

THE BRONCO

The Newsletter of the Blackwell School Alliance

Winter 2018



Join Us for the Blackwell Block Party on April 28th

Friends, it is really happening and we hope you can join us!

The Blackwell Block Party will take place on Saturday, April 28, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Marfa. This the first of what we hope is an annual one-day festival celebrating and commemorating the diverse culture and rich heritage of our beloved home town of Marfa.

The cornerstone event of the Block Party is the unveiling of a community inspired mural. The main mural will be on the east side of the Casner Building in downtown Marfa, with an image from the mural placed on the small wall in Blackwell Park.

The Block Party is a free, family-friendly event serving multiple generations and people of all backgrounds through art, music, dance, stories, and food.

The Blackwell Block Party and Mural will increase the sense of ownership of community on the part of Marfa residents through the act of celebrating the diverse influences on the city of Marfa; promote our rich heritage and culture to visitors; and increase awareness of, and appreciation for, the Blackwell School.

After the day has passed, the mural endures as a reminder of our shared community and experience.

Read more about the Block Party and Mural on page 3.

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Alliance Narrows the Field for Architect for HSR

The Alliance is moving forward with completing our Historic Structure Report—the planning document that will serve as the road map to restoring our building in a manner that is compliant with historic preservation standards. We have been on a bit of a roller coaster, as I will explain.

Fortunately, we met our fundraising goal for this project in 2017 because the Permian Basin Area Foundation and The Summerlee Foundation awarded us generous grants for the Report. Unfortunately the Texas Historical Commission (THC) did not award us a grant. Fortunately, though, our THC representative, Sara Luduena, knew that it was an es-

pecially competitive year. Because she believed in our project she connected us with UT San Antonio's graduate department of historic preservation architecture who made our project the focus of their 2017 summer field seminar.

In addition, we fortunately had Mike Green in our corner, a local architect passionate about adobe and historic preservation. Unfortunately (for us) Mike followed his partner Kaci to Seattle where she has an exciting new career opportunity. Fortunately Mike recommended many fine architects to take his place. Unfortunately none of them could do the job for the price Mike quoted (travel costs!).

Read more about our Architect on page 2.

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Letter from Gretel Enck

Dear Friends,

I am writing with a heart full of thanks on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Blackwell School Alliance.

2017 was an exciting and productive year. We completed a Strategic Plan. Our mission that will guide us into the future reads: “The Blackwell School Alliance and its partners preserve and restore historic resources associated with the Blackwell School; interpret and commemorate the era of segregated Hispanic education; and serve the Marfa, Texas, community culturally, historically, and educationally for the benefit of all Marfa residents and visitors, now and into the future.”

We successfully fundraised for a Historic Structure Report—the road map for the complete restoration of our building in a manner that is compliant with historic preservation standards—through the generosity of Texas philanthropic

foundations, and we are now hiring an architect to create the report.

We engaged and expanded partnerships in projects for historic preservation, oral history, archiving, and special events. Notable partners in 2017 included UT San Antonio, Marfa Public Radio, READ MARFA, Marfa Film Festival, and Marfa Open. In addition, many individuals stepped up to help us organize and catalog our museum collection, those who cooked burgers and put up fliers and helped to organize events, our dedicated members and generous donors, and those who told their stories—on the radio, on tape, or even just to an eager listener wanting to understand the experience of the Blackwell School.

Please know that we exist because of our community. So thank you, all of you. We have bold goals for 2018 and we hope you will join us to make them come true.

Architect, cont.

Fortunately, to wrap up the long story, we had three very experienced teams submit qualifications. Frankly, we were amazed by the great work done by all the candidates in the field of historic preservation architecture. From those three, we chose one finalist to submit a proposal and come to Marfa and meet with us in person. If that meeting proves successful, and we are confident it will, we will sign a contract and get moving on the report.

In the end, we expect to pay a little bit more than we had originally budgeted, but an amount we realistically we can raise in the coming months. And we expect to end up with a very good product—a report that tells us how to restore our building in a way that is compliant with historic preservation standards and still meets our desire of turning it into a fully functional, professional museum that honors the rich and complex history of the Blackwell School. This is a big step forward toward restoration of the building.

Blackwell Block Party and Mural

The Party

This all started when a woman named Taylor Livingston contacted the Blackwell School Alliance and said, Marfa needs a party all about community pride. Ms. Livingston grew up in Brownsville, celebrating Charro Days every year—a fiesta dedicated to bi-national friendship and sharing traditions that has been celebrated for decades.

Great idea, we said. But what does that look like for Marfa? Well, we are about to find out. We will have mariachi and other music, dancing, Pedro Infante films, loteria, story-telling, lots of amazing free food, a menudo cook-off,

The Mural

El Paso muralist Jesus “Cimi” Alvarado has been selected to create the mural based on his experience working with the residents of Segundo Barrio to tell the neighborhood stories through appealing public art.

