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Update on Alamo Plaza

Vincent Michael, Executive Director

orking with architects, developers and civic leaders, the Society circulated a petition regarding the new Interpretive Plan for Alamo Plaza, revealed to the public on June 7, 2018. The petition focused on two big issues: Keeping Alamo Plaza accessible and Preserving the Crockett Block Buildings. The Society has been pushing to save the 1882 Crockett, 1926 Palace, and 1921 Woolworth buildings since 2015.

The Society largely supported the Master Plan adopted by City Council last year, including a new museum in the Crockett Buildings, conservation of the chapel shrine and Long Barracks, a regraded plaza, and a pedestrian Alamo Street. At the time, the big controversy was glass walls surrounding the plaza, so those weren't approved.

The Interpretive Plan is a big step backward. There are even more street closings, and an unexplained inability to parade across the plaza, even once or twice a year. The glass walls are gone, replaced by fences shrouded by shrubs, but the goal is the same: manage the space. Are they making a state park in the middle of the city?

In Rome Piazza Navona is a legendary urban space. It sits on the site of the Roman Circus, but there is no need to recreate the circus. The *use* of the space by the public is the most meaningful historic connection. Alamo Plaza is our Piazza Navona (it's actually almost the same size).

When the Society was shown the plan, we were shocked to see that two of the three buildings we had fought for gone, and only the front half of Crockett Building conserved. All three are local landmarks and on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Crockett dates to 1882, before the state purchased the Alamo. Samuel Maverick's sons hired Alfred Giles, our most prominent 19th century architect, to build it. What's more, it makes a brilliant transition between the reverence sought for the courtyard/battlefield and the high-tech wizardry of the new museum.

During the presentation we reminded the planners of the incredible Civil Rights history in the Woolworth Building. Here was the first peaceful, voluntary integration of a lunch counter in the South, in March 1960. Their reason for demolition? To interpret the mission-era buildings along the western wall of the compound.

Why is this either/or? You can interpret both the lunch counter *and* the long-lost west wall of the compound *inside* the building. In the shade! Why in the name of history would you remove actual century-old buildings and replace them with modern interpretations?

You might compare this approach to what was done at Mission San Jose or the Spanish Governor's Palace 80 years ago, when there was a romantic, non-scientific approach to interpretation. It is surprising to see this amount of physical intervention being proposed in the 21st century.

After five public meetings, questions still remain regarding the fate of the urban plaza and the fate of important historic buildings. On June 29, as we went to press, the City was urging planners to save buildings and remove barriers, just as our petition asked. A revised plan will appear in July.



All Three Places Matter

Susan Beavin, President

ay is National Historic Preservation Month, as named by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, with the theme of

"This Place Matters". Everyone can identify places that are special to them and the San Antonio Conservation Society is no exception. There are three such places that are rich in their own history and with which we have had a very long history. These illustrate the long-term vigilance needed to save our heritage!

The Bergara-LeCompte House:

The Bergara-LeCompte house (ca 1830 – 1850) at 149 Guadalupe St "represents an extremely rare architectural resource within the City of San Antonio." It is a remnant of the Westside's Laredito community; one of the earliest settled areas of San An-



tonio. Today, few of Laredito's historic structures remain, having fallen to urban renewal and the construction of I-35.

Two grants of \$15,000 (by the Texas Historical Commission and the San Antonio Conservation Society) and a \$35,000 grant from the City of San Antonio were given and a promise of a new roof. Vacant and set on fire, the house has long been in a state of dispersion.



By 2017, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) acquired the property and the City had added the house to its Vacant Building Program database. After some negotiation, and on-going pressure from the Society, the City did

replace the roof, following the recon-

struction of the stone walls, and removal of fire-damaged interior elements. As SARA decides what to do with this property, we will continue our vigilance and remain in discussions with them.



The Dullnig Schneider House:

The Folk Victorian 1886 Dullnig-Schneider House at 204 Nolan Street, originally owned by George Dullnig, has been a City of San Antonio landmark since 1987. George Dullnig, was an Austrian immigrant,

and one of San Antonio's most prominent businessmen. The Dullnig-Schneider House received an award from the San Antonio Conservation Society for adaptive reuse.

