



Northside History Project Report

Prepared for:
TxDOT Corpus Christi District
US 181 Harbor Bridge Project
Nueces County, Texas

Senior Historian: C. Lynn Smith, HNTB Corporation

2017





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Corpus Christi Public Library, especially Library Director Laura Garcia and the staff of La Retama Central Library and the Ben F. McDonald Public Library

Mrs. Carmen Salazar Fierova

Holy Cross Catholic Church

Ms. Terri Longoria

Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church

Mrs. Virginia (Neeley) Lopez

Oral History Interviewees listed on the following page

Oveal Williams Senior Center staff and seniors

Port of Corpus Christi Authority

Roy Miller High School

St. Paul United Methodist Church

Dr. Gloria Randle Scott

Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School

Mr. Jessie Weathersby

Mr. Henry J. Williams III

Special thanks to:

The Corpus Christi Public Library who partnered on the project by providing space to record oral history interviews and assisting with research. The author also wants to thank Christopher Amy of TxDOT for his vision and support throughout the project.

¹ In Corpus Christi, for many years there were two newspapers. The *Caller* was established in 1883 and the *Times* was established in 1910. The owners of the *Caller* purchased the *Times* in 1929 and the *Caller* became the morning paper and the *Times* was the afternoon paper, but on Sunday the paper was combined and named the *Caller-Times*. As of May 30, 1987, all editions of the newspaper were named the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*.



Oral History Interviewees

The following persons recorded oral history interviews with the project historian and also gave permission to include their oral history transcripts in this report (listed alphabetically by last name):

The Reverend Claude Axel
Mr. Emile Bolden
Ms. Anita F. Bouldin
Mr. Robert Campbell and his daughter Ms. Barbara Campbell
Mr. Herb Canales
Mrs. Irene Canales
Mr. Bobby Galvan (Robert M. Galvan, Sr.)
Mrs. Marsha Shaw Hardeman
Mr. Willie Hardeman
Ms. Adela Hernandez
Ms. Thurma Hilton
Mr. Sam Johnson
Mr. Doward Kinney
Mrs. Virginia Lerma
Mr. Joel Mumphord
Mr. Herman Polk
Mrs. Phyllis Crecy Ridgels
Mr. Billy Ray Sayles
Mr. James Smith
Mr. Dick Swantner
Mr. Lamont Taylor

Many thanks to these persons who donated their time and shared their memories of Northside. The oral history interviews guided the research for Northside History Project and added immeasurable value.

Disclaimer

This report is focused on the history of the Northside community and is not intended to be a history of Corpus Christi. The preparation of the report was guided by information obtained from persons who had personal knowledge and experiences related to the history of Northside and who volunteered their time to record oral history interviews, review materials, and/or share photographs and memorabilia from their personal collections. Using the transcripts of each oral history interview, the historian conducted extensive research to locate newspaper articles and other materials and images to corroborate and further document the reported events.

The report was prepared as part of the project mitigation for the United States Highway (US) 181 Harbor Bridge Project in Corpus Christi, Texas to record the history of the area that holds wonderful memories for many of the families who called Northside home, as well as the persons who worked there or enjoyed visiting Northside for entertainment, shopping, church and other community services and activities.

This report is one of the four components that comprise the Northside History Project. The four components are:

1. Northside History Project Report (History Report)
2. Northside History Project Oral History Transcript Collection (Oral Histories)
3. Northside History Collection of Photos (Photo Book)
4. Northside History Banners (Banners)

TxDOT gave all four components of the Northside History Project to the Oveal Williams Senior Center at 1414 Martin Luther King Dr. in Corpus Christi. The Oveal Williams Senior Center is operated by the Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Department and will be responsible for loaning out the Banners to local schools, libraries and to educational groups for periodic display. One copy of each of the first three components (History Report, Oral Histories and Photo Book) were presented to the Corpus Christi La Retama Central Library which also received an electronic copy of the Banner files.



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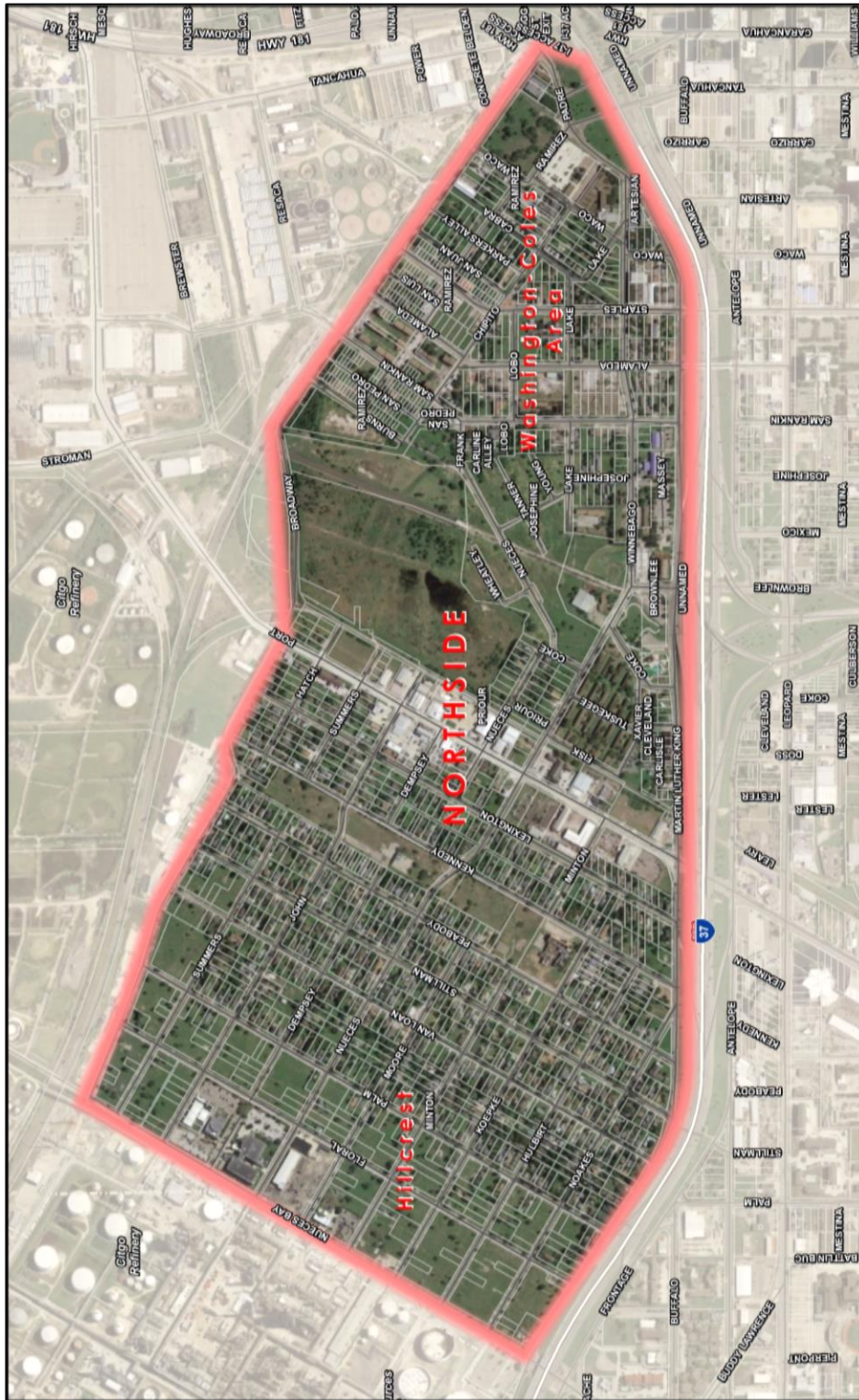
Introduction

TxDOT conducted widespread stakeholder and public involvement during the environmental process for the project known as the US 181 Harbor Bridge Project in Corpus Christi, Texas. TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as Joint Lead Agencies, held the public involvement events during the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Northside History Report was prepared in response to public and stakeholder comments received during the public meetings held throughout the preparation of the FEIS for the US 181 Harbor Bridge Project; comments which emphasized the importance of documenting the history of “Northside,” a locality defined for this report as the area bounded by Interstate 37 (I-37) on the south, Nueces Bay Boulevard on the west, and W. Broadway Street on the north and east (**Figure 1**).

The proposed US 181 Harbor Bridge Project would involve the replacement of the current Harbor Bridge and the reconstruction of portions of US 181, I-37 and the Crosstown Expressway/State Highway (SH) 286 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The construction project limits extend both north-south along US 181 and the Crosstown Expressway (SH 286) and east-west along I-37 and includes: US 181 at Beach Avenue on the north; Crosstown Expressway (SH 286) at Laredo Street on the south; I-37 and Nueces Bay Boulevard on the west; and I-37 and Mesquite Street on the east (TxDOT Control-Section-Job Number 0101-06-095).

The Northside History Report research included archival research as well as community involvement in the historical research process through inviting community members to attend open houses, provide photographs and other memorabilia to scan, attend a project update presentation, record oral history interviews and attend a draft banner review.

Figure 1: Northside Boundaries for the Northside History Report



Source: 2014 Google Imagery; annotation by HNTB, 2015

Methodology

The memories of the persons who grew up in Northside and who operated businesses there were considered to be critical to the value of this report. Because many of the physical resources (buildings and structures) of Northside have been lost over time as businesses and homes were abandoned and eventually demolished, the oral histories of persons with personal knowledge of Northside were a primary focus of the research for this report. In addition to this report and the collection of oral history interviews, the Northside History Project also involved the preparation of a photo book and ten banners. Extensive archival research was conducted to provide context for the report and to locate historic images for use in all components of the Northside History Project.

Public Outreach

From the recommendations of persons who served on the Citizens Advisory Committee for the US 181 Harbor Bridge Project as well as names suggested by clergy of Northside area churches, the historian identified the initial group of potential oral history interviewees. Chris Ramirez of the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* newspaper interviewed the project historian to publicize the Northside History Project, provide information about the planned open houses for the history project, convey the need for volunteers to record oral history interviews, and request for the community to provide historic images related to Northside. The newspaper interview resulted in a front-page article asking the community to participate in the Northside History Project and to attend the planned open houses (**Figures 2a** and **2b**). A Channel 3 (KIII) reporter also interviewed the historian and the resulting television story was included in three Channel 3 News broadcasts to publicize upcoming open houses. A total of three open houses plus a lunch-time presentation at the Oveal Williams Senior Center were held in an effort to identify additional oral history interview candidates and to provide an opportunity for the community to provide historic photographs and memorabilia to be scanned or photographed for inclusion in the Northside History Project. Information on the Northside History Project was also provided at Harbor Bridge workshops held on January 29 and February 21, 2015.

Figure 2a: November 13, 2014 Corpus Christi Caller-Times



Human trafficking survivor shares story. LOCAL, 1B

Playoffs beginning for area football teams. SPORTS, 1C

CRAFT LANDS ON COMET
WORLD/NATION, 7A

POLICE OFFER FAMILY HELP
LOCAL, 1B

YOU'VE GOT QUAIL

Quail numbers are up, giving hope for one of the best seasons in nearly a decade. **SPORTS, 3C**

CORPUS CHRISTI

Caller Times

\$1.00 ■ THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2014

CITY EDITION ■ caller.com

TxDOT to chronicle Northside story

■ Oral history of residents to be recorded

By Chris Ramirez
chris.ramirez@caller.com
361-886-3667

Old photos, time-yellowed newspaper clippings, even tattered posters from jazz clubs that were once common in the city's only historically black neighborhoods would be gold for Austin-based historian Lynn Smith.

The Texas Department of Transportation selected her to chronicle the Northside neighborhood's story as part of the agency's Harbor Bridge Project's Sustainability Plan.

The plan aims to map out how life will change when the massive construction project gets underway and after it's finished.

Smith will collect the information during two open

houses — one Thursday at Holy Cross Church, another Monday at Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church.

She hopes to get enough images to create a photo book and enough neighborhood memorabilia for portable displays that can be shown at libraries, schools and the Oveal Williams Senior Center.

Smith also plans to record audio interviews with what someone else finds important about it."

With a price tag of about \$700 million to \$1 billion, the Harbor Bridge project is perhaps the most aggressive transportation plan undertaken in the Coastal Bend in decades.

State transportation officials want to raise the bridge to accommodate taller vessels through the

See TERMINALS, 4A

Source: Corpus Christi Caller-Times, November 13, 2014, p. 1A

Figure 2b: November 13, 2014 *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

4A » Thursday, November 13, 2014 » CALLER-TIMES

DOCUMENTING NORTHSIDE HISTORY

What: Documenting the history of the Northside neighborhoods; Part of the Harbor Bridge Project's Sustainability Plan by the Texas Department of Transportation.

When: 4:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday and Monday

Where:

- Thursday: Drexel Hall at Holy Cross Church, 1109 N. Staples St.
- Monday: Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church, 1913 Mestina St.

