



HONOREE

The Conservation Society of San Antonio

Founded in 1924, the Conservation Society of San Antonio has battled to conserve the architectural, natural, and intangible heritage of San Antonio.

The Society is one of the oldest and most active preservation groups in the United States. From an original membership of thirteen female founders today's membership includes more than 1,700 women and men. Besides purchasing historic structures threatened by demolition, the Society offers grants for community preservation projects, maintains a research library, manages two historic house museums, and presents awards for exemplary restoration projects.

Instrumental in the conservation of landmarks, the Society also helps preserve the LA Villita Historic District, site of its annual cultural celebration (since 1948), "A Night in Old San Antonio® NIOSA®". About half of the Society's \$2.5 million annual budget derives from NIOSA receipts.

During its 97 years the Society has received numerous awards including the Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award (1977), the highest national honor in historic preservation. Other notable achievements include the following:

- In the late 1920's, Society members purchased and restored the San Jose Granary in a decades-long campaign to conserve San Antonio's five Franciscan Missions—the only World Heritage Site in Texas
- In 1985, the Society spearheaded the move of the 1906 Fairmount Hotel four city blocks to save it from demolition...at that time the largest building ever moved on pneumatic tires
- In 1988, the Society purchased the Aztec Theater when it was threatened by demolition
- For over 60 years, the Society has sponsored annual Heritage Education Tours for over 2,000 fourth grade students at no cost and provides Heritage Education Seminars for teachers with hands-on lessons to supplement tours. The Society recently completed virtual tours of the Missions and other landmarks
- Staff and volunteers in the Society Library handle over 1,100 research requests each year
- The Society has established a \$100,000 endowed scholarship in the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at San Antonio
- Special Society Board allocations have included \$50,000 for the Hays Street Bridge restoration, \$87,000 to the City Clerk of San Antonio to preserve archival documents, \$100,000 to restore the City Council Chamber, and \$300,000 for restoration of the Bexar County Courthouse.

In 2019, the Society unveiled a plan to preserve the Crockett and Woolworth Buildings on Alamo Plaza as part of the new Alamo museum. To advocate for saving the Woolworth Building, the site of civil rights history, the Society helped form the Woolworth Coalition which included the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, Mexican American Civil Rights Institute, San Antonio Branch NAACP, San Antonio African American Community Archive & Museum, San Antonio for Growth on the East Side and the Westside Preservation Alliance. Society advocacy included underwriting an architectural proposal in support of saving the Woolworth, distributing and gathering citizen petitions to save the building, providing testimony before the Texas State Historical Commission, filing for World Monument status for the Woolworth as an endangered monument in 2020, marching in the 2019 and 2020 MLK Marches displaying "Save the Woolworth" signs, constructing an award-winning "Dia de los Muertos" altar dedicated to the late NAACP Youth Council President Mary Lillian Andrews who was instrumental in downtown San Antonio's lunch counter desegregation (March 1960), hosting a free public forum about civil rights history at the Bexar County Courthouse, and developing historical videos about civil rights activities. 2021 saw a member of the Woolworth Coalition, Aaronetta Pierce, become a Tri-Chair of the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee which will help determine the Alamo museum's focus and content. The Bexar County Commissioners Court has committed \$25 million dollars spread over a five year period to repurpose the Woolworth and Crockett buildings for the Alamo Visitor Center & Museum.

Society Motto: "Shall I say 'Yes, I remember it.' or 'Here it is, I helped to save it'?" by Miss Anna Ellis

TRIBUTE TO WOOLWORTH VISIONARIES



Tommye M. Bright



Harry V. Burns



Mary L. Andrews



Richard H. Hunt

As the baker at the downtown San Antonio Woolworth Store, Mrs. Tommye Mae Bright brought delight to thousands of customers who snacked on the delicious donuts she prepared. However, since the Woolworth lunch counter had been legally segregated ever since opening June 3, 1921, neither she nor any other African American person could eat inside the store.

Harry Victory Burns became an ardent civil rights fighter as the 12-year old president of the Seguin, Texas NAACP Youth Council. In adulthood he became the 17th President of the San Antonio Branch NAACP and would attend SA City Council meetings with cards labeled "Equal Rights" pinned to his clothing. Bomb threats did not deter him from picketing and marching against injustice. A World War II U.S. Army Veteran, Burns was committed to non-violent demonstrations. His message, that a physical demonstration similar to the Greensboro, N.C. lunch counter sit-ins might be necessary in San Antonio, made an impact on nervous businessmen who didn't want to risk financial loss if profitable military installations left San Antonio.

San Antonio native, Mary Lillian Andrews, a 17-year old freshman at Our Lady of the Lake College, served as President of the San Antonio NAACP Youth Council. She wrote letters to many owners of downtown eating establishments questioning their racial policies and asking them to desegregate the lunch counters. She had inherited the zeal for justice from family members including civil rights activist uncles Atty. Percy Sutton and Texas State Rep. G.J. Sutton (San Antonio's first black elected public official), and her mother Smithie Sutton Andrews Henry who integrated the Camellia Room at Joske's Alamo Plaza Department Store.