The City acquired the Dullnig-Schneider house in 1978 and rented it to a nonprofit. The Office of Historic Preservation sent an independent engineering firm to evaluate the building, to verify the leasee's claim the building was beyond repair. The engineer



determined it could easily be stabilized and the exterior repaired. We knew that already! The Society kept pressing the City to act. Like the Bergara-LeCompte house, this property was listed on the City's Vacant Building Program list in 2017. Restoration

work is finally taking place, although the building's future is uncertain and will require continued monitoring.

The Perez St. Jacal:

The Perez Street properties, located at 215 and 219 Perez, represent another long preservation saga for the Conservation Society, this time involving the University Health Care System. Both buildings became the subject of a letter of agreement between the City and the Hospital System in the 1980s





The jacal at 216 Perez is one of only a half-dozen surviving jacales in all of Bexar County. These structures use a unique style of construction combining mesquite branches and caliche.

By 2001, the Conservation Society had spent more than \$32,000 on rehabili-

tating the two-story structure and constructing a temporary roof over the jacal. Both buildings appeared on Preservation Texas' Most Endangered Places list for 2004. Communications with UHCS continued, but with no results. In 2017, the 16-year old "temporary" roof collapsed on the jacal, which was in an extreme state of deterioration. It was really now or never! The University Health Care System Foundation agreed to salvage what it could and use the building as a "demonstration" of an early San Antonio jacal and its construction.

Stabilization is currently underway using funds obtained from a National Trust grant. Meanwhile, the watchful eye of the San Antonio Conservation Society remains vigilantly focused on this property.

There are so few structures representative of early San Antonio and we feel their preservation is critical. There is not time to share the individual history of each building and their many interesting inhabitants. These places matter! One of the Society's founders, Anna Ellis, stated, "Shall I say, 'Yes, I remember it', or "Here it is, I helped save it". As a member of the Society, you are helping us "Make history by saving history". Not yet a member? Join up and join in. Then tell us what places matter to you.

There is not room in this article for the fascinating details of each property. **For the full story, click here**.

Executive Director's Page

Vincent Michael

Demolition by Neglect

reserving our built environment is like preserving our health - it is something you need to work on regularly, not every once in a while. The examples of buildings that lingered without maintenance for a long time is the subject of President Susan Beavin's article in this issue. While those three buildings are finally "saved" after years of neglect, more must be done to prevent buildings from being neglected in the first place.

The best way to save a building is to use it. Because then we are motivated to take care of it. The opposite of that is what we call "demolition by neglect."

Despite promises two decades ago, the Beacon Hill School has been deteriorating for many years and rightfully causing concern among parents and residents. Sadly, this seems to be a deliberate case of demolition by neglect. Fortunately, the 1916 school by local architect Leo Diellman was built with lots of reinforced concrete, meaning that despite a wooden roof that has turned to mush, the

basic structure is sound.

ey, right? Not exactly. Beyond money the real problem is USE. Historic structures need a viable use. That is the challenge of the Beacon Hill school building.



So, the obstacle is mon-

cities in that it has an ordinance that addresses the problem of vacant and abandoned buildings that are being neglected to the point of demolition.

San Antonio is rare among major U.S. Unfortunately, local tax policies may

not incentivize maintenance or rehabilitation. Negligent building owners even go so far as to let their buildings languish until public authorities are forced to demolish them - at public cost. Demolition by neglect not only harms neighborhoods: it costs taxpayers money. These public costs - through tax avoidance and demolition liens - are part of the reason San Antonio adopted its Vacant Building Registration Program in 2016.

We are fortunate to have this new tool, but it is still the vigilance of the San Antonio Conservation Society and its members that makes the difference and holds public and private owners accountable for their responsibilities to their neighborhoods.



The Neighborhood Before Exhibit



The Neighborhood Before

pril began with Viva Hemisfair!, a weekend-long celebration of the World's Fair that graced San Antonio exactly 50 years ago. I enjoyed serving on the History Committee that displayed artifacts from the Fair in five of the historic buildings on East Nueva Street (formerly Goliad). Board member Marlene Richardson also participated and contributed many artifacts to the show.