Information: Rickey Dailey, public information officer, 361-808-2544, or Rickey.Dailey@txdot.gov. Anyone interested in sharing Northside photographs or discussing an oral history interview, contact historian Lynn Smith at lysmith@hntb.com or 512-691-2249.

TERMINALS
from **1A**

Corpus Christi Ship Channel. A higher clearance also means elevating the bridge at a more gradual slope and likely moving existing offramps. The Northside neighborhoods lie in the path of where much of the construction will occur.

A Caller-Times analysis in January found the project, combined with the relocation of several public and subsidized housing complexes, would cause the neighborhoods to lose as much as 23 percent of their population.

Transportation officials have invited four contractors to submit bids by early next year. Construction is expected to begin next summer.

"This ... is a major project for the city of Corpus Christi and the Coastal Bend. All indications are that that area is going to change dramatically," said Rickey Dailey, a transportation department spokesman. "It's important that ... 40, 50, 60 years from now, there's a historical record of who lived here."

"Memories fade; people pass. It's important that this is done."

Built during the late 1950s, the Harbor Bridge has a vertical clearance of 138 feet. The Department of Transportation asked contractors to submit proposals for a six-lane cable-stayed bridge with a minimum 205-foot vertical clearance above the 400-foot-wide ship channel.

Smith hopes to have the recordings completed by summer.

Twitter: @Caller_ChrisRam

Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, November 13, 2014, p. 4A.

Oral History Interviews

As potential oral history interviewees were identified, the historian met with those persons to conduct a pre-interview to discuss their knowledge and experiences related to Northside and to ask if they would be willing to record an oral history interview. During the pre-interview, the historian was able to determine appropriate interview questions to ask each person based on their knowledge and experiences related to Northside and then the oral history interviews were audio recorded. The recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber. Then the historian reviewed each transcript and corrected the names and spellings of places known to the historian through knowledge she gained by conducting Northside research and by recording the interviews. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to edit their transcript until they were satisfied that the transcript accurately reflected what they wanted to convey in the interview and were willing to execute a form giving TxDOT permission to include their edited oral history transcript in the *Northside History Project - Oral History Transcript Collection*.

Archival Research

In addition to the oral history interviews, the historian conducted extensive archival research at both the Corpus Christi La Retama Library and the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* archives. She also thoroughly reviewed the book titled, *Images of America - African Americans in Corpus Christi* written by Bruce A. Glasrud, Mary Jo O'Rear, Dr. Gloria Randle Scott, Cecilia Gutierrez Venable and Henry J. Williams. Online research was conducted as needed for background information and to verify details of the oral history interviews such as the spelling of names and places mentioned in the recordings.

In order to better understand the evolution of the physical resources of Northside, historic aerial photographs and other materials were obtained from the Texas Natural Resources Information Service, the Port of Corpus Christi Authority, La Retama Library, and the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*. Corpus Christi city directories from 1937, 1949, 1953 and 1956 were analyzed to gather data regarding the location of businesses, churches and schools mentioned in the oral history interviews as well as other businesses in Northside. From the late 1940s through the 1950s, the area near the Solomon M. Coles and Booker T. Washington schools of Northside was the primary location where the African American population of Corpus Christi lived, worshiped, attended school, shopped, dined, and sought recreation. A map illustrating the c. 1950s locations of businesses, churches, schools and other organizations was developed to illustrate the self-contained nature of the community at that time. By 1956, although a considerable number of Hispanics remained in Northside, many Hispanic families had moved to other parts of Corpus Christi.

Overview of Northside Neighborhood History

The story of Northside is a saga of change brought about by economic, social and natural forces that affected not only Northside but often Corpus Christi as a whole. **Table 1** provides a timeline that describes some of the important dates related to the evolution of Northside. Illustrated on Augustus Koch's 1887 Bird's Eye View map of Corpus Christi, the area of Northside located east of Black Street (as shown on historic maps, now North Staples Street) and north of Leopard Street constituted approximately one-quarter of the early city. At that time, the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad track cut through the bluff (to achieve the required gradual rail grade) and the tracks ran under a bridge, locally known as El Puente de los Amores (Lerma, 2015), on Ramirez Street and then continued along Black Street (**Figure 3**). A devastating hurricane in 1919 destroyed many homes and businesses. However, the repairs and reconstruction of the homes and businesses generated jobs. In 1922 (**Figure 4**), the population of Northside included Hispanics, African Americans and Anglos living in the area between West Broadway Street and Kennedy Avenue, north of Leopard Street. Middle-to upper income Anglo families constituted the dominant demographic in Hillcrest, west of Kennedy Avenue. From 1922 through 1926, the construction of the Port of Corpus Christi (Port) generated additional jobs. The Corpus Christi population grew rapidly. Within Northside, African American people and businesses were concentrated east of Kennedy Avenue (originally spelled "Kenedy" on early plats) and the African American community became closely knit and supportive of one another.

Table 1: Northside Timeline

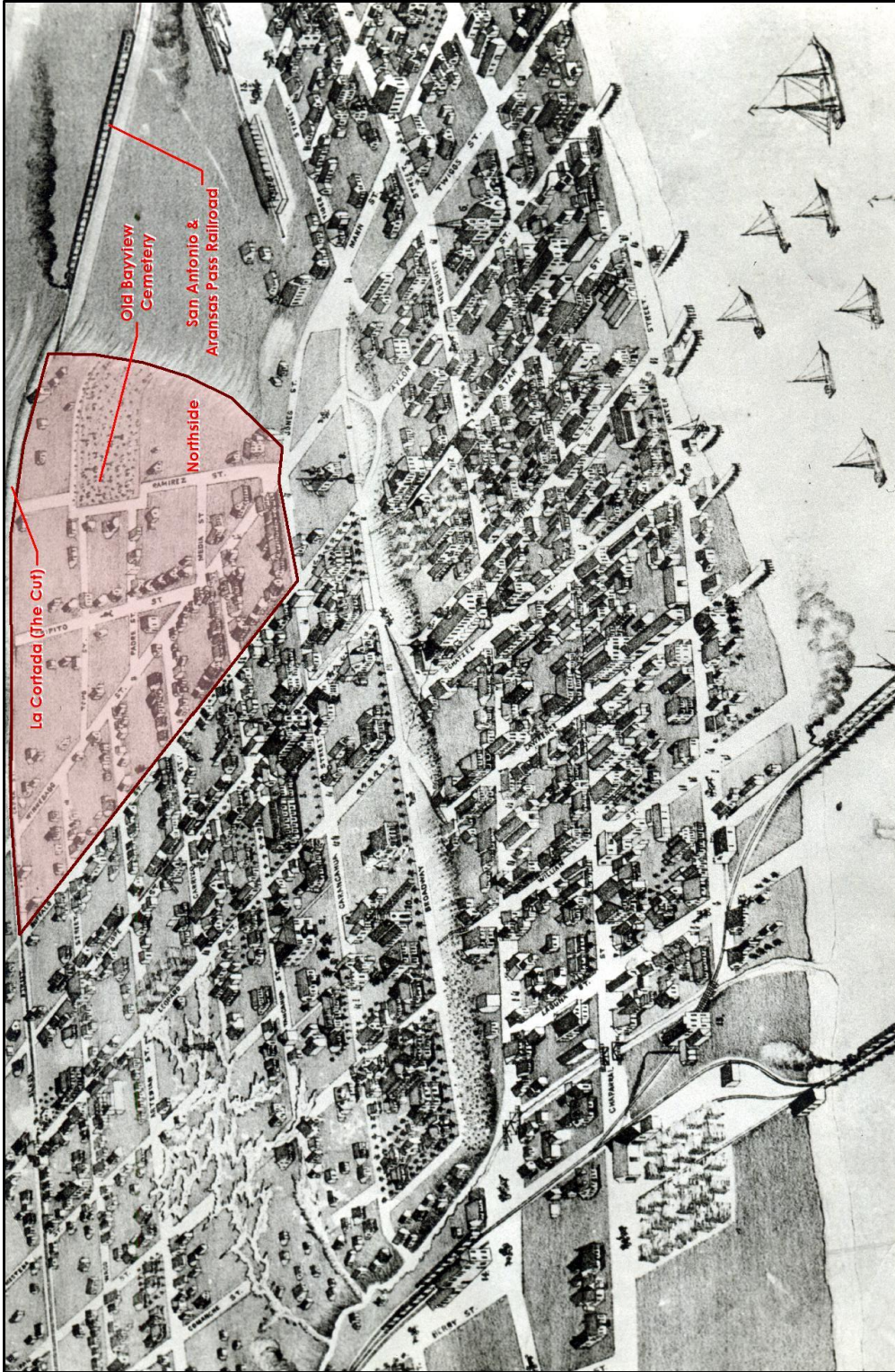
Date	Events
1845	Old Bayview Cemetery established
1852	Plan of Corpus Christi drawn that laid out the streets of Northside on the “Bluff”
1878	Yale educated Solomon M. Coles opened “Public Free School for Colored”
1886	San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad arrived in Corpus Christi
1887	Established New Bayview Cemetery (later called Hillcrest Cemetery)
1893	First class graduated from Corpus Christi High School
1910	La Colonia Mexicana platted
1916	Hillcrest Neighborhood platted (Savage, Corpus Christi library director hopes to rebuild trust in historic Northside neighborhoods, 2012).
1917	Holy Cross Catholic School opened
1925	Solomon M. Coles permanent school building constructed
1926	Port of Corpus Christi completed; Charles W. Crossley Elementary opened
1930	Oil discovered in Nueces County
c.1931	International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Hall in Northside constructed
1940	Naval Air Station Corpus Christi construction began
1940	D. N. Leathers Center (public housing) opened
1941	United States (U.S.) enters World War II
1944	City recommended Hillcrest be opened to African Americans
1949	Rafael Galvan, Sr. (resident of Northside from c. 1900–1942) opened the Galvan Ballroom
1952	Leathers Place No. 2 (public housing) opened
1954	School segregation ended
1959	Harbor Bridge completed
1962	I-37 completed in Corpus Christi
1964	HIALCO* created, an agency to provide assistance to Northside residents

Date	Events
1969	North Side** Manor Apartments opened (government subsidized housing)
1970	Mary McLeod Bethune Day Nursery opened Northside location at 1002 Coke
1981	Gasoline storage tank exploded at Southwestern Refining next to Hillcrest
1983	ILA Hall in Northside closed and African American and Anglo ILA Unions officially merged
1983	North Side** Business Association organized
1987	Elliott Grant Homes opened (for low-income elderly)
1994	Northside Neighborhood Care Center (later CHRISTUS Spohn Family Health Care Center) opened
c. 1995	Oveal Williams Senior Center opened
c. 2000	Charles W. Crossley Elementary closed
2006	Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School opened
2014	Solomon M. Coles High School celebrated first graduating class since 1967 (when school was closed as a high school and high school students transferred).

*HIALCO is an acronym referring to the primary neighborhoods that the agency was founded to serve: Hillcrest, Ayers, Leathers and Coles.

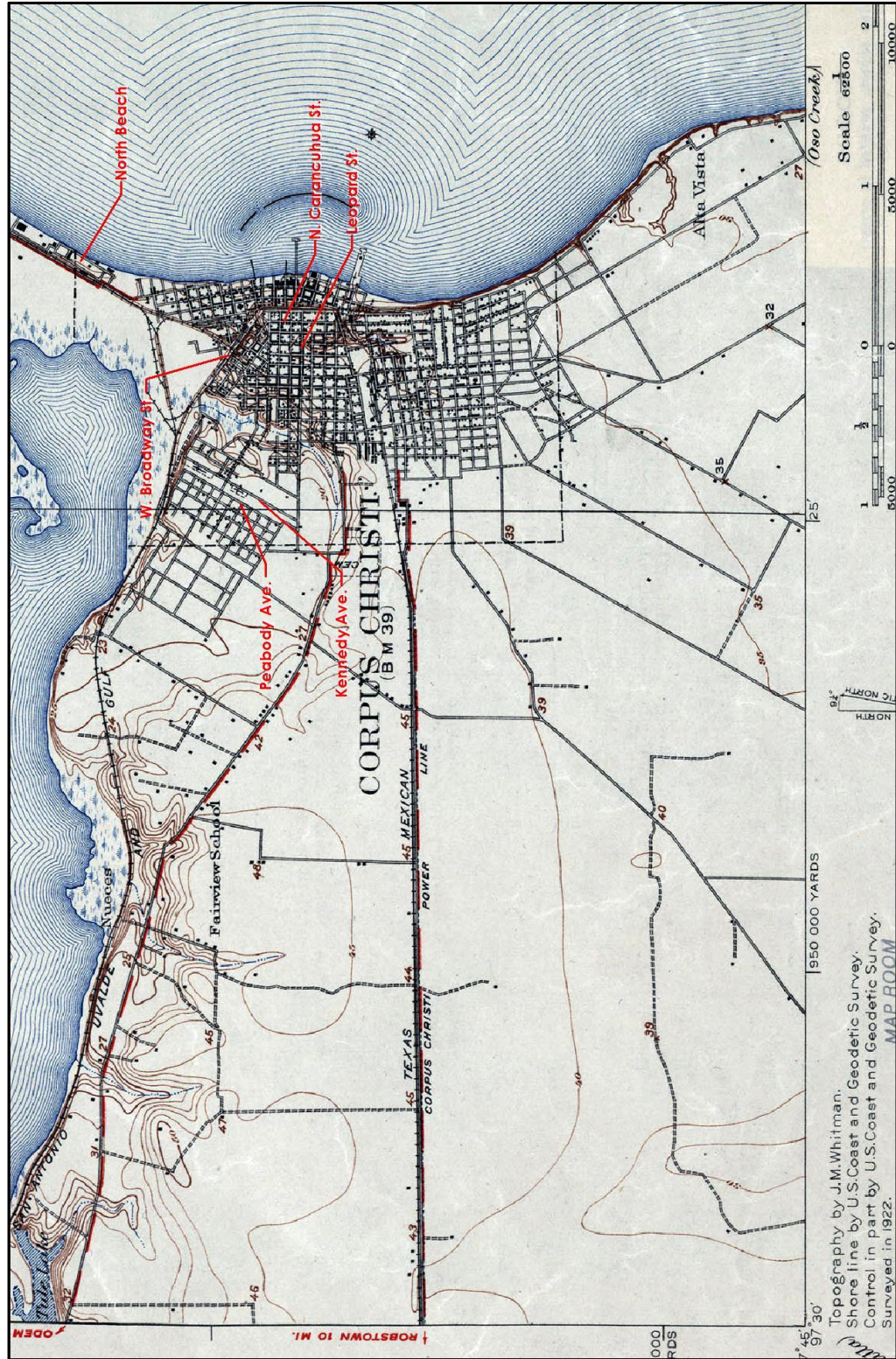
**The area discussed in this report is generally referred to as “Northside.” However, “North Side Manor Apartments” (with a space between “North” and “Side” is correct for the proper name of that apartment complex and “North Side Business Association” is correct for that organization. When appropriate for a proper name, “North Side” rather than “Northside” is used in this report.

