

# THE BRONCO

The Newsletter of Blackwell School Alliance

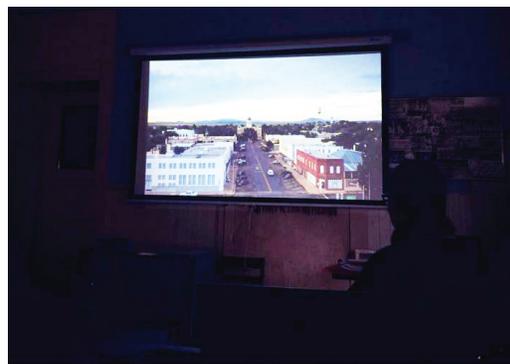
Winter 2016



## Blackwell School is Now Open Every Saturday

Since November volunteers have been staffing the school during open hours every Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Movies are screened each Saturday at 1:00 p.m. Some Saturdays we show *Children of Giant*, and other weeks we rotate the excellent documentaries of *Children of Giant* Director Hector Galan and other thematic films.

Being open on a regular basis allows visitors to Marfa as well as locals to come learn more about local history and of course the vibrant Hispanic culture of our community. Please plan to stop in and say hello the next time you are in town.



Near left: Screening *Children of Giant* at Blackwell School on a Saturday afternoon.

## Blackwell School is Awarded a Grant

Blackwell School Alliance recently received a grant in the amount of \$4000 from the Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation to put toward the installation of a heating and cooling system in the band room of the historic Blackwell School building. Climate control will allow this room to be used for meetings, presentations, and other community activities. Additional projects prioritized by Blackwell School Alliance in 2016 include installing picnic awnings in the adjacent park and continuing to restore the historic integrity of the building, while improving energy efficiency, with new windows and a new back wall for the north room of the school building.

Dudley T. Dougherty (1923-1978) was a successful oilman and cattle rancher in Beeville, Texas, in the Gulf Coastal Plains area, as well as being a decorated World War II veteran, two-term state legislator, and journalist. His love of knowledge and humanity became key facets of his life, and the foundation established in his honor supports worthy causes such as medical research, education, fine arts, and health care. The Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation was established in 2002 to

*continued on page 2*

## Committee

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## Letter from Joe Cabezuela

I hope your 2016 is off to a good start. Here at Blackwell School, we are as committed as ever to continuing our efforts to preserve Hispanic culture in Marfa, Texas. We are continuing to find the money necessary to complete the restoration of the historic Blackwell School building—through local fund-raising events, charitable grants, and donations from friends, family, neighbors, and you!

### **And we have a question for you?**

Would you be interested in having a Blackwell School reunion in 2016, this summer? Give us your opinion: write us an email, send us a note through the

### **Grant**, *continued from page 1*

support those who wish to be a part of the many worthy forces for change in our world. “We are a foundation whose purpose is to look ahead towards the future, giving the past its due, by remembering where we came from and how much we can all accomplish together.”

The Blackwell School Alliance grant application was championed by legendary Texas stateswoman Sissy Farenthold

### **Join Blackwell Today!**

All of the exciting projects taking place at Blackwell School today are because of our volunteers, donors, members, and dedicated Committee members—are you one of us? Would you like to be?

Annual membership dues for Blackwell School Alliance are only \$25. Won't you please make this yearly commitment and let us know you support the work being done here? Can you do more? Can you donate to support one of our 2016 priority projects? Can you

mail, give us a call. If we hear enough enthusiasm, we'll put it together. This would probably occur in conjunction with the Marfa Lights Festival on Labor Day Weekend.

We are not only asking for Blackwell Alumni. Did you attend St. Mary's? Did you attend Marfa High School? This is about everybody coming together with old friends and sharing good times.

Please contact us today, and thank you for all of you support for the Blackwell School Alliance. Together we are preserving a very important part of Marfa history—and our history!

who has had a life-long commitment to civil rights advocacy and social justice. She believes that Blackwell School has national historical significance as well as current social implications. Blackwell School Alliance is gratified to have its efforts at preserving the site and contributing to community reconciliation be recognized as an expression of the values held dear by Ms. Farenthold and the Dougherty Foundation.

volunteer for one of our events, or to host visitors to the school?

Ultimately, Blackwell School is more than just a Hispanic story, more than just a Marfa story: Blackwell School is an American story, an important piece of the American puzzle of who we are.

