

# *Annual Report*



## **ITC Press Conference**

Working with a host of community partners, the Conservation Society is the premier voice of historic preservation in San Antonio, fighting to save our landmarks, natural beauty and our unique San Antonio culture. Here our President, Kathy Rhoads, speaks out at a press conference in favor of saving the Institute of Texan Cultures building.

***Annual Report***  
***The Conservation Society of San Antonio***  
***And San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation***

***Advocacy***

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The Conservation Society’s three-year effort with the Coalition for the Woolworth Building continued this year as we completed our two “Texas Sit-In” videos, documentaries that tell the story of San Antonio’s unique voluntary and peaceful integration of downtown lunch counters in 1960. In October 2021, the Society’s efforts to save the Woolworth Building were honored with an award from the San Antonio Branch, NAACP. The Society continues to monitor the Alamo Trust’s plans for the site. The Society had partnered with the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center and the Westside Preservation Alliance to nominate 503 Urban Loop as a local landmark. The building, which began as a Victorian brothel where Fannie Porter hosted Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, was an orphanage and day-care center for over a century and one of the last remaining buildings of the Laredito neighborhood. It succumbed to a fire in February 2022.

We continued to monitor the revision of plans for San Pedro Creek Culture Park to maximize preservation of the 1875 St. James AME Church foundation at Camaron and Houston Streets. This year saw the formation of an advocacy group to help preserve the Institute of Texan Cultures building at Hemisfair Park in the wake of a task force and public process undertaken by the building’s owner, The University of Texas San Antonio. The Conservation Society Board voted to nominate the building to the National Register of Historic Places and as a State Antiquities Landmark. The Society also reached out to political and neighborhood leaders regarding the preservation of the Buena Vista neighborhood on the West Side.

Among the preservation “wins” this year was the Hughes House, threatened by possible demolition for a parking lot on the San Antonio College campus. The Society worked with neighborhood advocates to nominate the building as a local landmark and also contacted the Board of Trustees of San Antonio College urging them not to acquire the 1912 Prairie-Style house. At the same time, the Society wrote to the Archbishop, urging him to market the house to a preservation-minded buyer. When several interested parties emerged, the Society connected two of them – Andrew Weissman

and May Chu – who purchased the building June 2022. The Society also pressed for the preservation of the Grumbles House, built by a founder of the San Antonio Branch NAACP and landmarked this year, but deteriorating rapidly on East Wyoming Street. The Society also supported the restoration of the historic name of Old Highway 90.

The Society commented on the plans to restore the 1776 acequia, retaining walls, and remove trees in the northern section of Brackenridge Park. We urged minimal intervention and preservation of as many historic features and heritage trees as possible. The Conservation Society joined Dignowity Hill residents in opposing new infill that dramatically increases the density and alter the historic building pattern by putting 3-4 units on a single lot. The Society supported the designation of several landmarks, including the Borden Creamery on Ashby, 222 Brooks, 311 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, 404 Calhoun, 116 E. Dewey, 10314 Dreamland, 828 Nevada, and 326 Seguin.

## *Awards*

The Historic Preservation Awards were presented on March 17, 2022 at the San Antonio Country Club. Honored Building Award recipients were City Hall, 100 Plaza de Armas (City of San Antonio); Kelso House, 107 W. Craig (Power of Preservation); and Congregation Temple Beth-El, 211 Belkap Pl (Temple Beth-El). The Out-of-Area Building Award was presented to the The John Ruckman House, 526 County Rd 300 in Helena, Texas (Karnes County Historical Society).

Texas Preservation Hero Awards were presented: Pat Ezell has helped prepare city landmark designations, and has spent hours interviewing, documenting and posting exhibits for many Farm and Ranch websites; Harold Ray Knox has worked to save and improve San Antonio's parks for over 40 years including works to help form such groups like Friends of McAllister, Friends of Voelcker Park, Friends of the Medina River Natural Area, and the Brackenridge Park Conservancy; Humberto Saldaña whose work spans five decades and includes such notable restorations as the Little Church of La Villita, the Crockett Block on Alamo Plaza and San Antonio City Hall; Maria Stevenson Greene is a dedicated and passionate advocate and works hard to save landmarks connected to San Antonio's rich African-American history including the Woolworth

Building; and Nelson Wolff who has been a tireless advocate for saving, reusing, and interpreting irreplaceable resources that speak to the architectural, natural and cultural heritage of San Antonio.

The Lynn Ford Craftsman Award was bestowed on Diana Kersey whose ceramic work can be seen all over San Antonio, from the Mulberry Street bridge in Brackenridge Park to the new high-rise buildings on Texas 368 near the Pearl.

## ***Centennial Celebration***

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The Conservation Society is two years away from celebrating its 100-year anniversary. Look for information about how you can be a part of this historic moment.