Figure 3: 1887 Augustus Koch's Bird's Eye View Map of Corpus Christi, Texas; annotation by HNTB, 2015



Source: Corpus Christi Public Libraries Map Collection, Call No. F-1-1.09, Item

Figure 4: Detail - 1922 Topographic Map of Corpus Christi, Texas (Annotation by HNTB, 2015)



Source: University of Texas Perry Castaneda Library Online Map Collection.

In 1923, Holy Cross Catholic School (established in 1917 for African American students) had an enrollment of 200 and taught grades one through eight. In 1925, a two-story brick public school for African Americans was erected at 924 Winnebago Street and named in honor of Solomon Melvin Coles who, in 1878, opened the first public school for African Americans in Corpus Christi. In 1934, Solomon M. Coles School added the classes required to earn their accreditation as a high school. Prior to that time, African Americans who wanted to complete their high school education were compelled to leave Corpus Christi, often to attend Prairie View High School² (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1968).

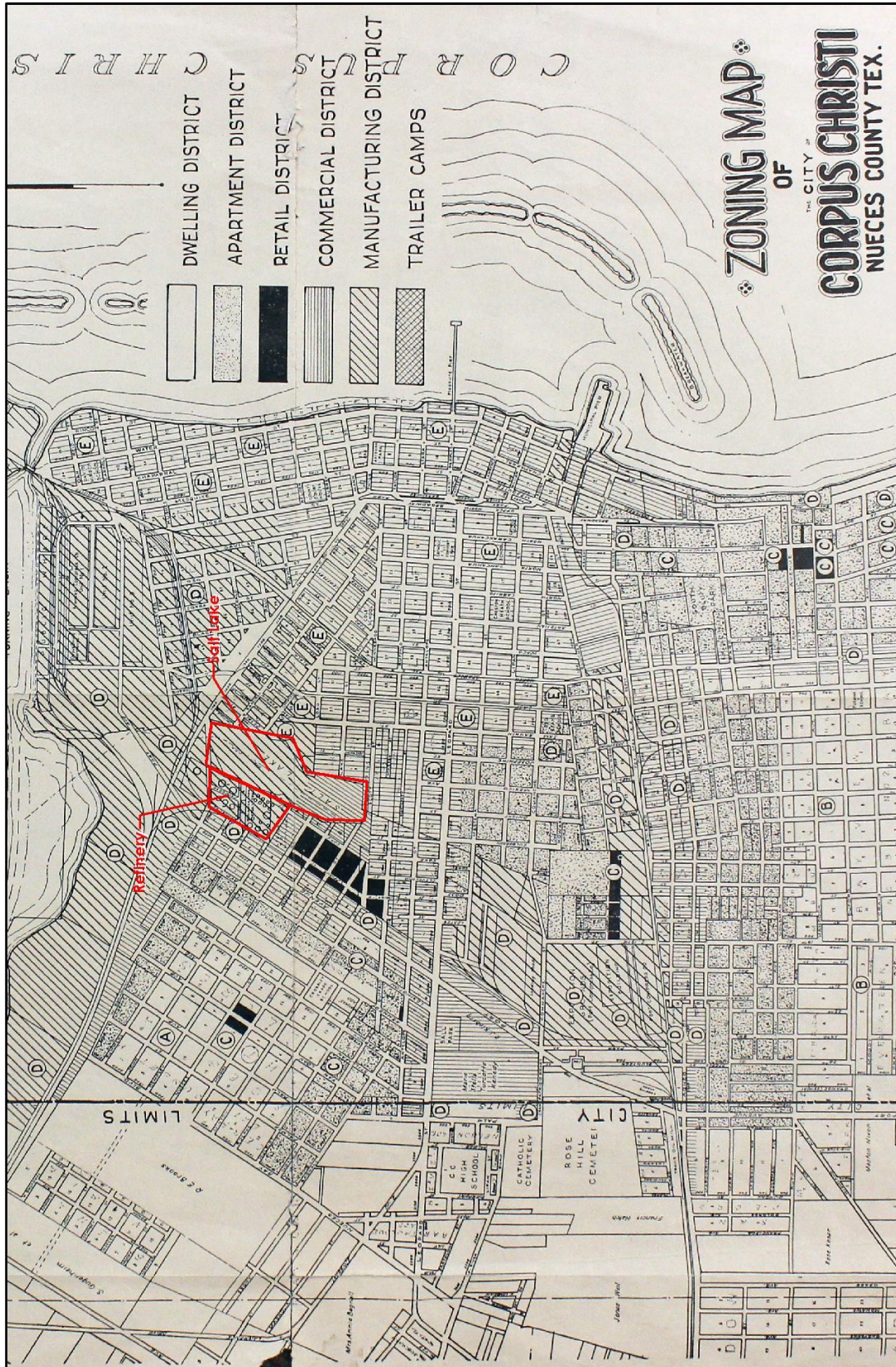
The discovery of oil in Nueces County in 1930 provided a further boost to the economy of the area and created more jobs. By 1937, the construction of petrochemical facilities had cut off any housing development options beyond the northern edge of the neighborhood along W. Broadway Street. Also, a refinery was constructed west of Salt Lake, a shallow body of water located south of W. Broadway and east of North Port Avenue, near the center of the predominantly African American community on the east side of Northside (**Figure 5**). Segregation laws and practices of the 1930s prevented African Americans from living in Hillcrest west of Kennedy Avenue, south of Leopard Street, below the “Bluff” defined by West Broadway Street, or east of Carancahua Street. A refinery being constructed within the east side of Northside further limited the space available to develop housing, commercial buildings, or other facilities for the neighborhood. A 1938 aerial view shows the difference in the density of the housing between the east and west sides of Northside and illustrates the crowded condition of the housing development east of North Port Avenue (**Figure 6**).

In the Washington-Coles³ area (east side of Northside), much of the original housing consisted of densely developed shotgun houses. Most of the shotgun houses were of board and batten construction and many, if not most, lacked indoor plumbing. In the late 1930s, the Corpus Christi Housing Authority (CCHA) conducted a study which revealed that 500 homes in the city’s poorest areas had families with five to nine people sharing a single bedroom, 1,200 families lacked indoor toilets and hundreds of houses had dirt floors (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1938). As a result of the study, three racially segregated housing projects for low-income people were planned. Kinney Place for Anglos and Navarro Place for Hispanics were housing projects constructed outside of Northside. In 1940, the D. N. Leathers Center housing project opened to provide accommodations for low-income African American families in Northside. Leathers Place No. 2 added 200 additional units for African Americans when it was completed in 1952 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1952)

² Prairie View High School was located in Prairie View, Texas northwest of Houston, Texas.

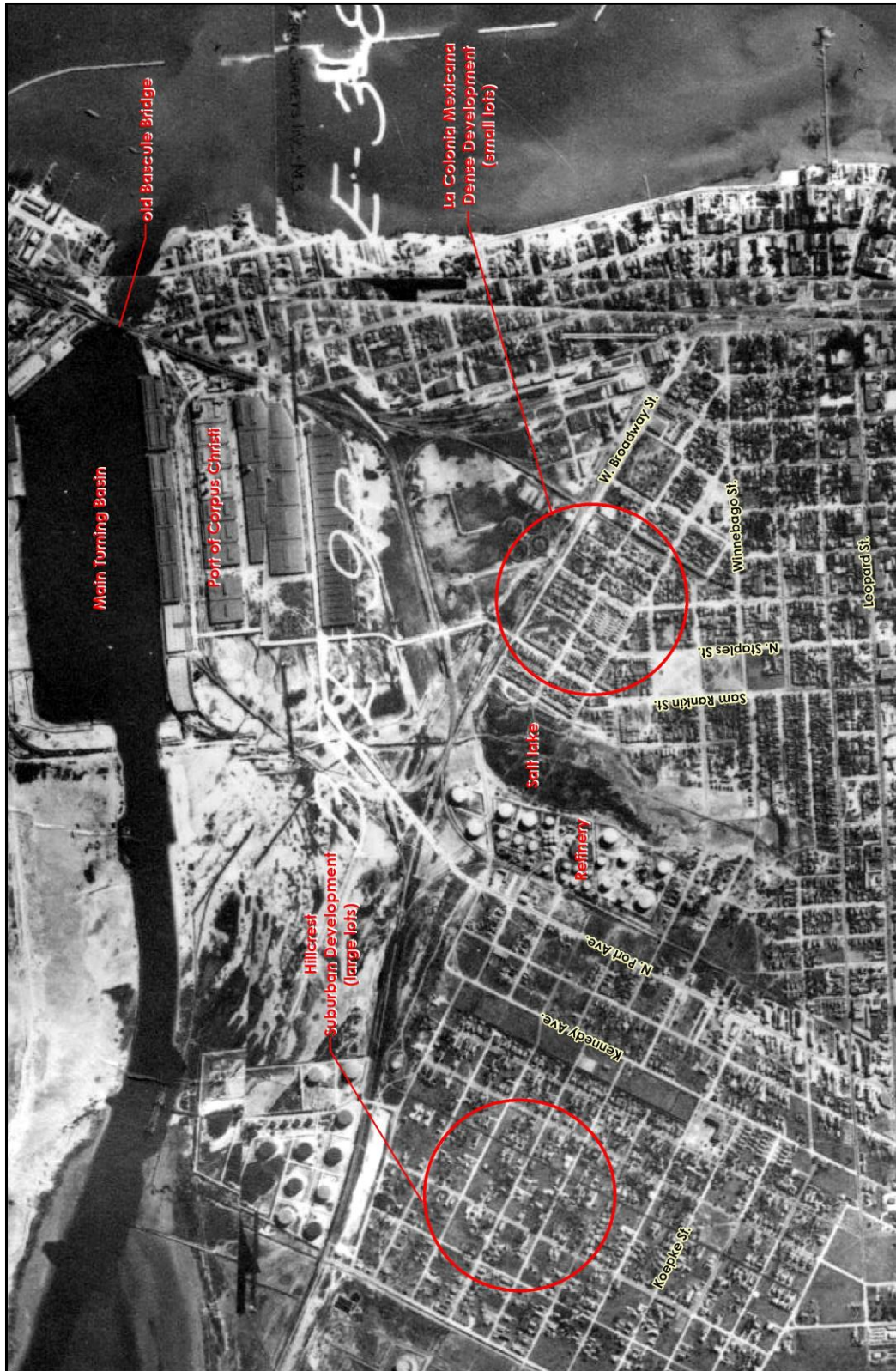
³ Washington-Coles is a term commonly used for the area near Booker T. Washington School and Solomon M. Coles School although the legal descriptions for this area included Bluff; Parker; Colonia Mexicana; North Broadway; Salt Lake Addition; Clarkson; Diaz; Braslau; Salt Lake-Leathers II; Craven Heights; and Leathers I.

Figure 5: Annotated Detail - 1937 Zoning Map of City of Corpus Christi;
 annotations by HNTB, 2015



Source: Corpus Christi Public Libraries Map Collection, Call No. M 352.961.