Supporting Blackwell School supports the commemoration and celebration of Hispanic culture and the Hispanic experience in Marfa and beyond.

**...and Thank You!**

Winter 2016

# School Building Facade Completed!

Blackwell School Alliance completed the restoration of the facade of the school. Deterioration of the adobe necessitated making this project a top priority, with the intrusion of rainwater contributing to continuing decay. DW Construction of Marfa was contracted to remove the old stucco and re-do the building's face with concrete stucco.

A discussion was held about the kind of stucco that should be used on the building: lime stucco or concrete stucco. Although lime stucco would

have been used on the original 1880s building, regular concrete stucco would be authentic to the building in the 1940s and 1950s. The Texas Historical Commission, therefore, accepts concrete stucco as historically appropriate. The deciding factor for Blackwell School Alliance was the amount of maintenance required, with lime stucco requiring much more ongoing maintenance.

Now the facade is restored in a way that is historically compliant and should last for years to come.



**Far left:** earliest known photograph of Blackwell School from the late 1880s.



**Near left:** crumbling facade from 2006 or 2007.



**Below:** Blackwell School today with restored facade.

# MARFA REPETICIÓN!

*“Nunca dudes que un pequeño grupo de personas consientes y comprometidas pueda cambiar el mundo. De hecho, es el único que lo ha logrado.”*

*Margaret Mead*

Blackwell School received its first grant for community programming last year! From August 27 to September 7, 2015, Blackwell opened its doors to the public for a series of oral history recordings from alumni and the community to create a historic archive for the school.

Humanities Texas sponsored this series of events, which included a visit from the *Children of Giant* co-producer Karen Bernstein, who presented seminars on the importance of Hispanic-Latino family histories, Marfa’s unique and diverse residents, and the documentary as an art form. Richard Williams, Marfa historian and archivist, screened a 500-student ‘portrait’ slide show of

Blackwell students on the big screen. Many families and volunteers, new and old, visited the historic site during the Marfa Lights Festival. Lisa Bateman, artist and project director for the event, shared photos of the activities.

Work on the archive continues with Gretel Enck transcribing interviews and developing a plan for cataloging and preserving interviews.

Blackwell School Alliance looks forward to future visits from Lisa Bateman and the formalization of a Blackwell School Alliance Oral History Archive.

Please consider sitting down for an interview the next time you’re in Marfa.

**Upper left:** Karen Bernstein leads an oral history workshop.



**Lower left:** visitor takes a picture of an image in the portrait slide show.



**Upper right:** former student Pete Quintella speaks with a volunteer.



**Middle right:** former student Mario Acosta speaks with a volunteer.



**Lower right:** visitors watch the portrait slide show.



## 2016 Projects

As you know, we have come so far in obtaining and restoring the beautiful and historic original Blackwell School building. You also know that much work still needs to be done.

Priority building and grounds projects for 2016 include:

- Install a central heating and cooling system in the historic band room to *greatly* increase our ability to use the building for meetings and community functions. The estimated cost is \$10,000.
- Complete the city park project that adjoins the school by installing three awnings over the picnic tables. The estimated cost is \$10-12,000.
- Restore the back wall of the north room of the school, both for structural integrity and to return to the historic appearance and function. The estimated cost is \$60,000.
- Fabricate and install eight new windows that will conform with historic specifications and provide modern protection from the elements. The estimated cost is \$24,000.

In addition to improvements to the building and grounds, projects on the horizon for 2016 include the continuation and formalization of our Blackwell School Alliance Oral History Project. Lisa Batemen has been and continues to be a tireless champion for the stories of Blackwell students. Today, with local volunteers, we hope to be able to conduct more interviews and to develop a system of safe storage and easy access to the oral histories. We hope all Blackwell students will consider telling your story for the record—good, bad, funny, sad: it's all part of our history.

And last, but maybe the most important of all: in 2016 we would like to expand our Blackwell community. In order to keep going, we recognize the need to engage young people and non-Blackwell alumni. Children, grandchildren, friends, and neighbors: we need you!

Keep track of our progress by visiting our website at [www.blackwellschool.org](http://www.blackwellschool.org). Or better yet, stop by and see us the next time you're in the neighborhood!