The San Antonio Conservation Society was proud to sponsor the outstanding exhibit "The Neighborhood Before" in the Longini-Herrman House, curated by Nicolas Rivard and Participation Studio. This exhibit featured a map of the neighborhood removed by urban renewal in order to build HemisFair '68. A series of hanging maps and images beautifully documented a neighborhood lost to time. Supplemented by artifacts from the collection of board member Linda Alwine. The exhibit continued through May and is currently seeking a permanent home.

FIESTA 2018 Recap - Parades

Jana Foreman, Parades Committee Chair

he Conservation Society once again participated in four parades during Fiesta this year. The Texas Cavalier River parade started things off on Monday, April 23rd. Susan Beaven, Margie Arnold, Kathy Krnavek, Patti Zaiontz and Sandy Sands rode on the float which was supplied and decorated by the Cavaliers. The theme was Mission Concepcion. Participants dressed as early inhabitants with Sandy as a mission friar, complete with cowboy hat.

The Battle of Flowers Parade, Friday, April 27th, featured Susan Beavin, Rose Moran, Patricia Seidenberger, Joanna Parrish and



Kathy Krnavek riding in our "King William Street" carriage. The ladies looked lovely in their period dress and gorgeous hats. It was decorated with photos of Wulff House, the King William Gazebo and Villa Finale with King William Street signs and Society seals. We had lots of paper flowers, courtesy of the Decorations committee – thanks y'all! It looked so good, we won a 3rd

Place ribbon!

Saturday, April 28th started with the King William Fair Parade. Our Junior Associates participated in the parade and had lots of



fun wearing Society bright tiedye t-shirts and riding in a 1950 Mack Fire Truck driven by the San Antonio Fire Department.

Our final parade was in the evening of Saturday, April 28th, the Fiesta Flambeau Night Parade. The tired but merry NIOSA ladies, Margie Arnold, Jackie Fellers, Glenda Duffin, Dee Wright,



Sharon Hearn and Jana Foreman rode in the same carriage used for Battle of Flowers, but decorations were changed to NIOSA with lots more flowers and lights of course. This time we were awarded 1st Place in the equestrian category.

Thanks to the committee members who decorated the carriage both times: Wayne and Judy Hartmann, Bea Orta, Stella Tenorio-De La Garza and Eddie De La Garza, with NIOSA signs supplied by Rose Moran. We wouldn't have done it without y'all!

2018 Kings Party

Christine Luttrell

he opening parade for NIOSA® kicked off Tuesday, April 24th. It was led by Mayor Nirenberg, King Antonio, and King Rey Feo. The parade winds through the streets of La Villita and ends in front of 511 Villita St, the location of the Conservation Society's Kings Party. This party is thrown every year in honor of King Antonio and King Rey Feo. Many dignitaries of San Antonio attend. Fiesta eggs are presented as gifts for the Kings. The Kings Party is a tradition that has gone on for many years.







s I look back at the 70th anniversary of "A Night In Old San Antonio" I am overcome with many emotions and thoughts. First is how incredibly thankful I am that it was completed so successfully and so safely. Successfully in that we had multiple nights of record attendance and revenue, even with the rain and thunderstorms on Wednesday night. Safely in that we had no incidents and the new bag screening procedure to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for our attendees and volunteers (i.e. any bags larger than 12" x 12" x 6" and all backpacks were prohibited) was universally accepted. Our SAPD coordinators said there was no push-back at all from our guests. Those new procedures will now

be SOP (standard operating procedure) for all NIOSA events going forward.