## ***Grants & Contributions***

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Proceeds from A Night In Old San Antonio® helped the Society continue to award annual community grants during the Fall of 2021.

In 2021, Community grants totaling \$75,000 were awarded to the following properties: 412 Pereida for materials in the restoration of the front porch; 224 Carolina St. for column restoration work; 116 Camargo for caliche repair and repointing; 525 S. St Marys for the stained-glass restoration; 119 Dreiss St. for shutter restoration; 130 Carolina for porch restoration; 216 Lavaca for porch restoration; 1829 N New Braunfels Ave for Historic District Marquee Sign restoration; 118 Florida, San Antonio for window restoration; 411 SW 24th St. for the restoration of the front entrance windows; and 422 W Drexel, San Antonio for the restoration of original door and window openings.

Three recipients received 2021-2022 Educational Grant funding from the San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation totaling \$40,000. GTI Environmental, LLC was awarded funding to assist with its archaeological excavation project at the Yturri-Edmunds Historic Homestead and Mill Site; Michael Carroll was awarded funding to help offset the expenses of the printing of his new publication, “Property Research and Definitive Guides to the City Directories and Sanborn Maps of San Antonio”; and the San Antonio Public Library Foundation was awarded funding to assist in its purchase of archival and storage equipment for the Texana Resource Center.

## **Hemisfair Park**

Hemisfair Plaza in-park programming returned this year to the delight of the citizens of San Antonio. Story Time takes place in the Yanaguana Garden, HEB's Super Fun Saturday is back on every third Saturday of the month, and other events like as Fiesta Fiesta, Free Movies Nights, and so much more. Groundbreaking took place for Civic Park with plans to have it completed by March 2025. The area will include green spaces, four buildings yielding 200 hotel rooms, 500 residential units, 60,000 sq.ft. of retail and 60,000 sq.ft. of office space. The recent bond election funds the continuation of Hemisfair Boulevard and improved access to the Tower of the Americas in Tower Park. A position letter was sent by the Society to City Council member Melissa Cabello Havrda, recommending to not approve the proposal that would have moved the Park Police Headquarters to Building 227 in Tower Park, as it goes against the spirit of the park and the intent of the 2017 bond.

## **Heritage Education Tours**

The Fall of 2021 saw the ongoing pandemic again prevent the production of in-person Heritage Education Tours. Nonetheless, the Conservation Society produced two more virtual Heritage Education tours, filming and completing short videos designed for 4<sup>th</sup> grade history students on the Alamo and the River Walk. These were added online to our existing virtual tours of Mission San José and Mission Concepción and the Steves Homestead. The Committee shared the video links with all San Antonio area schools.

## **Historic Farm and Ranch Complexes**

The Farm & Ranch Committee met a total of seven times by Zoom and/or in person. This past year the Committee welcomed guest speakers Charles Porter, Matt Elverson and Clint McKenzie. Each speaker provided the group with a different perspective on the preservation of historic properties dating back to the early development of San Antonio to current development on adjacent farms and ranches. The final meeting date (May) was combined with the 2022 Historic Preservation Month-guest speaker. Finally, the committee's researcher, Pat Ezell, continues to research properties for inclusion on the Farm and Ranch website. This year three properties were added to the website.

## ***Historic Preservation Month***

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The 2022 Historic Preservation Month Seminar and Reception was held on Saturday, May 14, 2022 @ 10:00 AM with a reception that followed at the River House of the Edwards Steves Homestead at 509 King William, San Antonio, Texas 78204. The guest speaker was Dr. Vincent L. Michael, who gave us an update on “The State of the City: San Antonio Preservation 2022.”

There were 41 members and guests in attendance. Among our guests was Ken McGlamery Director of Bexar County Parks and Recreation, and Mari Tamez, Bexar Heritage Outreach Manager. Both had words of gratitude for the Conservation Society’s preservation success. Also among our guests was the President of the Canary Islands Descendants Association, Freddie T. Bustillo.

## ***Junior Associates***

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The Junior Associates kicked off their new year with a September 12th meeting at the Yturri Edmunds Homestead. Barbara Hall, Chair of the Yturri Edmunds Homestead Committee, hosted this event and spoke about gardening and worked with the Junior Associates to plant a garden in front of the Carriage House. Officers of the Junior Associates were introduced.

December 5<sup>th</sup>, Junior Associates gathered in the River House behind the Steves Homestead for the much-anticipated Gingerbread house decorating party. It is debatable who ended up consuming more candy – the houses, the kids, or the adults. It was a delicious December afternoon.

February 6<sup>th</sup>, Junior Associates met at the historic Mission San Francisco de la Espada. Guide Tom Castanos, National Parks Services Interpretive Operations Supervisor, provided a very educational tour for all who attended.

Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, former president and former NIOSA Chair, Patti Zaiantz, provided the Junior Associates with a Behind the Scenes Tour of NIOSA. The Juniors then volunteered to help the NIOSA stagers by unloading the flowers from the truck. The following week Junior Associates walked with the NIOSA Hat King and Queen in the King William Fair Parade.

The final Junior Associates meeting of the year was held at San Pedro Creek Park. Members were able to see the changes made to the Creek and the ongoing changes yet to be made. They enjoyed not just the new art found, but also the abundance of the wildlife along the trail. The following will continue in their role as officers: Kevin Dorsey -- President, William Van Cleave -- Vice President, Kaiden Dorsey -- Secretary, and Sophia Van Cleave -- Historian.

## **Library**

The library undertook two new projects this year: planning a library space in the basement of the Courand House, and record keeping for the disposal of the Steves Homestead's contents.

Grant applications resulted in \$9,600 from Humanities Texas and \$2560 from H-E-B. The latter grant funded licensing the two "Woolworth and Civil Rights: A First in the South" videos for showing at free, public events.

The library planned the Society's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual DreamWeek event, "Piecing Together a Story of Courage: Civil Rights in San Antonio," which was postponed until March. Partners included the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute, SAAACAM, the San Antonio Public Library, and the City's Office of Historic Preservation. The librarian also presented to the San Antonio Historical and Genealogical Society and attended the Historic Homeowner Fair.

Collection photos were provided for: San Pedro Creek interpretive panels, Making the Unknown Known: Women in Early Texas Art, 1860s-1960s (pending), and Money, Murder, Sex, and Beer: The Texas Trial of Emma Burgemeister (State House Press).

Key research projects involved Zona Cultural interpretive signage and redrafting the finding of historic significance for 503 Urban Loop. The librarian re-evaluated this site for its archaeological significance, documenting 11 additional structures that had once occupied the multi-lot site.

## **Meetings, Conferences, Seminars and Workshops**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual PastForward conference was virtual again in 2021 and Executive Director Vincent Michael again participated, organizing the panel on Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice. The Conservation Society was again a Preservation Partner for the Texas Real Places Conference in

February 2022 and an active participant in the virtual Preservation Advocacy Week, meeting with half a dozen Texas Senators and Congresspersons by Zoom to promote the Historic Preservation Fund, historic tax credits and the Historic Preservation Caucus.

## **Membership Activities**

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The Conservation Society hosted regular General Membership meetings with guest speakers and timely topics.

September 22, 2021: The first meeting of the year was held by Zoom. Guest speakers Lynn Osborne Bobbitt, Executive Director, Brackenridge Park Conservancy and Kirk Feldmann, Brackenridge Park Conservancy Consultant. They spoke about the “Reactivation of the Sunken Garden Theater”.

December 9, 2021: The Conservation Society hosted its annual Weihnachtsfeier gathering at the Beethoven Maennerchor. Guests enjoyed delicious German-inspired recipes and beverages as they listened to the music provided by the Beethoven Maennerchor.

January 26, 2022: Guest speaker Vincent Michael, Society Executive Director, gave a presentation titled “Robert H H Hugman, Architect of the River Walk.” This event was held at the Little Rhein Probst Haus.

February 24, 2022: Guest speaker for this program was P.T. Lathrop who is the Chief of Interpretation & Education at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. His presentation was titled: “The Visitor Experience: A Vision for San Antonio Missions National Historical Park”.

May 25, 2022: This May election meeting was held at the San Antonio Garden Center. The Bylaws Committee presented multiple amendments to the Society Bylaws – most were approved, and a couple were tabled for further review and to be re-presented at the June General Membership Meeting. Following the Bylaws, elections were held, and ten new directors were elected to serve on the Board of Directors following their installation at the June General Membership Meeting.

June 22, 2022: This meeting was also held in person in the River House behind the Edward Steves Homestead. The Society gave thanks to the outgoing officers and directors and welcomed the new directors



and officers. Junior Associate officers were also recognized. The Bylaws Committee re-presented the tabled Bylaws for consideration and the members approved additional Bylaws revisions.

## **Neighborhood Liaison**

The Conservation Society worked closely with its neighborhood partners both in Advocacy efforts such as 503 Urban Loop and networking to continue the pre-pandemic work of the Neighborhood Initiative with the Office of Historic Preservation, Tier One Neighborhood Coalition, and the American Institute of Architects.

## **NIOSA®**

A Night in Old San Antonio benefits our community by celebrating and preserving the customs and culture unique to our region. NIOSA is one of the most-loved Fiesta events, and the largest fundraiser for historic preservation in the country. The money we make during this event helps the Society with its different projects and preservation efforts in San Antonio area. NIOSA draws thousands of guests to historic La Villita and the surrounding downtown area, for this 4-night event.