Figure 6: Detail - 1938 Aerial Photograph; annotation by HNTB, 2015



Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System. Index - 14

Segregation limited options for African Americans, but it also was a factor in creating a strong, cohesive African American community in Northside. The city directories through 1953 noted which directory listings were either owned or operated by “colored” people (C. B. Page Directory Company, 1949). Information from the 1949 and 1953 city directories recorded that many schools, medical services, churches, grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, clubs and recreation areas in the east part of Northside were operated by African Americans although some were operated by Hispanics and others. The data from the 1949 and 1953 city directories as well as the oral history interviews indicated that the African American community was largely self-contained within the east side of Northside while Hispanics and others lived and attended school in the Hillcrest area in the western part of Northside as well as in other parts of Corpus Christi.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* made school segregation illegal. Corpus Christi Schools had been integrated to include Hispanics by the 1930s, but African American students attended separate schools designated for African Americans. Following the court ruling which required full integration of all schools, Corpus Christi schools did not immediately open to African Americans. A 1954 visit to Corpus Christi by Thurgood Marshall⁴, Special Council for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), hastened the full integration of the city’s schools. Marshall threatened suit to force full integration. However, he did not need to follow through on the threat because the school board agreed to allow African American students to enroll in all schools within the city (Hardeman W., 2014).

The integration of schools in 1954 provided an incentive for African Americans to try to move from the crowded conditions near Solomon M. Coles and Booker T. Washington schools to residences in Hillcrest west of Kennedy Avenue and to neighborhoods on the south side of town. However, Marsha Shaw Hardeman reported in her oral history that her family (African American) was unable to find a company in Corpus Christi willing to give her family a mortgage loan even though they had impeccable credit. Her family found a company in the Lower Rio Grande Valley that was willing to finance their new home in Greenwood Park on the south side of Corpus Christi (Hardeman M. S., 2014).

The 1952 Leathers Place No. 2 housing was constructed on some of the only available land on the east side of Northside. Leathers Place No. 2 was at a low elevation, frequently flooded and was eventually demolished. Willie Hardeman mentioned Oakwood, Greenwood Park and New Addition as examples of subdivisions on the south side which were open to African Americans in the 1950s (Hardeman W., 2014). Many African American families relocated their residences to the south side, although most continued to attend church,

⁴ The Honorable Thurgood Marshall served on the U.S. Supreme Court from October 1967 to October 1991.

shop, and enjoy dining and entertainment in Northside even after they moved (Hilton, 2015).

The construction of Harbor Bridge in 1959 and I-37 in the early 1960s displaced some Northside residences as well as the businesses (many operated by African Americans) that had been located on the “Old Line,” which may generally be described as the area east of Solomon M. Coles School. The new I-37 freeway was constructed between Buffalo and Antelope Streets located parallel to and north of the existing Highway 9/Leopard Street. The placement of the highway was decided after several years of study and many meetings with city officials and Corpus Christi residents from 1957 through 1959 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1957) (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1959). The ultimate route of the freeway avoided displacement of the businesses along the active and lengthy commercial corridor along Leopard Street. The new freeway also made access to Leopard Street shops and businesses more challenging for Northside residents due to the controlled access nature of I-37, a feature common to interstate highways.

In 1967, Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School was closed and did not reopen as a high school until 2006 when it opened as a Special Emphasis High School (Rodriguez, 2014). However, the building was remodeled and reopened as Coles Elementary School beginning in 1973 and as a Special Emphasis Elementary School from 1980 - 2005. Booker T. Washington Elementary School closed in 1973 and Crossley Elementary closed in the early 2000s.

Following the merger of the local African American and Anglo chapters of the ILA in 1983, the ILA union hall in Northside closed and that void seemed to contribute to a decline in the neighborhood. However, the fond memories of the neighborhood persist and there have been numerous campaigns to renew the once vibrant community. Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School is an example of current success in the neighborhood. The students who attend the Coles Special Emphasis High School have previously attended other high schools where they have been unsuccessful. Upon achieving success at Coles, they have the opportunity to either graduate from Coles or to return to their previous school to graduate. In 2014, 20 of the 361 graduating seniors chose to graduate from Coles rather than their previous high school and Coles celebrated their first graduating class since the school closed as a high school in 1967. The desire of those students to graduate as Coles’ students rather than as graduates from the high school they attended previously (Rodriguez, 2014) and the impressive art that adorns the walls of the school both testify to the success of Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School in Northside (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Art in hall of Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School, 2015



Source: Photo by C. Lynn Smith, HNTB

Themes of Northside

The oral history interviews as well as the archival research revealed nine themes of Northside community history. The themes are listed below:

- Education
- Professionals and Leaders
- Businesses
- Faith
- Athletics
- Cemeteries and Parks
- Music
- Community
- Housing

The first eight themes listed above will each be discussed in this section of the report. Housing will be addressed in the “Catalysts of Neighborhood Change” section of this report.

Education

Almost every person interviewed for this report spoke about the importance placed on education by their family and by the faculty of the schools they attended. In 1884, the Teachers State Association of Texas was founded “to promote quality education for blacks and good working conditions for black teachers” (McDaniel, 2010). The historic emphasis on education among the African American population of Corpus Christi is supported by documentation provided in Gladys Gibbon’s 1941 master’s thesis where she cites an 1890 scholastic census of the Corpus Christi children ages 8 through 15. According to that 1890 census, of the 935 Anglo children in Corpus Christi, 102 Anglo children did not attend school (10.9 percent); whereas, of the 206 total “colored” children in Corpus Christi, 10 “colored” children did not attend school (4.8 percent) indicating that a larger percentage of African American parents, versus Anglo parents, were making sure their children attended school⁵ (Gibbon, 1941).

James Smith, son of the Reverend Sydney R. Smith and Mrs. Beulah Smith, was interviewed for his oral history and he expressed that from an early age, there was never a doubt about whether he or his friends were going to go to college. They understood that their parents expected them to attend primary and secondary schools and then go on to college (Smith J., 2015). Two of James Smith’s friends, Barbara Campbell and Lamont Taylor, were also

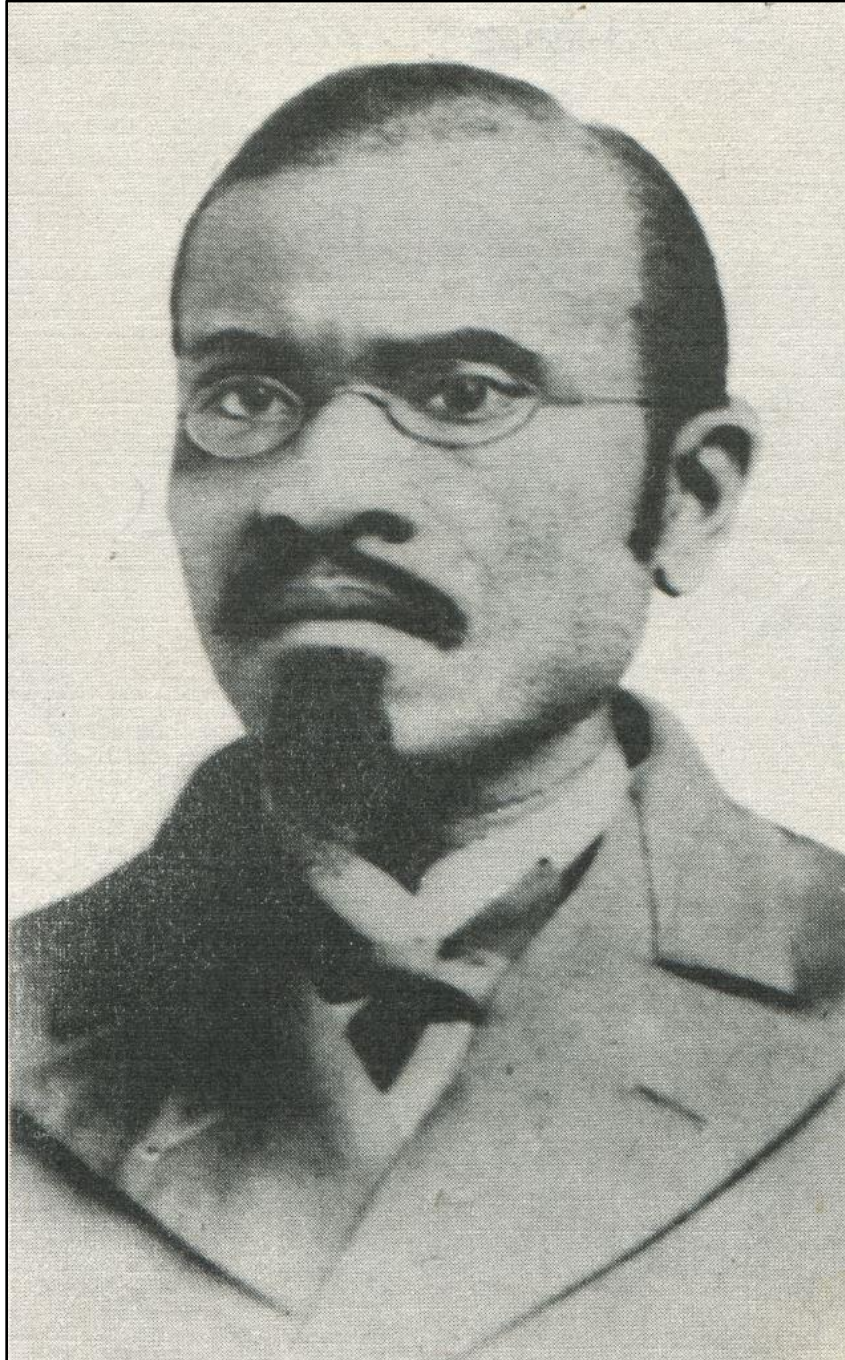
⁵ Note that only “white” and “colored” children were mentioned in the 1890 census cited in Gibbon’s thesis. Gibbons did mention that in 1940, Spanish language courses were made compulsory in Corpus Christi schools indicating that Hispanics may have been grouped with Anglos in the census data.

interviewed for this report and both he and his friends graduated from Roy Miller High School in 1971 (the only high school that served Northside at that time) and they all went on to attend college and earn bachelor's degrees. Ms. Campbell and Mr. Taylor also earned graduate degrees. This is just one example of the importance placed on education by the African American community in Northside. Schools attended by most of the Northside students are discussed below in the order in which the schools were constructed beginning with the earliest school established in the area.

Solomon M. Coles School

The earliest school for African Americans in Corpus Christi was established by Solomon Melvin Coles (**Figure 8**) (1844-1924). Coles was a former slave who earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania as well as a Bachelor of Divinity from the prestigious Yale University Divinity School in Connecticut. He traveled to Corpus Christi in 1877 to preach at the Freedom Congregational Church and when he arrived he also began teaching African American children. Coles saw the need for education for African Americans in Corpus Christi. In 1878, he gave up the ministry in favor of establishing a school which he named the Public Free School for Colored, located in the 500 block of North Carancahua Street. He served there as the full time principal and also taught. In 1893, the school relocated from Carancahua Street to the site at 924 Winnebago Street. At the Winnebago site, a broom factory was converted to house Coles' school. In the following year, Mr. Coles moved to San Antonio but his education legacy continued in Corpus Christi and in 1925, the broom factory school building was replaced with a larger brick school (**Figure 9**) which was named Solomon M. Coles School in his honor (Bruce Glasrud and Cecelia Gutierrez Venable, n.d.).

Figure 8: Solomon Melvin Coles



Source: Courtesy of the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* Photo Archives.

Figure 9: c. 1940 photo of Solomon M. Coles School originally constructed in 1925



Source: (Gibbon, 1941), courtesy of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries

Ms. Alclair Pleasant was a teacher at Solomon M. Coles School and she posed for a photograph with the children in her 1930-31 first grade class in front of the school (**Figure 10**). This photograph was taken during the tenure of T. C. Ayers who served as principal of Solomon M. Coles School from 1916 to 1923 (in the converted broom factory) and again from 1932 until his death in 1937 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1946) (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1971).

Through 1933, public education for African Americans in Northside did not extend to the grades required for high school graduation and parents who could do so generally sent their children to Prairie View High School to complete their high school education. In 1934, Solomon M. Coles School was granted full accreditation for both elementary and secondary courses and students were able to obtain their high school diploma from Solomon M. Coles School (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012).

Figure 10: Ms. Alclair Pleasant posed with her 1930–31 first grade class at Solomon M. Coles School



Source: Courtesy of *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

In 1938, Cornelius Carl “C.C.” Sampson began his tenure as principal. When he arrived, the school had 13 teachers and 585 students. During Sampson’s 15-year tenure, the school added a vocational education shop, cafeteria and a gymnasium. Solomon M. Coles School included all the grades taught to African Americans in Corpus Christi until c. 1945 when Booker T. Washington School was constructed nearby (Greenwood, 1953); Solomon M. Coles School became a Junior-Senior High School. In 1950, Solomon M. Coles was listed as an Honor School with C. C. Sampson serving as principal per the *Texas Standard* (Colored Teachers State Association of Texas, 1950). While Sampson was principal, he reported that African American students rode buses from Molina, Carver areas, Flour Bluff, Aransas Pass, Ingleside, Robstown, Kingsville and Taft to attend school at Coles because education for African Americans was limited or non-existent in neighboring communities (Nelson, 1970). In 1967, while Robert D. Campbell was principal (Campbell, 2015), Solomon M. Coles was closed for remodeling and students transferred to other junior high and senior high schools such as North Side Junior High School,⁶ Robert Driscoll Junior High School and Roy Miller

⁶ In 1967, North Side Junior High was operating at 500 N. Carrizo St., the building formerly known as Cheston Heath Elementary.