Mostly, however, I am overwhelmed at the magnitude of what it takes to "make" NIO-SA happen---and how deeply grateful I am to those who volunteer to make it happen, led by my selfless vice chairmen (Sharon Hearn, Dee

Wright, Jana Foreman and Glenda Duffin) and NIOSA Treasurer Jackie Fellers, who worked a year to make 2018 NIOSA the success it was. Next volunteers in line to thank: our awesome stagers (Brad Dietrich, Ray Moreno, Scott Cox, Jeff West, Rick Zertuche, Artie Dietel, Gene Willette); the NIOSA crafters (Linda Skop, Gerry Young, Thelma Parker, Deborah Lund and Blue Alvarez, to name a few); the Cascarone and Decorations committees who meet all year to make those important accessories of NIOSA; the "Service and Support" committees (such as banners, consolidated foods, coupons, electrical appliances, gates, ice, locks, maps, cup supply, paper supply, safety/fire extinguishers, signs, souvenirs and advance ticket sales, just to name a few); the 15 area chairmen and their armies; and the booth chairmen and their workers for the 200+ food, drink and "atmosphere" booths - all volunteers. More than 3,000 volunteers came through our gates each night to do their part for the San Antonio Conservation Society. That count does



not even include all the other behind-the-scene volunteers that I named above. In my gratitude list I can't forget the three full-time NIOSA office staff and two full-time warehouse staff,

who do the work of 50.

Everyone always wants to know how our "new" items for the 70th Anniversary were received. I am happy to report that all our new items and musical acts did well--especially the



three new booths in Chinatown (Pot Stickers, Fried Rice and Mandarin Screwdrivers). As for our tried-and-true NIOSA fa-

vorites: anticuchos sales were way up, Bongo-K-Bobs had a record year, as did Maria's Tortillas. The 2018 70-year NIOSA medal is almost sold out and was voted Number 3 by the San Antonio Express News as the best Fiesta medal in the nonprofit division. NIOSA was voted the number one Fiesta Event in



San Antonio by the readers of mysa.com—and we wholeheart-edly agree!

It's amazing to think that NIOSA started with just five San Antonio Conservation Society members who wanted to make money to save our city's historic heritage.



They cooked food at their homes and sold it at those first festivals. How some things have changed and, yet, so, so many things have stayed the same: NIOSA still raises funds for the historic preservation efforts and programs of the Conservation Society, it is still presented by volunteers, most all foods are still made by the volunteers on site in the booths, decorations and cascarones are still hand-decorated by volunteers, booth signs are still hand-made by the sign committee, bolsas are still painted by local artists.....and therein lies the magic of A Night In Old San Antonio!

Summer 2018 Donations

Supports

		\$100 to \$249		
Mrs. Anna Catalani	Mrs. Anita Gonzalez	Mr. James Ivey	Mr. Robert Rivard	Mrs. Evelyn Williams
Mr. Edward De La Garza	Ms. Joanne Holshouser	Mrs. Aurora Pacheco	Ms. Patsy Taylor	
Mrs. Peggy Furches	Ms. Jenna Hughes	Dr. Linda Rhodes	Mrs. Stella Tenorio-De La Garza	
		Donors		
		\$5 to \$99		
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Memorials

In Memory of Lorrain	e "Rushie" Andersen	In Memory of Chi	ristena Crawford	In Memory of	Judy Hagen	In Memory of Carol Paveglio
Jean Andersen	Judy & Bill Neal	Maryann Baykal	George R. Strait	Kevin Bergner	Elizabeth Reise	Linda Lee
Christine Keicher	Janet Schiessler	Steven C. Bent	Evelyn P. Wood	Denise Hartman	Dr. & Mrs. W. L. Moore	e, Jr.

Capital Club

Corinthian \$10,000 Level

GLI - Mr. Tim Campion Glazer's Beer & Beverage - Mr. Mike Gorman

Ionic \$5,000 Level

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The Preservation Advocate is published by the San Antonio Conservation Society.

Send letters, articles, or comments to: conserve@saconservation.org.

Submission deadline for the Autumn Newsletter is Friday, August 3, 2018.

The purpose for which the San Antonio Conservation Society was formed is to preserve and encourage the preservation of historic buildings, objects, places and customs relating to the history of Texas, its natual beauty and all that is admirable and distinctive to our State; and by such physical and cultural preservation to keep the history of Texas legible and intact, to educate the public, especially the youth of today and tomorrow with knowledge of our inherited regional values.

Publications Committee

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Upcoming Events

Monday, September 3

Wednesday, September 26, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Labor Day - Offices closed

General Membership Meeting - Carver Theater







Members enjoying a recent tour



Historic Preservation Month Committee



50 year members