

THE BRONCO

The Newsletter of the Blackwell School Alliance

Summer 2018



Pages from the Marfa Storybook



The First Annual Blackwell Block Party took place on Saturday, April 28th. And by any measure, it was a huge success. We threw a fun party, debuted a beautiful mural, and engaged our community in the history of the Blackwell School.

The event was attended by 250 people, beginning at the mural site with a short ceremony, followed by a procession of Mariachi musicians, classic cars, and pedestrians, to the main event at the Black-

well School in south Marfa. Guests enjoyed a free buffet lunch, music, games for adults and children, storytelling, and a comfortable venue to reminisce with friends, old and new.

History matters, our stories matter, and we are thrilled that so many people supported the party and the mural. You believed in our dream, you shared our dream, and we did this wonderful thing together.

Read more and see photos of the Block Party and Mural on pages 4 and 5

Historic Structures Report is Underway

We first started talking about a Historic Structures Report for the Blackwell School about two years ago, while discussing with local architect Mike Green about next steps to preserve our building.

This led us to a site visit from Mike Robb of the Texas Historical Commission who explained further about needing a comprehensive plan for restoration—a plan

that would take into consideration the building's historical integrity and significance, while also allowing us to modernize the plumbing and electricity and create a space suitable for a professional museum and community space.

Through our contacts at the Texas Historical Commission we were connected last year to a graduate program historic

Read more about our Architect on page 3.

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**THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL IS
OPEN EVERY SATURDAY FROM
10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM.
ADMISSION IS FREE.**

Letter from Gretel Enck

We are having a very exciting year here at the Blackwell School. We hope you will enjoy reading about the Block Party we threw in April, as well as seeing photographs of the mural and lots of our friends, old and new. Were you there? I hope you had a wonderful time. Either way, save the date of the last Saturday in April. We hope to make this an annual event.

I also hope you take note of the progress we are making on our Historic Structure Report. I feel like we are in very good hands with Ms. Pemberton.

To fund our projects, the Blackwell School received grants in the past year from the Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation, Permian Basin Area Foundation and their Tillapaugh Fund for Public History, The Summerlee Foundation, Kirkpatrick Family Fund, and the City of Marfa—through their Hotel Occupancy Tax fund.

We also applied for grants from other foundations that we didn't get—and that's OK. This has been a time of exploring the

possibilities out there. It takes time to find foundations whose goals are aligned with our mission. Yet I feel strongly that many people out there, and foundations, want to support a place like this.

In fact, we have been so successful that we are learning new accounting software. Quickbooks allows us to enter all of our income and expenses, put them into categories, and create reports that are important to our tax preparer, potential donors, and of course us!

Thanks especially to Kathleen Walstrom who continues to be a diligent treasurer for us. As we move to our new system, her accuracy and thoroughness have made it easy. With this new software we will keep the kind of accounting records specific to non-profits like ours. And we're feeling pretty good about learning some new tricks.

I invite you to stop in and say hello on Saturdays. The Blackwell School is your school, and I'm delighted and honored that you let me play a role. Thank you so much!



We Need Your BLACKWELL SCHOOL BUILDING PHOTOS Can you Help?



The Blackwell School Alliance is gathering all the photos we can find of our building “back in the day.” They will help our architect make decisions for building restoration.



Bring your photos to the Blackwell School any Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. We will scan your photos on to our computer and give you your photos back. **YOU KEEP YOUR PHOTOS!**

The Blackwell School is located at the corner of Abbott and Waco Streets in south Marfa. If you would prefer to mail photos to us, donate photos, or just can't make it in on a Saturday, call Gretel Enck at 432.295.3359.

Historic Structures Report, continued

preservation architecture at UT San Antonio. Their summer fieldwork at the Blackwell School provided some critical evidence about our building's origins—and got a lot of people excited about long-term preservation of the Blackwell School.

Now, this summer, we have been able to hire San Antonio architect Sue Ann Pemberton to complete our Historic Structures Report. She is an architect in private practice and a university professor. She has extensive experience in conducting these kinds of projects on historic structures. And a big qualification in her favor is her long-time interest in, and experience with, adobe and earthen structures.