High School. In 1968, the campus reopened as Solomon M. Coles Junior High School and North Side Junior High was closed (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1967).⁷ In 1973, upon the closing of Booker T. Washington Elementary School, Solomon M. Coles was reopened as Solomon M. Coles Elementary School. From 1980 through the 2005 spring semester, the school functioned as Solomon M. Coles Elementary Special Emphasis School.

In 2006, the school became Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School (Santos-Garza, 2005). A few years ago, an art teacher was added to the faculty and art was added to the curriculum. The results of this educational enhancement adorn the halls of Coles High School and are exhibited periodically at Del Mar College.

Oral history interviewees who attended Solomon M. Coles School included (in alphabetical order by last name): The Reverend Claude Axel, Emile Bolden, Anita Bouldin, Willie Hardeman,⁸ Thurma Hilton, Herman Polk, Phyllis Crecy Ridgels, Billy Ray Sayles and James Smith.

Roy Miller High School (formerly Corpus Christi High School c. 1890–1949)

The history of Corpus Christi High School began c. 1890 because the Corpus Christi High School Record kept by the school registrar lists the 1893 class as the school's first graduating class, a class that contained four students (Corpus Christi High School Registrar, 1893). The current building was originally constructed in 1929 and named Corpus Christi High School. It replaced the 1912 high school building located at 525 N. Carancahua St. which was re-named North Side Junior High School after the high school relocated in 1929. Corpus Christi High School was the only high school for non-African American students in Corpus Christi until the construction of W.B. Ray High School (completed in 1950) and located at 1002 Texan Trail at S. Staples Street on the south side of Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi High School was renamed Roy Miller High School in 1950 in honor of Henry Pomeroy "Roy" Miller, a former mayor of the city in the 1910s. Roy Miller High School is located at 1 Battlin Buc Blvd., just south of Leopard Street and south of area identified as Northside in this report. Most African American high school students transferred from Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School to Roy Miller High School when that Coles campus closed for renovations in 1967. At that time, Roy Miller High School was a brick school that exhibited Moorish Revival style of architecture as shown in the Reverend Claude Axel's 1962 *The Duffle Bag* annual (**Figure 11**). Graduates of Roy Miller High School interviewed for this report include the Reverend Claude Axel, Anita Bouldin, Barbara Campbell, Bobby Galvan, Adela Hernandez, Thurma Hilton, Joel Mumphord, James Smith and Lamont Taylor. Dick Swantner attended the high school before the name changed in 1950.

⁷ From the early 1960s to 1968, North Side Junior High School had been housed in the building constructed as Cheston Heath Elementary at 500 N. Carrizo St.

⁸ Willie Hardeman also attended W.B. Ray High School and graduated from Mary Carroll High School.

Figure 11: Roy Miller High School entrance in 1962, before the school was renovated



Source: 1962 *Duffle Bag* - Yearbook of Roy Miller High School; courtesy of the Reverend Claude Axel

North Side Junior High School (Formerly Corpus Christi High School from 1912–1929)

The building that became North Side Junior High was the same building constructed in 1912 at 525 N. Carancahua St. to serve as Corpus Christi High School. The school was re-named North Side Junior High School in 1929 after the building that became Roy Miller High School was constructed to serve as the “new” high school. In 1961, the building at 525 N. Carancahua St. was demolished and students were transferred to Cheston Heath School at 500 N. Carrizo St. (Ramage, 1951). Cheston Heath School was re-named North Side Junior High School when the students were transferred there. This school (in both locations) was actually located just south of Leopard Street and was therefore out of the Northside area defined for this report. However, some students from the Northside neighborhood attended North Side Junior High (**Figure 12**). Oral history interviewees that attended North Side Junior High School include the Reverend Claude Axel, Bobby Galvan, Irene (Reyna) Canales and James Smith.

Figure 12: North Side Junior High in 1939



Source: Courtesy of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries, Public School Collection, Call No. 5.21

Cheston Heath Elementary School

Constructed in 1912, this was a one-story brick building at 500 N. Carrizo St. (south of Leopard Street) (**Figure 13**) which originally served only Hispanic students (Ramage, 1951) but appears to have been open to both Anglo and Hispanic students by sometime in the 1930s. In 1940, the Corpus Christi Public Schools had begun a new program of compulsory Spanish for the second through fifth grades. This program replaced the previous program that mandated that students take Spanish from the eighth through twelfth grades (Gibbon, 1941). The Cheston Heath school building was apparently converted to North Side Junior High School (formerly located at 523-29 N. Carancahua St.) and then the school building at 500 N. Carrizo St. was closed permanently in 1968 (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1967). Today's Nueces County Courthouse, which opened in 1977 (Jeanson, n.d.), occupies the site of the former school (Lerma, 2015). Cheston Heath Elementary School was located near Northside but south of Leopard Street. However, students who lived in Northside attended the school including oral history interviewees Bobby Galvan, Virginia Lerma and Adela Hernandez.

Figure 13: Cheston Heath Elementary School



Source: (Gibbon, 1941), courtesy of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries

Holy Cross Catholic School

Holy Cross Catholic School was the second school established for African Americans in Corpus Christi and it was located at 1121 N. Staples St. (Figure 14). In 1914, the Catholic Diocese of Corpus Christi, through canon law of the Catholic Church, was directed to provide ministry to African Americans. In response to that mandate, Father Mark Moeslein served as the pastor at Holy Cross Church from 1914 through 1926. Holy Cross School was founded in 1917 through Father Moeslein's devotion and on-going fundraising as well as the vision and continued major financial support of Mother Marie Katharine Drexel (now Saint Katharine Drexel) (Holy Cross Catholic Church, 2014). Mother Katharine Drexel was an heiress to a banking fortune and she founded a religious order called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. Through her religious order and with funds from her inheritance, she founded Catholic schools across the U.S. as well as Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. Her focus was on the education of Native Americans and African Americans.

Figure 14: Holy Cross Catholic rectory (on left) and school (on right) in 1924 (cropped from panoramic view)



Source: Photo by The Swafford Company, Corpus Christi Public Libraries; Photo File - B64 B2 F26 1

Alclair Pleasant (a resident of Northside and member of Holy Cross Church for her entire life) remembered that as a child she prayed with Mother Katharine Drexel when the Mother Superior would visit Holy Cross Catholic School (Figure 15) (Martinez, 2000). The school closed in 1965. Oral history interviewees who attended Holy Cross School included Marsha Shaw Hardeman, Thurma Hilton, Phyllis Crecy Ridgels, Billy Ray Sayles and James Smith.

Figure 15: In 2000, Alclair Pleasant seated beside a photo of Saint Katharine Drexel inside Holy Cross Church



Source: Photo by John Kennedy, April 2, 2000, courtesy of *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

Incarnate Word Academy

Incarnate Word Academy opened in 1871 and then moved to a more substantial building in 1885. In 1926, an impressive new school building (**Figure 16**) was completed at 701-715 N. Carancahua St. The 1926 school was located just north of Leopard Street which was the thoroughfare that defined the southern boundary of Northside prior to the construction of I-37. The 1926 building had three main floors plus an attic and a basement and it was constructed in association with the fulfilment of the requirements for a state-affiliated high school. The building also included grammar grade classrooms and boarding accommodations. In 1955, the high school grade levels were relocated to the present site of Incarnate Word at 2010 S. Alameda St. (Incarnate Word Academy, 2015). A 1956 aerial photograph (Texas Natural Resource Information Services, 1956) shows a vacant lot where the 1926 building had stood.

Figure 16: Incarnate Word Academy on northwest corner of Carancahua and Leopard Streets, c. 1920



Source: Corpus Christi Book & Stationery Co. post card; courtesy of Herb Canales

The oral history interviewees that attended Incarnate Word Academy included Irene (Reyna) Canales, Marsha Shaw Hardeman and Dick Swantner.

Charles W. Crossley Elementary School

Charles W. Crossley Elementary School opened in 1926 (Strasburg L. A., 1998) at 2512 Koepke St., between Kennedy and Peabody Avenues. A Public Works Administration project addition was erected in 1934 per the plaque near the front door of the now abandoned school (**Figure 17**).

Figure 17: Charles W. Crossley Elementary School in March 1965



Source: Corpus Christi Library, Collection 1 - Subject: Schools-Public- Crossley; donated to library by KZTV

A 1936 class photo taken by Frederick “Doc” McGregor shows a Crossley teacher and her students (**Figure 18**). In 1964, the enrollment at Crossley had grown to 451 compared to 391 students the previous year. In response, Crossley added its third African American faculty member, a teacher who had previously taught at Booker T. Washington Elementary (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1964). In 1981, extensive renovations to the school were dedicated, presumably the renovations announced in 1978 which included the addition of air conditioning, the addition of a multi-purpose center and renovations to the cafeteria (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1978) (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1981). By 1989, Crossley functioned as a Special Emphasis School for elementary-age students (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1989). Charles W. Crossley Elementary closed in the early 2000s. In 2013, the building was owned by Pastor Freddy Naranjo who planned to convert it to a church until a fire heavily damaged the building on April 19, 2013 (Channel 3, KIII TV South Texas - Online, 2013). The building is currently vacant and boarded up. Oral history interviewees that attended Charles W.

Crossley Elementary School included Barbara Campbell, Joel Mumphord, James Smith and Lamont Taylor.

Figure 18: School children and their teacher in front of Charles W. Crossley Elementary School on May 26, 1936



Source: Photo by Doc McGregor, Corpus Christi Public Libraries

Robert Driscoll Junior High School

Robert Driscoll Junior High School is located at 3500 Bluebonnet Drive, southwest of Hillcrest (outside of Northside). The original building was constructed c. 1940. This date is based on the fact that the school is not visible on a 1938 historic aerial photograph, but a photo of the school is included in Gibbon's 1941 thesis (**Figure 19**). The school has been substantially renovated since that time. Persons interviewed who attended Robert Driscoll Junior High included Barbara Campbell, Adela Hernandez, Joel Mumphord and Lamont Taylor.

Figure 19: c. 1940 photo of Robert Driscoll Junior High School



Source: (Gibbon, 1941), courtesy of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries

Mary McLeod Bethune Day Nursery

In 1942, Bernice Leonard worked with others such as Ernestine Bibbs and Mary Holdsworth Butt to establish the Mary McLeod Bethune Day Nursery (Bethune Nursery) at 1403 Howard Street. The nursery school was named after Mary McLeod Bethune, the first African American woman to head a federal agency. Although the nursery school was located just south of Northside, it was inspired by the need that Mrs. Leonard perceived while visiting families who lived within and near the D. N. Leathers public housing that her husband, Carlyle Leonard, managed in Northside. Prior to the founding of the nursery, many low-income, working mothers left their children at home alone because they had no one to care for them. Mrs. Leonard saw the need for the children to be supervised while their parents worked and she began working within the city to find persons who could help. Mary Holdsworth Butt, wife of Howard Edward Butt (founder of HEB Groceries), became a close

friend of Mrs. Leonard and Mrs. Butt helped lead fundraising efforts to establish and provide continuing support to the school (George, 1990). Mrs. Leonard was the director of the school from its founding until she partially retired in 1986 (George, 1990). Mrs. Leonard remained involved with the school until her death in 1993.

The nursery school was the first licensed day care in Corpus Christi. In 1970, a second location that utilized a donated military barracks was opened at 1002 Coke Street across from the D. N. Leathers housing project. The main campus was relocated to Kinney Avenue in 1982 (Smith R., Nursery marks its 50th year, 1992). The Northside location at 1002 Coke Street (**Figure 20**) is no longer extant but the campus at 900 Kinney Ave. continues to serve children from infants to 7-years old (Rabago, 1993).

Figure 20: Children sang in 1982 at Bethune Nursery location at 1002 Coke Street



Source: Photo by George Gongora, courtesy of *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

Booker T. Washington Elementary School

Booker T. Washington School was constructed c. 1945 to serve African American students (**Figure 21**). In 1950, it was listed as an Honor School with O.L. Bolden serving as principal per the *Texas Standard*, (*Texas Standard*, 1950). *Texas Standard*⁹ was a publication of the “Colored Teachers’ State Association of Texas” (Colored Teachers' State Associaton of Texas, 1933). In 1963, H.E. Johnson was serving as principal (*Texas Standard*, 1963). Booker T. Washington closed in 1973, the same year that Solomon M. Coles re-opened as an elementary school (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1973). After closing as an elementary school, the Booker T. Washington building was used as a training facility for the HIALCO agency, but the agency moved to a new facility in the early 1990s and the school is currently vacant. Oral history interviewees that attended Booker T. Washington Elementary School included the Reverend Claude Axel, Emile Bolden, Willie Hardeman, Thurma Hilton, Herman Polk, Billy Ray Sayles, James Smith and Lamont Taylor.