The Marfa mural will be created and designed using images, stories, and symbols discovered through community conversations in Marfa.

The Block Party and Mural are part of the Alliance’s mission to serve the Marfa community through culture, history, and education.

Board member and former student Jessi Silva notes, “It’s exciting for the Alliance to bring something new to Marfa,

games and crafts for kids—and cross your fingers, we are talking to a low-rider car club in El Paso to bring some of their cars to Marfa.

Whatever your interest, we are creating a day of love, pride, and fun for our community. We hope you can be there.

Saturday, April 28

11:00 a.m. Unveiling of Mural in the Stripes parking lot on the east side of Marfa City Hall.

11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Festivities at the Blackwell School

something that both honors our history and inspires the next generation.”

The Alliance has received substantial grants from The Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation, the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, and the City of Marfa toward the creation of the mural. We are now soliciting donations for the remaining funds for the mural, and funds for event logistics and entertainments.



DONATE TODAY

We have received two generous foundation grants to support the mural, and grant money from the City of Marfa's Hotel Occupancy Tax fund. But we still need a little bit more to pay the muralist what he is worth, and to provide all the entertainment and food free of charge to our guests.

Can you help?

Individuals who donate \$25 or more will receive a commemorative poster signed by the artist.

Businesses who donate \$100 or more also get their business name on the poster.

To donate, visit:
gofundme.com/blackwellblockparty

or send us a check:
Blackwell School Alliance
PO Box 417
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Muralist Cimi Alvarado came to Marfa in November to meet residents and collect stories. He also visited Marfa ISD to see the work of the students who visited his studio last year as part of the Chinati Foundation's Education partnership with Marfa ISD.

Marfa City Council approved the use of the east wall of the Casner Building for the mural. This is a photoshopped image using one of Mr. Alvarado's El Paso murals to show what a Marfa Mural might look like. Our mural will depict Marfa-specific stories, symbols, and images.



Marfa Public Radio Airs Blackwell Stories

September 2017 saw the airing of *Voices of Blackwell* on Marfa Public Radio. This series of short stories was produced by Diana Nguyen and featured the voices of former students and friends of the Blackwell School: Mario Rivera, Lionel Salgado, Maggie Marquez, Dawn Shannon, and Jessi Silva.

Everyone has a story to tell. We organize our memories and experiences into stories. The stories that were heard on Marfa Public Radio covered a range of emotions that go hand in hand with remembering the Blackwell School,

good and bad. individual stories have historical importance.

An important piece of recording history is capturing the voices of those who lived it. Certainly the history of the Blackwell School cannot be told without the voices of those directly involved—students, faculty and staff, neighbors, and community members. Newspaper articles, speeches, and government documents may reveal useful information, but those kinds of sources often neglect more personal and private experiences.

We are grateful to Ms. Nguyen for capturing these voices so that we can learn about the hopes, feelings, aspirations, disappointments, family histories, and personal memories of the people who were there.

Learn more and find links to the recordings at www.theblackwellschool.org/oral-history — and support public radio at marfapublicradio.org

Jessi Silva and Maggie Marquez in front of the Blackwell School. Photo by Sarah Vasquez for National Public Radio.



Archiving our Collection

February saw the visit of Kimberly Feathers to the Blackwell School to volunteer for a couple of days to begin accessioning our collection.

Ms. Feathers was one of the students from UT San Antonio who came to Marfa last July to help investigate our building's history. She is interested in helping to document all the photographs, memorabilia, and documents that we have acquired (and you have generously donated) over the years.

It's a big job to do this in a way that complies with museum management standards: making a spreadsheet and listing details of the items and how we came to have them. But like eating an elephant, you take one bite at a time.

And so she got started and would like to return more in the coming months. She enjoys Marfa, and we provided her with free lodging—so we will see if we can make progress on this project in 2018.



READ MARFA Returns to the Blackwell School for a Holiday READ

For the second year in a row, children, families, neighbors, and readers gathered at the Blackwell School for a Holiday Read Aloud created by READ MARFA. On Saturday, December 16, more than forty participants of all ages enjoyed stories about Christmas and other seasonal holidays read out loud by community members who volunteer for the READ MARFA program.

READ MARFA is a program in partnership with Marfa Public Schools where community volunteers share their love of books by reading stories aloud to students during the school day. Our holiday readers included Michael and Susan Wallens, David and Kathleen Mims Walstrom, Jennifer Olivas, Gil Carrillo, Liam Kelly, Dara Roberts, Rachel Monroe, and Oscar Aguero.

Because thousands of children learned to read at the Blackwell School, it makes sense to share this space with READ MARFA. While this program promotes early literacy development, one of its goals is to instill a love of reading in all students, whether their first language is English or Spanish.