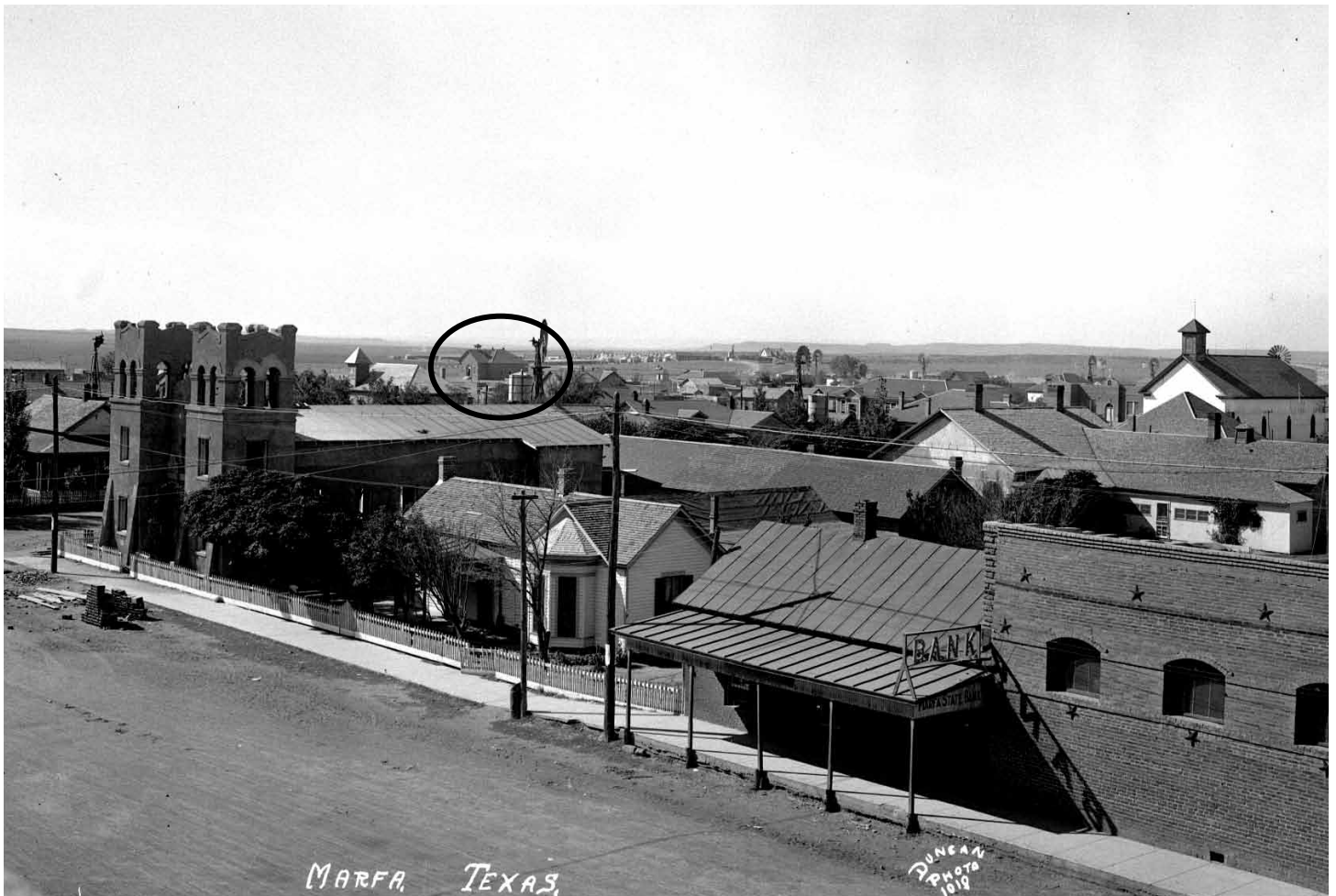
Ms. Pemberton and her team spent time at the school in July, are conducting historical research, and using strict historic guidelines to develop recommendations for how to approach the very large task of completely renovating our building.

Ms. Pemberton is returning to Marfa on August 25 to answer our questions, and ask a few of her own. Then she will have the report finished in October. The report will recommend a phased construction schedule based on both what are immediate building problems and what is the logical sequence of restoration.