⁹ The earliest edition found online of the *Texas Standard* was published in 1933.

Figure 21: c. 1970 photo of Booker T. Washington Elementary School



Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

Professionals and Leaders

Within the commercial areas of Northside, there were many professionals and community leaders. Some of the names that were mentioned in the oral history interviews as well as in newspaper articles reviewed for the report are described in the sections which follow. This section is not comprehensive, but merely a sample of the talent and leadership represented within the Northside community.

Business Leaders

Howard E. Butt – In the 1920s, Howard E. Butt took over the family grocery business now known as the HEB. He was the youngest son of Florence Butt who founded the business in Kerrville in 1905. In 1936 Howard E. Butt opened a bakery in Corpus Christi. Howard E. and his wife, Mary Holdsworth Butt, and their family lived in Hillcrest on Palm Drive (Corpus Christi City Directory, 1937). In 1937, their bakery was located at 804 Last Street (now North Alameda Street) and they operated a Piggly-Wiggly grocery at 2021 Mestina St. By 1940 the company headquarters moved to Corpus Christi (Kleiner, 2010). In the 1950s they operated an H.E. Butt Grocery on Leopard Street near North Port Avenue just south of Northside (Hardeman W., 2014). Today the grocery chain operates throughout most of Texas.

Jeff Newton Callahan – Callahan’s Super Market was operated by Jeff Newton Callahan and G.A. Carroll from the late 1940s through approximately 1953 (Solomon M. Coles School Yearbook Staff, 1947) (C. B. Page Directory Company, Inc., 1953). The store was advertised in the 1953 Solomon M. Coles School Annual as a super market with “quality in meats and vegetables.” This grocery was mentioned in the following oral history interviews: Anita Bouldin, Marsha Shaw Hardeman, Willie Hardeman and Lamont Taylor. Anita Bouldin contributed images of Mr. Callahan and Mr. G. A. Carroll in Callahan’s Grocery.

G. A. Carroll – Mr. Carroll was president of the Corpus Christi Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1950 when the Texas Conference of Branches met in Corpus Christi and the Honorable Thurgood Marshall gave the convention address. The theme of the convention was “Make Jim Crow an Outlaw in Texas.” G. A. Carroll was an instructor at the Cooking and Baking School and he was a partner of Mr. Callahan in the operation of Callahan’s Super Market (Courtney School of Music, 1950).

Bob and Ed Ekstrom – The Ekstrom brothers ran the Nueces Transportation Company which offered local bus transportation in Corpus Christi. Before deciding to move to Corpus Christi, they had established the Greyhound Bus Company in Minnesota but sold that company in order to move to a warmer climate. They then established the Nueces Transportation Company in Corpus Christi and purchased their first buses in 1933 (Corpus Christi Public Libraries Photo Collection, 1933). Dick Swantner recalled that a bus from the Nueces Transportation Company would pick him and his brothers up at Incarnate Word Academy and drop them at their house in Hillcrest. Swantner recalled that the bus driver, Tom Bowlby,

knew where all the children lived and the bus operated similar to a school bus except it was actually a privately owned company. Nueces Transportation was part of the Northside community and advertised in the Coles High School yearbook (1947, 1953)

Galan Grocery Stores – In 1953, Pete Galan was operating two grocery stores, No. 1 at 1205 N. Staples St. and No. 2 at 1023 Waco St. (Solomon M. Coles 1953 Senior Class, 1953). The sign still present on the Galan Grocery located on Staples Street states “GALAN GROCERY · FOOD · DRINKS · PICNIC SUPPLIES · SINCE 1913.” The store was still operating on February 22, 1998, when featured in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* article, “Numerous Northside businesses empty,” but the store was closed when observed in 2014. Visits to the store and interactions with Mr. Galan were recalled in the oral history interviews of the following people: Marsha Shaw Hardeman, Adela Hernandez, Virginia Lerma and Phyllis Crecy Ridgels.

Garza Grocers – Several persons named Garza operated grocery stores in Northside. Henry Garza operated “Henry’s,” a grocery located at 1219 Sam Rankin St., just north of Leathers Drugs (Solomon M. Coles 1953 Senior Class, 1953). In 1949, 1219 Sam Rankin St. was the address of “Club Be-Bop” and “Terry Orange” so it appears that Henry’s Grocery was established between 1949 and 1953 when it was advertised in the 1953 Coles yearbook. In 1956, Henry’s Grocery and Market was still located at 1219 Sam Rankin St. per the city directory published that year. Henry Garza’s grocery was mentioned in Willie Hardeman’s oral history interview. In Phyllis Crecy Ridgels’ oral history interview, she described a “big grocery store” called Garza Grocery near the corner of Staples and Winnebago. In the 1949 and 1956 city directories, the building at 1001 N. Staples St. (formerly the Galvan home) was listed as the location of E. C. Garza Grocery and this address corresponds with Mrs. Ridgels description of the store location.

Gervase V. Leathers – Pharmacist of Leathers Drugs which opened at 1211 Sam Rankin St. in 1947. The store had a soda fountain along with the pharmacy. Gervase V. Leathers co-owned the building with his brother-in-law, Dr. William R. Carline, a dental surgeon whose office was located at the back of the store. There were also two insurance companies with offices located in the building. The store remained open until 1980. In 1992, Rene Wynn returned to Northside after her career as a building inspector in Austin. Wynn led an effort to turn the building into a community and cultural center. Although she was able to gather donations of materials for some of the required repairs to renovate the building, the high cost to perform roof repairs and to replace the heating and air conditioning system stalled the project (Williams, 1992).

Melvin John Polk, Sr. – Mr. Polk demonstrated leadership within the ILA as described in the oral history interviews of Billy Ray Sayles and Herman Polk as well as in an article published in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* on September 6, 1992, “Docks Segregated until recently.” He arrived in Northside when his son, Herman Polk, was in the fourth grade, c. 1956, and

was president of the Cotton Headers Local No. 1347 in 1979. He was the last president of the largest predominantly African American ILA local, Deep Sea Local No. 1225, before the merger of the segregated Deep Sea local union chapters. Melvin Polk, Sr. was also the first president of the integrated Deep Sea ILA Local No. 26 formed after the merger in 1983 (Cardenas, New social hall's grand opening set Aug. 23, 1985).

Sam Johnson – Mr. Johnson earned his barber’s license in Wharton, Texas in 1952 and he arrived in Corpus Christi in 1953 and began working for Mr. Dennis Thompson at True Trim Barber Shop at 1001 N. Tanchua St. In 1954 he moved to Elmo’s Barber Shop at 1315 Sam Rankin St. On March 13, 1962, Johnson opened his own shop at 1715 N. Port Ave. and then 25 years later he moved to his current business location at 1426 Kennedy Ave. in Hillcrest, a business which he still owns and operates. When interviewed in 2014, he was also serving as a pastor at Thomas Chapel Church of God in Christ. He and his wife were once honored by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) as family of the year. On September 15, 2012, HIALCO recognized him as a leader who demonstrated commitment to his community.

G. R. Swantner, Sr. – The Swantner family lived in Hillcrest from c. 1930 to 1939. In the 1930s, G.R. Swantner, Sr. transitioned from running an insurance department within a bank to founding an independent insurance business and constructing the first commercial building on Shoreline Drive (**Figure 22**). John Richard “Dick” Swantner, G.R. Swantner Sr.’s middle son became a principal of Swantner & Gordon Insurance Agency, which grew to be one of the top one hundred independent insurance agencies in the country. Dick Swantner also served as President of the Board of the Corpus Christi Area Tourist Bureau in the 1970s (Swantner, 2014).

Figure 22: C. 1940 Swantner and Gordon Building, one of the first buildings erected after Shoreline Boulevard and the T-heads were added to the coastline of Corpus Christi Bay during 1939 and 1940



Source: Personal photo collection of Dick Swantner

Community Leaders

Charles Bolden – Mr. Bolden became the first recreation coordinator of T. C. Ayers Recreation Center in 1945 and he served in that position for 25 years. He was the first outreach coordinator for HIALCO; founder of the Black Chamber of Commerce in Corpus Christi, Texas; a 33rd degree Scottish Rite Mason; and member of the Grand Lodge of Perfection (Senate of the Texas Legislature, 1997). Charles Bolden organized Les Circle Monsieurs, an organization of young men based on citizenship, character and commitment and Bolden was a role model for many of the young men of the community (Axel, 2014).

Mary Holdsworth Butt – The wife of Howard E. Butt (late patriarch of family that owns HEB Grocery Company) was a philanthropist who was influential in the community and whose philanthropic efforts benefited Northside residents as well as many others. In the 1930s the Butt family lived in Hillcrest. Through her family's financial contributions and her own community influence, she was instrumental in assisting Bernice Leonard establish the

Bethune Nursery which cared for children of low-income families (many of whom lived in Northside) while their parents worked. The Butts and four other prominent families bought the house that served as the first location for the day care. Bernice Leonard said that it was at Mrs. Butt's insistence that local physicians provided free medical exams for all the children. The nursery furnishings (cots and sheets) were also provided by Mrs. Butt. The nursery continues to operate today.

Hinio Clark – Mr. Clark was the caretaker of Old Bayview Cemetery for 36 years. Under his care, the Old Bayview was a well-tended garden as well as a cemetery. The Clark family lived in the house located on the cemetery grounds. Trinidad Clark, the daughter of Hinio and Louisa Clark, married Victor Martinez and the wedding ceremony was held in Old Bayview Cemetery (**Figure 23**). In approximately 1955, the caretaker's shotgun house was moved from the cemetery to 1407 San Pedro St. in Northside. According to Hinio Clark's granddaughter, Adela Hernandez, Hinio Clark also had some connection to the Nueces County Courthouse because she said he wore a suit during his frequent visits to the courthouse (Hernandez, 2014).

Figure 23: Adela Hernandez' parents wedding photo taken in Old Bayview Cemetery including (left to right): Louisa Clark, Victor Martinez, Trinidad Clark, Avelino Martinez, Hinio Clark (caretaker of the cemetery with a tombstone visible behind him and to the right)



Source: Personal photo collection of Adela Hernandez, an oral history interviewee

Aclair Pleasant – Ms. Pleasant was born in 1906 below the bluff of Northside in Irishtown. She attended Holy Cross Catholic School and then Prairie View A&M where she earned Bachelor of Science and Masters Degrees. She taught at Solomon M. Coles School beginning in 1920s and won many awards for teaching. For 17 years she worked with special needs and disadvantaged children and she retired in 1971. Ms. Pleasant was a life member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (Corpus Christi Public Library, 1990). She worked throughout her life for racial equality (Ongoing Battle for Civil Rights, 1990). She died in 2011.

Dentists

Dr. Abner R. Branch – The dental office of Dr. Branch was located at 1317 Sam as advertised in the 1947 Solomon Coles *Green Hornet Annual*. In the 1956 city directory, his office was listed at 1319 Sam Rankin (R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1956). Dr. Branch was well respected within the community and donated the Gethsemane stained glass window to St. Paul United Methodist Church (UMC) (Saint Paul United Methodist Church, 1984).

Dr. William R. Carline – Dr. William R. Carline arrived in Corpus Christi in 1946 after practicing dentistry in the U.S. Air Force (DePue, 1966). His office was located in the back of Leathers Drug Store at 1211 Sam Rankin St., a building which he co-owned with his brother-in-law, Gervase Leathers. Dr. William R. Carline practiced in Northside for over 40 years and was interviewed by the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* in 1992 after he retired (Janner, 1992).

Dr. H. Boyd Hall – Dr. Hall was a dentist who graduated as a Doctor of Dental Surgery from MeHarry Medical College (Nashville, Tennessee) in 1923. He moved to Corpus Christi in 1937 where he advertised his dental practice in his home. After noticing the absence of African American postal carriers, he launched a campaign to increase employment of African Americans. He founded the Corpus Christi Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1941 and served as president for three years. City directories from 1949, 1953 and 1956 list his dental office address as 722 Artesian (Venable, n.d.). According to Emile Bolden, Dr. Hall was the first African American to live on Ocean Drive (Bolden, Edited Oral History Transcript, 2015).

Physicians

Dr. William C. Anderson – Dr. Anderson was a physician and surgeon that served Northside residents. City directories from 1953 and 1956 show his medical office to be located at 716 Artesian St., just south of the area documented in this report as Northside.

Dr. Hannibal L. Brownlow – Dr. Brownlow was a Northside physician who graduated from Meharry Medical College and served his internship at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1945, his office was located at 1004 Winnebago St. (San Antonio Register, 1945). By 1956, he had relocated his practice to the Medical Office Building at 1319 Sam Rankin in Northside, a building he shared with Dr. H. J. Williams (physician) and Dr. Abner Branch (dentist) (R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1956).

