so be sure and register early-spots will fill up fast!



## Welcome! NEW BHA MEMBERS

Debbie Cox  
Mayra Cruz  
Elizabeth Garcia

Shelby Bauer  
Wally Cisneros  
Laura Conway

Connie Longoria  
Herman Navarro  
Diana Vasquez

# Behind the Badge: Experience the Brownsville Police Department

*Behind the Badge: Experience the Brownsville Police Department*, will allow visitors to explore the past, present, and future of the Brownsville Police Department. The exhibit explores the following questions: What is the purpose of policing? How has it changed over the years? And how will it evolve in the future? The exhibit will examine the history of the police department, their daily work, and their commitment to the local community. *Behind the Badge* will be on display from January 12, 2021 – April 3, 2021, at the Brownsville Heritage Museum.

*Behind the Badge* is a student-curated exhibit by University of Texas Rio Grande Valley students: Adam Cavazos, Angel Flandes, and Susannah Holliday. The interns determined the theme or approach to the material, selected the objects, wrote interpretive texts, planned the installation design, and organized the exhibit during the fall semester. The students were heavily involved in learning about the museum's collections and were excited to have the opportunity to experience the many aspects of museum curatorial work.



## MEET THE INTERNS

We would like to introduce to you the fall semester interns who were tasked with researching and curating our latest exhibit, *Behind the Badge*.



*Pictured from (L-R): Angel Flandes, Collections Manager-Aubrey Nielsen, Susannah Holliday, and Adam Cavazos.*

**Adam Cavazos** is majoring in History with a Teaching Certification from UTRGV and plans to teach at the middle school or high school level. Throughout his internship he learned about the process of setting up an exhibit, complexities of museum operations, and expanded his knowledge of local history. He found his internship to be a memorable experience. Adam learned by searching through the BHA vaults for information on BPD. He also had the unique opportunity to go through a training simulation program with BPD along with the other interns. Adam credits his time with the BHA in helping develop his communication skills and aims to use this along with other skills he learned in the future as an educator.

**Susannah Holliday** is a senior majoring in History from UTRGV who hopes to continue her studies and pursue a Master's Degree in Library Science with a focus in Archives and Special Collections. She enjoys immersing herself in the past as part of her studies as well as the chance to handle historic documents and artifacts. Susannah relished the opportunity to dig through collections during the research phase of the exhibit. She also found it interesting to collaborate with BPD throughout the exhibit process and hear about their work and involvement in the community.

**Angel Flandes** is a history major from UTRGV who is passionate about history and intends on becoming a teacher. He was excited to have the opportunity to intern with the BHA and to gain a greater understanding of Brownsville's rich and ever expanding culture and history. Angel felt the knowledge gained from this internship would undoubtedly transcend into his career as an educator and as an individual.

### 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  
Email: [info@brownsvillehistory.org](mailto:info@brownsvillehistory.org)  
[www.brownsvillehistory.org](http://www.brownsvillehistory.org)

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Permit No. 47  
Brownsville, TX



# THANK YOU!

The BHA would like to thank everyone who was part of our latest fundraising effort in early December of 2020.

We managed to successfully reach the target amount to send some of our staff members to retrieve flat file cases donated to the BHA in Pampa, Texas. In true Texas fashion, these staff members faced nearly every type of weather imaginable along the way before making a safe journey back home.

Once they arrived, the rest of our wonderful staff rolled up their sleeves to receive the flat file cases that are to facilitate our collections. Again, we would like to thank everyone who donated for their support in this endeavor!