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”*

*Margaret Mead*



**Far left:** current back wall and loading dock that need to be restored to the original design and condition.

**Near left:** current windows that need to be replaced.

## Blackwell School Memories

*This is an article printed in the Big Bend Sentinel on April 9, 1987. You can find the Big Bend Sentinel archive at <http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/>*

“Today there is no Blackwell School—it is only a memory! No longer do teachers’ purring motors halt at the faculty parking lot or shuffling footsteps of elementary youngsters’ enter the building, or the periodic school bells ring in the halls or the merry din of pupils’ voices scream on the playgrounds. No longer are there school houses on the campus for they were razed and many modern apartment units, known as the Housing Authority of the City of Marfa, were built on several blocks.

“However, there is a little piece of Blackwell School that remains untouched today. On 309 W. Waco Street, which is the northeast corner of the campus is the original Mexican School alias the Ward School alias ‘Cathedral’ alias Blackwell School alias the Harper Building alias the Marfa school CV-AE Building.

“When Presidio County was created in 1850, it was a vast territory, consisting of many present West Texas counties. According to J. E. Gregg in his thesis,

History of Presidio County, ‘The first free public school in the county was organized in Fort Davis in 1883, under the ‘Community System.’ This school was taught by Mrs. W.B. Anderson—the first school in Marfa, and the second in the county, was organized and taught by Kate Barnhart in 1885. Barnhart taught in a one-room adobe building which stands today near the present Mexical school building.’

“Four years later a third school came into existence—the Mexican School. In her memoirs written in 1940, Carmen Mendias contends: ‘The oldest building which has been in use up to the present time, was built for a church but was used on week days for school. The school was opened in December 1889 with Mr. Taft as the teacher of not more than 25 pupils. By 1908 there were two teachers: Mrs. Joe Humphries and Mrs. Calvin Robinson.’

“In an interview, Mrs. Herschal Hord said, ‘I shall never forget the community church that was built in Marfa. As a youngster I remember my father and mother coming to town in a buggy from the ranch each Sunday to attend church. I also recall our church was used as a Mexican school.’

**Left to right: Mrs. Sally Williams, Miss Willie Harper, Miss Mary Lou Harper, Mrs. and Mr. Hector Valdez, at the 1987 Blackwell School Reunion.**





**Above:** Blackwell School marching band under the direction of Raymond Wheat, sometime in the late 1940s, photo by Alex Leos.

“Mrs. Joe Humphries was Mrs. Anne McCracken Markle’s grandmother. In her recollections, Mrs. Markle says, ‘My granny was a well respected and admired lady. While attending Old Cement School near Seguin, she earned her teacher’s certificate. With this diploma in hand, Granny felt capable of teaching school not only in Marfa but also in Terlingua Baja and Ruidosa. She was known to bake cakes in an old black stove for all occasions—birthdays, funerals, weddings, and other gatherings. Granny was a great believer in education. Not only was she a mentor but a true friend to all her pupils and parents.’”

“A long list and a Blackwell history is being written by both teachers and students in this column.”

Accompanying the column was a photograph (unfortunately too fuzzy to reproduce here) with the following caption: *The Blackwell School Class of 1944 from left: Faustino Bustamante, Eliza Uranga, Guadalupe Gonzalez, Dorothy Morely, Lilly Mendias, Angela*



*Barron, Mae Sailer, Mary Alice Medias, Landa Navarette, Lupita Roman, Eva Kelly, Eva Gutierrez, Vita Gonzalez, Eveline Leos, Olivia Pineda, Ramon Aguilar, Manuel Rubio, Eleazer Villareal, Cesar Sanchez, Edmundo Soza, Armando Vasquez, Oscar Terango, Abel Rameriz, Adalberto Franco, Domingo Fuentes and Mike O’Hara.*

**Left, left to right:** Quentin Williams, Ernest (Martinez?), Luz Guerroiroz, and Johnny Calderon, probably in the mid-1950s.

## Did You Know?

Blackwell School Alliance sells t-shirts, ballcaps, and folding camp chairs with the Blackwell School logo. We also sell DVD copies of *Children of Giant* for you to share with the whole family.

We can do mail order with a small additional shipping charge.

Contact us to order yours, or stop by Blackwell School on Saturdays.

windows  
 stories  
 Marta  
 reunion  
 membership  
 air conditioning  
 memories  
 engagement  
 Blackwell  
 doors  
 heat  
 projects  
 join  
 language lessons  
 fiesta!  
 photographs  
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 history  
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