This year, as in the past couple of years, we were dealing with the widespread construction of La Villita, Nueva Street and the old CPS plaza/breezeway. So once again, the NIOSA team has to rethink how it will look in April 2023. Our team will definitely meet this challenge.

This was a successful year, even though we went through some challenges. We were able to gross almost \$3 million. Because of the rising cost of things, our net to the Society was a little under \$1 million. We hope this next year will be record breaking!

NIOSA wants to thank the thousands of hard working, dedicated volunteers, from the Flower and Cascarones Committees, the Stagers, Warehouse Crew, Area and Booth Chairmen and all the other area volunteers. NIOSA would not be able to happen without all of you. If you want to join in, please contact the NIOSA office at 210-226-5188 or online at [niosa.org/volunteer](http://niosa.org/volunteer).

Please mark your calendars for the 74th NIOSA which will be held April 25-28, 2023.

VIVA NIOSA!

## ***NIOSITAS***<sup>®</sup>

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NIOSITA, a small version of NIOSA, is presented to private groups. It is another way we raise funds for the Society. We were fortunate to present a NIOSITA in May 2022 for the Vernacular Architecture Forum and we will present another one in November 2022 for the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers. Then we have one scheduled for January 2023 for the Professional Tour Guide Association.

If you know of any group that might be interested in having a NIOSITA, please contact the NIOSA office for more information.

## ***Parades***

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The Conservation Society participated in four parades during Fiesta 2022: the Texas Cavaliers' River Parade, the Battle of Flowers Parade, the King William Fair Parade, and the Fiesta Flambeau.

The theme of the Conservation Society's float in the Texas Cavaliers' River Parade was "Texas Alfresco or Texas Outdoors,". DJ Ronald Gonzalez provided the musical accompaniment on the float.

In the Battle of Flowers Parade, the Conservation Society again participated in the antique car category with a 1929 Ford Model A. The theme of the float was "Viva las Flores," and signage on the truck celebrated the Texas Sage which is the official flower of the Conservation Society. The Conservation Society's vehicle won third place in the antique car category.

The Junior Associates participated in the King William Fair Parade, as they marched in the parade alongside the first ever NIOSA Hat Court.

Representatives from NIOSA participated in the Fiesta Flambeau Parade, riding a 1929 Ford Model A truck. The Society's theme this year was, "When you Wish Upon A Star". With the truck decorated and all lit up, the Conservation Society/ NIOSA placed 1<sup>st</sup> in the Antique vehicle category.

## **Properties Restoration and Repair**

Maintenance and restoration work continues on all the Society's properties.

The roof at the Alaskan Palace was replaced. The roof at our newest property, the Gray-Guilbeau at 515 Villita (formerly The Fig Tree Restaurant), was repaired and new flashing installed. Gutters and downspouts there were repaired and replaced where needed. At the Bombach House (formerly the Little Rhein Steak House), two windows and the prominent corner door on the second floor were removed, reconstructed, and installed with repairs to the surrounding masonry. Water heaters were replaced in both the Steves basement and the River House. A bad fan motor unit was replaced at the Yturri-Edmunds Carriage House as well as one at the Alaskan Palace. The vent line for the upstairs unit in the barn was found to be clogged; a new access panel was installed and the drain cleared. The track and casters for the automatic gate at the Gresser House were replaced. A leak in the irrigation system at the Wulff House was repaired.

In June of 2022, The Conservation Society completed the sale of the Edward Steves Homestead.

## **Public Relations and Publicity**

The Society focused on specific events to publicize, including the General Membership Meetings, the annual Historic Preservation Month event which featured Executive Director Vince Michael discussing "The State of the City: San Antonio Preservation 2022."

## **Scholarships**

The San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation, courtesy of the Eleanor Freeborn Bennett Educational Fund Scholarship Fund wrote a check in the amount of \$5,000 to The University of Texas at San Antonio – College of Architecture for grant students pursuing a graduate certificate in Historic Preservation. For the 2022-2023 academic year, Karla Ruiz Huerta and Gabriela Garza each received a \$2,500 scholarship.

Once a year, the San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation also provides funds to the Texas Architectural Foundation for the Brooks Martin Educational Scholarship Fund. This scholarship is awarded to outstanding students, in accredited departments; or

schools, of architecture in Texas who show an interest in historical architecture, preservation, and adaptive reuse. Ms. Rashmi Gajare, Ph.D. (University of Texas at Austin) received a \$5,000 scholarship for the 2022-2023 academic year.

### **Steves Homestead/ Yturri-Edmunds House Museums**

The Society continued to operate weekend tours at the Steves Homestead until the Spring of 2022. The building was sold to private residential owners in June, 2022. The Yturri-Edmunds Home and Mill remained open for tours by appointment year-round and was visited by several groups including descendants of the family that lived there and donated the house to the Society in 1961.