Once we have digested her recommendations, we will begin a fundraising campaign to pay for the first phase. We know this will be expensive. Yet, this is what we have been waiting for—a roadmap to our goals. Stay tuned to learn more.

And if you want to be a part of the discussion on Saturday, August 25, please call Gretel Enck for more information at 432.295.3359.

We are indebted to Board Member Jessi Silva for finding this photo. It is part of the Duncan Collection at the Marfa and Presidio County Museum. It appears to be taken from the top of the old hotel, facing southwest. We're not sure what the last number of that date is, yet it's an important photo that shows the Blackwell School in the background, as well as a lot of Marfa from a century ago.



Blackwell Block Party 2018...

The Blackwell School Alliance would like to thank everyone who played a part in creating a beautiful community mural and a fun festival for the whole family—from early financial support from foundations, to generous grants from the City of Marfa, to all the businesses and individual who contributed money, time, ideas, images, and encouraging words. Thank you for believing in our dream. We hope you will mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual Blackwell Block Party the last Saturday of April, 2019.

The Blackwell School Alliance created the Block Party and commissioned the new mural to celebrate our heritage, expand our understanding of Marfa's history, and explore the pages of the Marfa storybook. As you know, this mural is only the tip of the iceberg. Yet we hope it engages our community and educates our visitors, speaking these stories a little louder and to a wider audience. We thank our artist Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado and his team for turning our stories and images into something beautiful for our city.



All the photos on these pages were taken by Sarah M. Vasquez. She is a former journalist for the Big Bend Sentinel, and an accomplished professional writer and photographer. We are grateful to her for capturing this special day in pictures.



...and Mural

And because we know that so many experiences and people are not represented on the mural, we want to say that our work is not done. If you feel like your story is not represented here, or your identity is forgotten in the way the world sees Marfa, then let's get to work. Let's fix that. Across our community, let's find creative ways to honor our history and ensure that all voices have a chance to be heard.

The Blackwell School Alliance has the goal to be relevant and to serve Marfa and our regional community culturally, historically, and educationally for the benefit of all Marfa residents and visitors. The Block Party is a way for us to bring the community together around these goals. We do not yet know what next year's Block Party will look like; we are brainstorming right now! Got ideas? Send us a letter or an email: blackwellschoolmarfa@gmail.com. Thanks!



Our biggest thanks go to Taylor Garcia Dickson, above, who brought the idea of a community party to the Blackwell School Alliance—something reminiscent of the annual Charro Days in her hometown of Brownsville. For months, she worked with us to plan the party and mural, even while planning her own wedding! We couldn't have done it without her!



All the Volunteers

We had more than 30 volunteers come help us throw our big party, and that's above all the business who donated gift certificates and money, the individuals who supported our gofundme drive, our foundation donors, and the generous grants from the City of Marfa. Everything we do is a team effort.

And the heart of the team is the dedicated people who serve on our Board of Directors. If you were at the Block Party, you saw David Walstrom out collecting recyclables and Betty Nunez, Jessi Silva, and Kathleen Walstrom selling bandanas.



You also might have noticed that we have a new ramp leading up to our loading dock and back door. Gretel Enck suggested at one of our monthly meetings that we might want to hire someone to replace the worn decking and a rotten support post before the big party. *Sure, but we can do it ourselves*, was the response. And so we did.

Mario Rivera, Lionel Salgado, and Gretel Enck spent the better part of a Saturday rebuilding the ramp—new support posts and all new decking. It feels solid once again, and it sure got used at the Block Party!



Marfa Lights Festival is Just Around the Corner

And if you are standing on that corner, you can wave to us as we go by in the parade. Or better yet, join us!

Yes, the Blackwell School Alliance is preparing for the Marfa Lights Parade. We had so much fun last year, that we will do it again this year. You can show your Blackwell Pride by walking with us, riding on our truck, or just cheering loudly as we ride by.

Also, we have decided not to have a booth this year—no beer, no snowcones, no merchandise sales. Instead we will staff the Blackwell School so that you can visit and bring your friends and family to learn our important history.

We will also share stories about our new mural. Please stop by the mural to learn about how it came to be, and hear the stories behind all of the images.