Dr. C. T. Carline – Dr. C. T. Carline was a physician who founded the Carline Clinic located at 1207 Sam Rankin St. in the 1940s. He was the doctor who delivered Adela Hernandez (Hernandez, 2014). By 1953, the clinic was no longer listed in the city directory and by 1956 Jackson & Flowers Funeral Home was located in the former clinic building located across Sam Rankin Street from St. Paul UMC.

Dr. Henry J. Williams – He left teaching at Solomon M. Coles School to obtain his medical education and training. He returned to Northside to practice medicine and he and his family resided in Hillcrest until his death on March 3, 1986. His office was located at 1319 Sam Rankin St. in Northside in 1956 (R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1956). He shared a medical building with Dr. Brownlow (physician) and Dr. Abner Branch (dentist). Dr. Williams served as president of the N.A.A.C.P. for five years and worked to integrate the Corpus Christi Independent School District, Del Mar College, and recreational facilities in Corpus Christi. Dr. Williams was a board member of the local chapter of the American Diabetes Association and a member of the Nueces County Medical Society. He was the first African American doctor to be on staff at the Corpus Christi Hospital (Spohn, later Memorial) (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1986) (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1977). Hillcrest Park was re-named “Dr. H. J. Williams Memorial Park” in his honor. Although vacant and boarded up, the Medical Dental Building where he practiced still stands.

Educators

Thomas Carleton (T. C.) Ayers – Mr. Ayers (1876–1938) was a Northside resident who worked as a postman and then served as a teacher and principal of African American schools. He served as principal of Solomon M. Coles School from 1916 to 1923 and again from 1932 until his death in 1937 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1946) (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1971).

Robert D. Campbell – Robert Campbell taught at Booker T. Washington Elementary from 1950 to 1962. From 1962 through 1964, he served as head teacher at George Washington Carver Elementary. In 1964 he taught history at Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School and then became principal there in 1965. He remained principal at Coles until the school closed for renovations in 1967. He then became principal of Booker T. Washington Elementary School through the spring of 1970. In 1970, he was the first African American principal of Casa Linda Elementary School on the south side of Corpus Christi. The Campbell family lived in Hillcrest until 1971 (Campbell, 2015) (Corpus Christi Public Library - Greenwood Branch, 2014).

Coach John Clay – At Solomon M. Coles School, John Clay was a teacher and coach. He coached the 1965 Green Hornets State Champion baseball team and was a role model for his students (Sayles B. R., 2015).

Frederick James Douglas – Oral history interviewee Anita Bouldin recalled that her father, Frederick Douglas, was known locally as “Mr. Freddie.” He played on the Corpus Christi Sluggers semi-pro baseball team and coached the Corpus Christi Bluejays women’s softball and other teams in Northside (Smith R., *Baseball thrived on Northside*, 1992).

Saint Katharine Drexel – Mother Marie Katharine Drexel (now Saint Katharine Drexel) provided the financial backing to establish Holy Cross School in 1917. Mother Drexel was an heiress to a banking fortune and founded a religious order called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. She was remembered fondly by Alclair Pleasant and was influential in the lives of many Holy Cross students. She was the second American to be canonized as a saint (Martinez, 2000).

Cornelius Carl “C.C.” Sampson – Mr. C. C. Sampson came to Corpus Christi in 1938 to become principal of Solomon M. Coles School (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1985). In 1944, while superintendent of Solomon M. Coles School, Sampson served as vice-chairman of the Corpus Christi Inter-Racial Committee, an organization formed “to further mutual understanding and good will between the white and negro races” (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1944).

Bernice Leonard – In 1941, Bernice Leonard came to Corpus Christi with her husband Carlyle Leonard who managed the D. N. Leathers Housing Project dedicated in that year. Mrs. Leonard was a founder of the Bethune Nursery in 1942 and served as the director there until 1986. The nursery school served low-income families, many of whom lived in Northside. In 1970, a second location of the school opened at 1002 Coke St. to better serve the Northside children (George, 1990).

Coach John H. Thomas – Coach Thomas taught and coached football, basketball, tennis and track at Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School. At Solomon M. Coles School, there is a trophy commemorating Coach Thomas’ “Faithful Service – Coles Faculty” from 1940–1967. In 1960, Solomon Coles won the Division 3A state football championship and Coles' tennis players won the state championships (singles and doubles) in the Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL) 25 times between 1947 and 1967 (University Interscholastic League, 1940–1968).

Ministers/Religious Leaders

Reverend Harold T. Branch – Beginning in 1956, the Reverend Harold Branch was the pastor of St. John Baptist Church and in 1956 he lived at 1307 Ramirez St. Under Branch’s leadership, St. John Baptist Church moved to Greenwood in 1961. Pastor Branch moved to Hillcrest and remained a Hillcrest resident after the congregation relocated (Strasburg, 1998). He was the first elected African American city councilman since 1889 (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 2002). In 1970, he was elected President of Black Mobilization, a group formed in response to racial tension following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Reverend Harold Branch died in January 2012.

Reverend Thomas Bruton – He served as a minister at St. Paul UMC from 1948 to 1958 and led the congregation in their efforts to construct the current church, completed in 1952, at 1202 Sam Rankin St. (Saint Paul United Methodist Church, 1984). His married daughter, Mrs. Green, taught at Solomon M. Coles School according to Billy Ray Sayles.

Reverend Elliott Grant – The Reverend Elliott Grant began serving as pastor of St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church (St. Matthew Baptist Church) in Northside on June 12, 1962. He announced his retirement in 1988 and culminated his role as pastor on October 16, 1988. He preached his last sermon at St. Matthew Baptist Church on January 22, 1989. He was active in the Civil Rights movement and played a key role in the construction of North Side Manor Apartments for low-income residents. He was elected as President of Corpus Christi Independent School Board in 1984. In 1987, a low-income senior housing project in Northside (on the northwest corner of Martin Luther King Drive and North Alameda Street) was named in his honor.

Hattie (Moore) Littles – Born on June 29, 1869, in Corpus Christi. Mrs. Littles was believed to be one of the first African Americans born in the city. Hattie (Moore) Littles attended the original school founded by Solomon Melvin Coles in 1878. In 1915, she and her husband were the first African American Catholics baptized in Corpus Christi. She worked for many prominent families including John G. Kenedy for whom her husband also worked. The Kenedys gave to Mr. Willis Littles and his wife Hattie Littles a home which they relocated to 1108 N. Staples St. c. 1918, a site across the street from Holy Cross Catholic Church where she attended Mass daily. Mrs. Hattie Littles, Mrs. Cornelia Carson, and Mrs. Annie Bowman received a “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” medal from Pope Pius XII in 1954 (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1954). Mrs. Hattie Littles died in 1962 (Corpus Christi Landmark Commission, n.d.).

Father Mark Moeslein – Father Moeslein was born May 7, 1854. He became a Passionist priest (of the Congregation of the Passion Order). He came to Corpus Christi c. 1914 to assist Bishop Paul J. Nussbaum in converting African Americans to the Catholic faith. In 1915, at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, the first African Americans in Corpus Christi were baptized into the Catholic Church: Maria Josephine Little and her parents Willis John Little and Marie Hattie Little. Although the establishment of Holy Cross Church was in response to the 1914 Catholic Church mandate to evangelize African Americans, Father Moeslein and the congregation of Holy Cross welcomed people of all races and ethnicities. Father Moeslein often wrote to benefactors on the East Coast to plead for funds to finance the mission of Holy Cross Church and School. The largest donations appear to have come from Mother Katharine Drexel (an heiress and founder of a religious order) who, in 1917, financed the purchase of the church property and provided the capital to build a building which housed the church on the first floor and the school on the second floor. Although the Catholic Church gave Father Moeslein a salary of \$27 per month, he often used his monthly salary towards the running and operations of the church and school while he lived on a simple diet of wheat bread and milk. In September 1926, he baptized his 108th convert and

soon after left Holy Cross after reporting to his superiors that he was getting too old to fulfill the responsibilities of Holy Cross (Holy Cross Catholic Church, 2014).

Musicians and Club Owners

Elmore Crecy – Mr. Elmore Crecy was better known as Elmo Crecy. He operated the Down Beat Club and Crecy Cab Company. Mr. Crecy had a talent for attracting big-name performers such as Fats Domino and Ray Charles to Northside. His clientele was attracted to the Down Beat not only for the music but also for Elmo Crecy’s cooking. He was known for his chili, fried chicken and salads. After closing the club, he catered events for wealthy clients in Corpus Christi as well as for the owners of the King Ranch (Ridgels, 2014).

Rafael Galvan Sr. – Rafael Galvan Sr. was born in Port Isabel, Texas on August 13, 1887. His family moved to Corpus Christi in 1896. As a young man he worked as a fisherman and later became one of the first Hispanic police officers in Corpus Christi. After the death of his first wife with whom he had two daughters, he married Virginia Reyes on October 26, 1919 and they had seven more children. By the 1920s, they had purchased a home at 1001 Black St. (now North Staples Street) on the northwest corner of North Staples and Winnebago Streets (Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, 1927). In that Northside home they raised nine Galvan children. Rafael Galvan Sr. was a founding member of LULAC.

The youngest child, Bobby Galvan Sr. (born July 10, 1929), reported in his oral history interview that his father heard Bernave Alvarado perform and was so impressed with Mr. Alvarado’s talent that Mr. Galvan hired him to teach the Galvan children to play music. Rafael Galvan Sr. dedicated a room within their home on North Staples Street as a music studio. In that home studio, all of the Galvan children learned music. The musical talent developed in the Galvan children carried forward into their adult lives. In 1949, Rafael Galvan Sr. constructed the Galvan Building at 1632 Agnes St. in Corpus Christi. On the second floor of the Galvan Building was the Galvan Ballroom and the opening night performer was Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra. The Galvan Ballroom was open to rental by all races.

The third Galvan son, Eddie Galvan, organized the largest big-band in Corpus Christi at that time. The 15-piece orchestra included Rafael Galvan, Sr. and the Galvan brothers, Eddie, Ralph Jr., Sam, and Bobby. The group played regularly in the Galvan Ballroom as well as other venues in the area. Eddie Galvan was also the band director for Roy Miller High School from 1956 to 1961 where his band won numerous awards. Eddie Galvan was selected as the Texas Bandmaster of the Year in 1996 by the Texas Bandmasters Association. The band hall at Roy Miller High School is named in honor of Eddie Galvan.

After being a member of the All-State Band in high school, Bobby Galvan joined the U.S. Air Force and played in the Air Force Band of the West before returning to Corpus Christi. When interviewed in 2016, Bobby Galvan (at the age of 86) was still running the Galvan Music

Store on the first floor of the Galvan Building; the Galvan Ballroom on the second floor of the Galvan Building was still being leased on a regular basis.¹⁰

Don T. Haynes, Sr. – From 1946 through when Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School closed for renovations in 1967, Mr. Haynes taught history and directed the band at Solomon M. Coles School (Strasburg J., Jazz Giants: Northside nightclubs hosted kings of swing, 1998). According to Anita Bouldin, Mr. Haynes loved marches, especially those composed by John Philip Sousa (Bouldin, 2015). Haynes established the John Philip Sousa Band Award at Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School from 1955 – 1965. His son, Don T. Haynes, Jr., was the band director at LBJ High School in Austin, Texas for 39 years. Adela Hernandez remembered her delight in hearing the Solomon M. Coles Band when she lived in Northside and during the annual Buccaneer Days parades (Hernandez, 2014).

Mary Belle (Littles) Martin – Mary Belle (Littles) Martin was the daughter of Hattie (Moore) Littles and Willis Littles. Mrs. Martin taught private music lessons in the family home at 1108 N. Staples St. In her youth, her first music teacher was Sister Xavier at Incarnate Word Academy where she quietly went to lessons after Holy Cross Catholic School classes were dismissed (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1976). Mrs. Martin died in 1983 (Corpus Christi Landmark Commission, n.d.).

Bu Chapman Pleasant – Bu Pleasant was a well-known jazz singer and pianist whose father owned the Skylark Club above his liquor store. She grew up knowing the famous musicians who visited Northside such as Count Basie, T-Bone Walker, Oscar Brown, and Big Joe Turner. She played in large cities such as New York and San Francisco. She returned to Corpus Christi to be with family in 1978 and stayed until her death from cancer in 1989 (Pleasant). The Skylark Club was later re-named the Ebony Recreation Spot and the building still stands near the southeast corner of North Staples and Ramirez Streets.

Mrs. Sidney R. (Beulah) Smith – Beulah Smith was the founder and director of the Courtney School of Music at 919 Waco St. She married the Reverend Sidney R. Smith, pastor of First Congregational Church and they adopted James Smith (an oral history interviewee). She was an English teacher at Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School where she was also the director of vocal music and of the “A Capella Choir.” She earned degrees from Jackson College; Marcus L. Quinn Conservatory; Chicago Musical College (Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Music Education) (Courtney School of Music, 1950).