Attired in uniform on March 16, 1960, U.S. Army Private Richard Howard Hunt was a courageous risk taker when he had lunch at the downtown Woolworth and consumed his meal without incident. San Antonio was unique in having peaceful lunch counter integration and was recognized for that in national media including JET Magazine. Mr. Hunt is now a nationally renown sculptor.

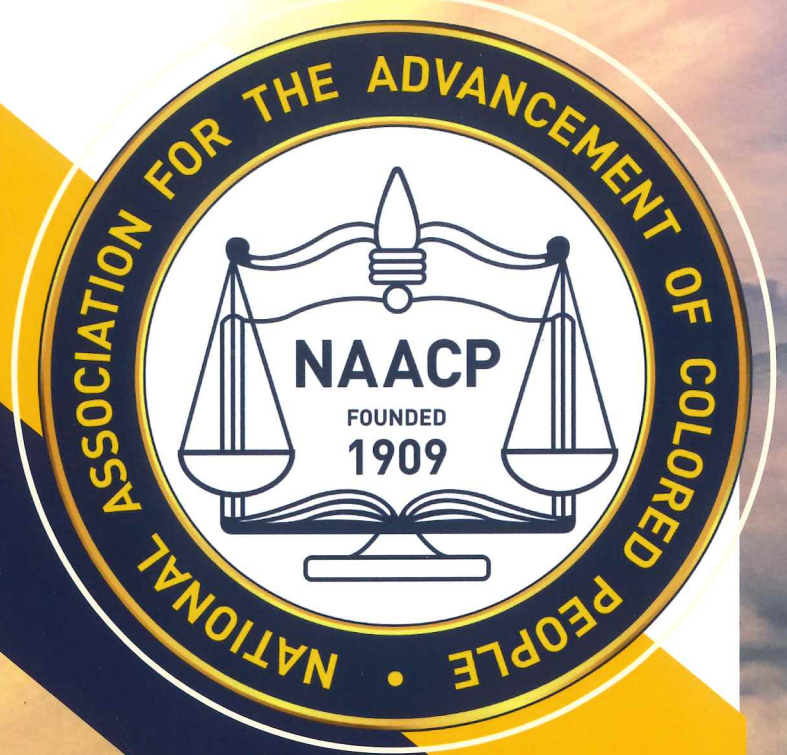
However, we would have little cause for celebration if it were not for the Conservation Society of San Antonio sounding the alarm about the proposed demolition of the Woolworth Building. Society leaders developed the Coalition to Save the Woolworth Building. They devoted time and resources to research, record, and publicize the civil rights history which occurred before, during and after downtown lunch counter integration. Thanks to Herculean efforts by Charles and Thelma Andrews, Susan Beavin, Antonia Castaneda, Everett Fly, Sarah Zenaida Gould, Nettie Hinton, Deborah Omowale Jarmon, Tuesdae Knight, Dr. Vincent Michael, Velma Nanka-Bruce, Aaronetta Pierce, Paul Ringenbach, Graciela Sanchez, Beth Standifird, Patti Zaiontz, and many others, the 100 year old Woolworth building has been saved...but the content of the new museum has yet to be determined. Thank you to Aaronetta Pierce for accepting a leadership role in that cause. She needs and deserves the community's support.

I am grateful for the leadership of San Antonio NAACP Branch President Dr. Gregory Hudspeth and the involvement and support by Officers, Executive Committee Members, and the General Membership of the Branch. The hard-working members of the Community Coordination Committee are Dorothy Lee Collins, Doris Callies Dunlap and Nettie Brooks Hinton and "volunteers" from the San Antonio Fighting Back staff: Willie Mitchell, Maria Betancourt and Debra Tyser. Thank you for youthful support in preparation of beautiful purple promotional flyers by Wendellyn Miller and participation in the Courthouse Forum by Taylor Andrews (Grandniece of Mary Lillian Andrews).

San Antonio Community: You signed petitions, made phone calls of support, distributed flyers, attended hearings, participated in marches and rallies, networked with family, friends, church members and associates, wore the purple badges and tee shirts, served donuts outside the Woolworth site, carried educational banners and signs, gained favorable media coverage by Cary Clack, Vincent Davis, Scott Huddleston and Chris Tomlinson...so that our children and generations beyond may have the opportunity to visit a museum reflective of the many dimensions of the Alamo Plaza story including the truth about slavery and Alamo Plaza's civil rights history. I am grateful for YOU...TODAY'S VISIONARIES!

Compliments of Maria Stevenson Greene

71st San Antonio Branch NAACP Freedom Fund Celebration 1st Virtual Celebration



October 22

2021

VIRTUAL | 7:00 PM (CST)

**DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY
ALWAYS VOTE!**

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