Public Talk at the Mural (30 minutes)
Saturday, September 1: 9 - 9:30 am
Sunday, September 2: 9 - 9:30 am

Open Hours at the Blackwell School
Saturday, September 1: 11 am - 4 pm
Sunday, September 2: 10 am - 4 pm

Children of Giant (86 minutes)
Screening at the Blackwell School
Saturday, September 1: 1:00 pm
Sunday, September 2: 1:00 pm

MARFA LIGHTS PARADE STARTS AT 10 AM ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Learn more about the Marfa Lights Festival here: marfachamber.org/menu/

Do You Remember?

Blackwell Reunion Plans Continue

*By Evelyn Davis in the
Big Bend Sentinel on April 2, 1987*

Much excitement has been generated about the Blackwell School Reunion, which is being sponsored by the former students this coming July. Through efforts of the Blackwell Ex-student Association, the members have planned many events and entertainments for the community and out-of-town visitors.

Even the teachers have become inspired and are eager to take part in the celebration. Mary Katheryn Earney, a staff writer, is doing all the publicity. The Harper girls, Billie and Mary Lee, are locating all the former teachers and have received some wonderful responses. A group has started compiling data on a history. The city commission is very interested in the reunion and are giving their assistance.

"I am so delighted the Blackwell students love their school enough to revive its seventy some-odd years of existence," contends Mayor Jane Shurley. "Serving as a school board member for many years, I am aware of its many merits.

"The parade has been granted the permit, the buildings have been rented for the dinner and dance, and Vizcaino Park will be the site for the family gathering and booths. The swimming pool will be available for the special event and 1899s games are planned for the small children.

"Aida Cano has gotten me very enthused, as well as Lionel Salgado, the president, about their ideas of the celebration. Lionel is planning a banner like the "Marfa Fever" that will hang one week in advance over Highland Avenue before the date. I hope all the parks will be used including the Founders Park with the completed band stand.

"I love being a part of the Blackwell Reunion and I feel we shall have another festival equal to the centennial."

Ester Sanchez at the City Library has completed her research on all the available material about Blackwell, Pat Godbold has submitted all the pages from the Presidio County Museum vertical files, and Dr. Cecilia Thompson's History of Marfa and Presidio County sheds a little new light. The information is good but fails to complete the entire history.

Since Superintendent Hamilton Steel cleaned house and destroyed all the old records in 1955, the teachers are faced with a difficult task of writing a complete history. Carl Robinson and Veronica Campbell are searching the MISD record; Josie Luna and Aida Cano are combing the school board minutes. Bertha Sanchez has volunteered to study The Big Bend Sentinel yearly files and Yvonne Saulter is searching the early records in the county judge's office when the Mexican school was administered by the county judges.

Evelyn Davis has elected herself to be the coordinator of the written accounts, has mailed many letters to former teachers "picking their brains" and has talked to many of her old pupils. She is asking the Marfa students to write their memories of their school days and mail them to her.



Marfa Public Library has considerable collections of local history material. Contained in one is a research paper outline written by Frank Baeza for history class at Marfa High School. The paper is about Mrs. Evelyn Davis.

"Mrs. Davis was born in 1909 in Sabinal, Texas. Came to Marfa, Texas when she was 9 months old. She decided to be a teacher, she went to Texas University, and Southwest University, and also Sul Ross University. She started to teach in Presidio Elementary, then came to Marfa and taught here, she also was a teacher in Seguin, Texas, for some time. She was a teacher for a period of 28 years ... She was teaching during World War II. She has taught college, high school, and elementary."



It's MEMBERSHIP SEASON

**...AT THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL
JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY**

Now is the time to show us you believe in the Blackwell School Alliance —our dedication to preserve the historic school house, to gather and share the stories of this chapter of Marfa's history, and to be a place in Marfa that celebrates and commemorates the rich culture and heritage of our borderland roots. Your membership is a vote of confidence for our mission.

**Membership year runs from July 1 to June 30
\$25 annual dues for one person // \$50 for two people
Thank you for your support!**

By check: Blackwell School Alliance / PO Box 417 / Marfa, TX 79843

By credit card: theblackwellschool.org

In person at the Blackwell School, Saturdays 10 am to 4 pm

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