With cookies and cocoa provided by the Alliance, the Holiday Read Aloud contributed by making a festive party out of reading stories. The Blackwell School Alliance hopes and expects that our holiday READ will be a fun annual event.



Top: Rachel Monroe brought the room to laughter with the delightful rhymes of Shanté Keys and the New Year's Peas.

Middle: Marfa ISD Superintendent Oscar Aguero kicked off the READ with *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*.

Bottom: Father Mike Wallens of St. Paul's Episcopal Church swept his audience away on the *Polar Express*.



Learn more about READ MARFA: www.marfaisd.com/read-marfa/



A New Work of Art in our Collection

We recently received a visit from former students Socorro and Pablo Muñoz at the Blackwell School. And along with the visit, Mrs. Muñoz brought a beautiful painting that she had made. She wished to donate it to the Blackwell School Alliance so that others could enjoy and learn from the work.

We are grateful to her and to the many others who have donated documents, memorabilia, photographs, and stories so that our museum can grow, and we can educate about this piece of Marfa history.

Stop in and see what's new!



Who Doesn't Love a Parade?

Freed from the obligations of the beer tent at the 2017 Marfa Lights Festival, we had fun selling snowcones (Raspas

de Blackwell!!) and participating in the parade. We tossed *a lot* of candy! We hope to see you at the Festival in 2018.

Jon Johnson of Planet Marfa chauffeured us in his vintage Ford pick-up truck. David and Kathleen Walstrom, Mario Rivera, and Jessi Silva rode in the back. Gretel Enck and Lionel Salgado walked in front of the truck with a Blackwell School banner.



Do You Remember?

Last summer we were visited by a trio of women visiting family in Marfa. Cam Hendley and her cousins visited the Blackwell School to learn more about the place that meant so much to Hendley's mother, Mary Louise Mitchell Glann.

Miss Mitchell, as she was then known, taught first grade at Blackwell during the years of World War II. Her daughter kept in touch with us and recently we received in the mail the accompanying photographs, and a message from our former teacher (*right*).

And the memories go both ways. Lionel Salgado remembers being one of Miss Mitchell's students. Years later he found himself at a Paisano Baptist Encampment and had a conversation with a woman who turned out to be his first grade teacher. He had wondered where she had gone after her years at the Blackwell School, and they had a nice conversation.

We appreciate having these photographs in our collection, and we are always happy to enable connections, old and new. Do you remember Miss Mitchell?

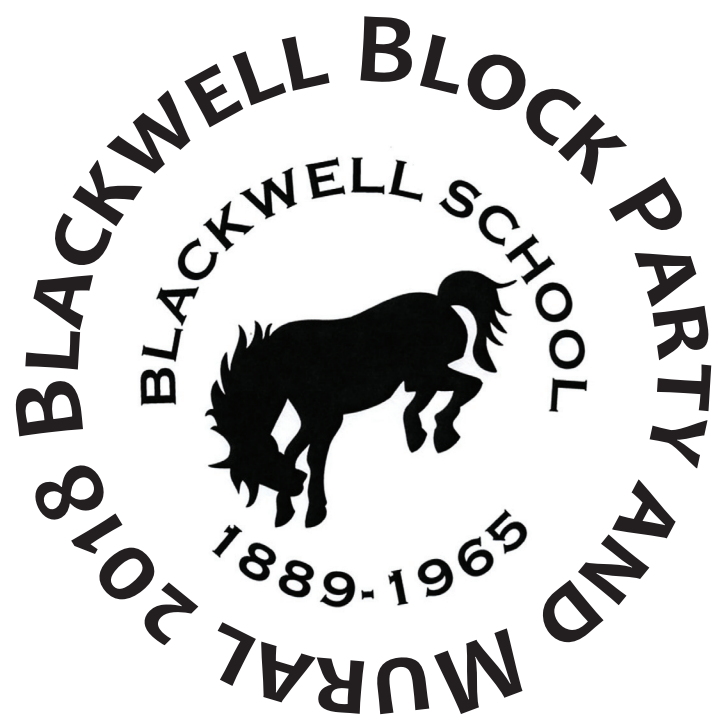


"I graduated from Marfa High School in 1936. I continued my education at Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX. After graduating in 1940 with a Bachelor of Science in Education, I began teaching at Blackwell. I was so proud of my paycheck of \$30.

"While teaching at Blackwell, I resided in Marfa with my grandparents, Crawford and Mamie Myers Mitchell, during the week. I would ride my bicycle to school from their house daily. When the weekend would arrive, I would travel home to the Crawford Mitchell Ranch to spend time with my parents, Loyd Mitchell, Sr., and Ruth Oderdonk Mitchell.



"At the age of 98, I reside in Rocksprings, TX. To this day, I remember many of my students' names and cherish my experiences from Blackwell Elementary."



learn more inside...

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BLACKWELL SCHOOL
1889-1965