¹⁰ In 1942, the Galvan family moved from Northside to a home constructed in 1908 located at 403 Waco St. In 1982, that home known as the Galvan House was purchased by the city of Corpus Christi and moved to Heritage Park.

Business

Beginning in the late 1920s, Northside businesses began to include those operated by African Americans with locations along what was known as the “Old Line” which may generally be described as the area east of Solomon Coles School, near the intersection of Tancahua and Winnebago Streets shown **Figure 24**. The African American population grew in Northside as other ethnic groups relocated to other parts of the city. This trend is explained in more detail later in this report (Catalysts of Change – Ethnic Population Shifts). By the late 1940s, many commercial businesses of Northside were operated by African Americans although there continued to be some businesses operated by Hispanics and a few operated by other ethnic groups. The Northside businesses included grocery stores, barber shops, beauty shops, cafes, bars, clubs, drug stores, hotels, taxi stands, shoe shine stands, liquor stores, a movie theater, laundries, funeral homes, retail shops, a union hall and a photography studio. Physicians and dentists had offices in Northside and there were also a number of churches. When the Harbor Bridge and I-37 were constructed in the 1950s, Old Line businesses were largely displaced and many relocated to North Staples Street, Ramirez Street and Sam Rankin Street were busy commercial districts at that time.

In order to show the variety and location of businesses, this report includes a map (**Figure 24**) that generally shows a “snapshot” of the businesses in the east side of Northside c. 1950s when economic activity was quite vibrant. The majority of the location data was derived from addresses listed in the 1956 city directory. However, the map also includes businesses from the 1949 city directory in order to better represent the Old Line business district before the construction of I-37. Members of the community also requested that the map include certain businesses that they remembered but which were not listed in either the 1949 or the 1956 directory. When the historian was able to find an address for a business named in a community comment, those additional businesses were added to the map. Unfortunately, although remembered by Northside community, the following businesses were not mapped because location information was not available: Bigger Burger, Bradfords Mechanic, Freddie Parker Service Station, Keetch Motors and Little U Club.¹¹

¹¹ Businesses were not found in the city directories reviewed by the historian; the persons who identified the businesses were not able to provide the addresses.

Suggestions for Using Figure 24 to Find Specific Businesses

The businesses mapped in **Figure 24** were grouped in the color-coded general categories shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Map Color Codes / General Categories

General Category	Examples
Auto / Transportation	Gas Stations, Auto Mechanics, Auto Sales, Taxi Cabs, Bus Station, Train Station
Beauty/ Barber	Beauty Shops, Barber Shops
Cemetery / Funeral	Cemeteries, Funeral Homes
School	Public School, Nursery Schools, Parochial Schools
Church	Churches, Religious Organizations
Grocery	Food Stores, Produce Houses
Hotel / Apartment	Hotels, Apartments, Public Housing, Motels
Industry	Cotton Gins, Oil Companies and related industries
Professional - Medical	Medical Doctors (MD), Dentists, and Dental Surgeons
Professional - General	Real Estate Agents, Insurance Agencies, Union Offices, Photographers
Public / Civic	Police Station, Post Office, Salvation Army, Car Pound, Bridge, Park, Civic Clubs, Chamber of Commerce
Restaurant / Bar / Entertainment	Restaurants, Bars, Clubs, Pool Halls
Retail	Drug Stores, Clothing Stores, Shoe Stores, Department Stores, Furniture Store, Shoe Repair, Music Stores, Shoe Shine Parlors, TV Repair Shop, Laundromat

Table 3 is organized alphabetically within geographic groupings of map locations as follows:

- 100s – Left side of map, north of Leopard Street
- 200s – West of Sam Rankin St. near Leopard Street
- 300s – East of Sam Rankin St. near Leopard Street
- 400s – Near Sam Rankin Street
- 500s – North Alameda Street to “Old Line” Business Area
- 600s – Map Inset (Ramirez at North Staples Streets)

When searching on the **Figure 24** map for a business listed in **Table 3**, identifying the geographic grouping, the appropriate category color code as described above and the Map Number (No.) will assist the reader to more easily locate businesses and organizations on the map.

Table 3: Geographical Groups of c. 1950s Mapped Businesses and Organizations (Organized Alphabetically within Geographic Group)

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
100s - Left side of map, north of Leopard Street		
119	Bell's Barbeque (now TJ's Que)	2214 Winnebago St.
115	Bisbee Food Store	1426 Kennedy Ave.
101	Brooks Chapel A.M.E. Church	2314 Hatch St.
108	Cactus Café	1701 N. Port Ave.
128	Car Pound	1600 Buffalo St.
116	Charles W. Crossley Elementary	2512 Koepke St.
117	Colonial Apartments	1400 Stillman Ave.
104	Cottmar Apartments	2313 Summers St.
127	Dept.-Public Safety/Police Station	1616 Buffalo St.
103	Gen. American Tank Storage Terminals	2202 N. Port Ave.
122	Gomez, Rafael Grocery	1902 Winnebago St.
109	H & H Instrument & Supply	1702 N. Port Ave.
118	Hillcrest Assembly of God Church	1216 Kennedy Ave.
100	Hillcrest Cemetery	2001 Kennedy Ave.
105	Hillcrest/Dr. H. J. Williams Memorial Park	1501 Kennedy Ave.
126	Honk-R-Holler Drive In	1915 Buffalo St.
129	Leathers No. 2 (public housing)	North of T. C. Ayers Center
123	Leathers, D. N. (public housing)	1001 Coke St.
110	National Tank Co.	1621 N. Port Ave.
107	Nueces County Transfer & Storage	1703 N. Port Ave.
112	Oil Well Supply - US Steel	912 N. Port Ave.
114	Producers Supply & Tool Co.	817 N. Port Ave.
102	Roy's Barbeque	2304 Hatch St.
125	Silver Center Grocery	909 Coke St.
106	South Texas Gin Service Co. (cotton)	1902 N. Port Ave.
121	Sweet Home Baptist Church (now Macedonia Church of Our Lord)	1916 Winnebago St.
124	T. C. Ayers Recreation Center	1722 Winnebago St.
120	Tip Top Barbeque	2209 Winnebago St.
111	Truckers Equipment Inc.	1517 N. Port Ave.
113	Wilson Supply Co.	902 N. Port Ave.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
200s - West of Sam Rankin near Leopard Street		
225	Aboud's Food Store	1516 Leopard St.
206	Ace Sign Service	2126 Leopard St.
217	Alex Cities Service Station	1826 Leopard St.
221	Andy's Auto Glass	1702 Antelope St.
219	Axle Wheel Aligning Co.	1802 Leopard St.
212	Biel Self Service Grocery Office	2007 Leopard St.
235	Cantu's Packing Co.	1427 Antelope St.
201	Citizens State Bank	2402 Leopard St.
229	Colonial Hotel	720 Josephine St.
208	Corpus Christi Paper Co.	2117 Leopard St.
228	G & G Humble Service Station	1500 Leopard St.
223	Garcia Banana Co.-wholesale	1622 Leopard St.
231	Gulf Chevrolet - Used Cars	1421 Leopard St.
204	Hasty Tasty Diner	2224 Leopard St.
202	Hayter Texaco Station	2301 Leopard St.
203	HEB Food Store	2300 Leopard St.
222	Intl. Brotherhood of Boilermakers	1602 Antelope St.
230	J & J Auto Service - Auto Repair	1422 Leopard St.
232	Juan Gonzales Funeral Home	1414 Leopard St.
216	Knights of Columbus Hall	1906 Leopard St.
234	La Serena Recreation Club	1429 Antelope St.
210	Legion Barber Shop	2102 Leopard St.
200	McNabb's Liquor & Beer	2430 Leopard St.
224	Mexican Chamber of Commerce	1602 Leopard St.
211	Midway Liquor Store	2100 Leopard St.
207	Mike's Coffee Shop	2114 Leopard St.
227	Najar, Jose M. - Barber Shop	1514 Leopard St.
215	Nueces Cleaners	1919 Leopard St.
213	Richie Roofing & Sheet Metal	2005 Leopard St.
218	Rudy's Shoe Shine Service	1822 Leopard St.
205	Sheffield's Auto Diner	2211 Leopard St.
209	Speedy's Restaurant	2104 Leopard St.
214	Steve's Service Station	1908 Leopard St.
220	Trevino's Place - beer	1722 Antelope St.
226	Turner Tire & Battery	1519 Leopard St.
233	Waco Food Store	1409 Leopard St.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
300s - East of Sam Rankin near Leopard Street		
300	Alamo Equipment Co.	807 Sam Rankin St.
375	Anderson, Dr. William, MD	716 Artesian St.
321	Apache Bar	1215 Leopard St.
372	Auto Garage Repair	1002 Antelope St.
322	Aztec Finance Co.	1209 Leopard St.
388	Bernal Celastino - Barber	801 N. Staples St.
339	Bernstein's Department Store	926 Leopard St.
312	Best Furniture Co. Inc.	1307 Leopard St.
341	Bluff Drug Store	914 Leopard St.
337	Braslau Furniture Co.	1001 Leopard St.
307	Bunk's Café	1322 Leopard St.
353	Carol Inn (beer retail store)	801 Leopard St.
329	Casa Mexicana Music Store	1123 Leopard St.
309	Chat "N" Chew Café	1312 Leopard St.
380	Claudine Snyder Real Estate	908 Antelope St.
354	Cole's Book & Card Shop	723 Leopard St.
377	Crockett Oil Co. Gas Station No. 13	923 Antelope St.
370	Crockett Oil Co. Gas Station No. 17	1025 Antelope St.
317	De Paola, Frank - Shoe Repair	1212 Leopard St.
331	DeLeon's Economical Drug Co.	1024 Leopard St.
304	Dick's Place - beer	1318 Antelope St.
382	Diocesan Council of Catholic Action	804 Antelope St.
387	Driscoll Hotel Barber Shop	609 Antelope St.
383	Dunne's Funeral Service	720 Antelope St.
325	El Poblano Cafe	1116 Leopard St.
360	El Rosario Funeral Home	715 N. Staples St.
364	Feniente's Shoe Shop - Repair	1129 Antelope St.
318	Fletcher Furniture	1210 Leopard St.
323	Flores Transfer	700 N. Staples St.
308	Godoy's Recreation Club	1320 Leopard St.
310	Goodwill Industries	1302 Leopard St.
342	The Grand Dry Goods Store	912 Leopard St.
335	Grande Theatre	1015 Leopard St.
362	Gulf Cleaners	720 N. Staples St.
359	Gutierrez Service Station	1223 Antelope St.
376	Hall, Dr. H. Boyd (Dentist)	722 Artesian St.
386	Halliburton Oil Well Cementing	802 N. Carancahua St.
347	HEB Food Store No. 3	818-24 Leopard St.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
350	High Hat Shop	808 Leopard St.
343	Hill Top Place Restaurant	910 Leopard St.
352	The Horn Shop	800 Leopard St.
392	Hunt's Quick Tire Service	1108 Antelope St.
365	Ike's Package Store	1127 Antelope St.
346	Jaeger Furniture Co.	900 Leopard St.
378	Jerry Karren Service Station	920 Antelope St.
355	Joe-Ed Shop	715 Leopard St.
384	John H. Yochem Co. Office Furniture	702 Antelope St.
324	Joseph Economy Store	1122 Leopard St.
302	Kings Package Store	1322 Antelope St.
303	La Cita Club Bar	1318-20 Antelope St.
393	La India Bakery	719 Waco St.
361	La Villita Café	712 N. Staples St.
326	Leopard Club	1114 Leopard St.
357	Lichtenstein's Uptown Store	701 Leopard St.
316	Lopez Barber Shop	1214 Leopard St.
327	Marin's Beauty Shop	1106 Leopard St.
334	Melba Theatre	1016 Leopard St.
367	Mexi-Hut Restaurant	1119-21 Antelope St.
333	Midget Café	1020 Leopard St.
314	The Modern	1220 Leopard St.
330	Mona's Beauty Shop	1109 Leopard St.
345	Moreno's Beauty Shop	913 Leopard St.
336	National Club	1009 Leopard St.
351	Green, Ola Beauty Shop	802 Leopard St.
315	Olivo's News Stand	1216 Leopard St.
328	The Parisian	1104 Leopard St.
358	Parr's Wilson Building Pharmacy	601 Leopard St.
373	Perales Barber Shop	723 Artesian St.
320	Post Office Parcel Station	1219 Leopard St.
368	Ramirez, Pedro & Sons Tailors	1107 Antelope St.
319	Ray's Tire & Supply	1204 Leopard St.
385	Republic Oil Refinery Co.	809 N. Carancahua St.
389	Salvation Army	806 N. Staples St.
338	San Jacinto Hardware Co.	921 Leopard St.
311	Sears Roebuck & Co.	1319 Leopard St.
301	Shamrock Bar & Cafe	1324 Antelope St.
348	Shepard's Furniture Co.	814 Leopard St.

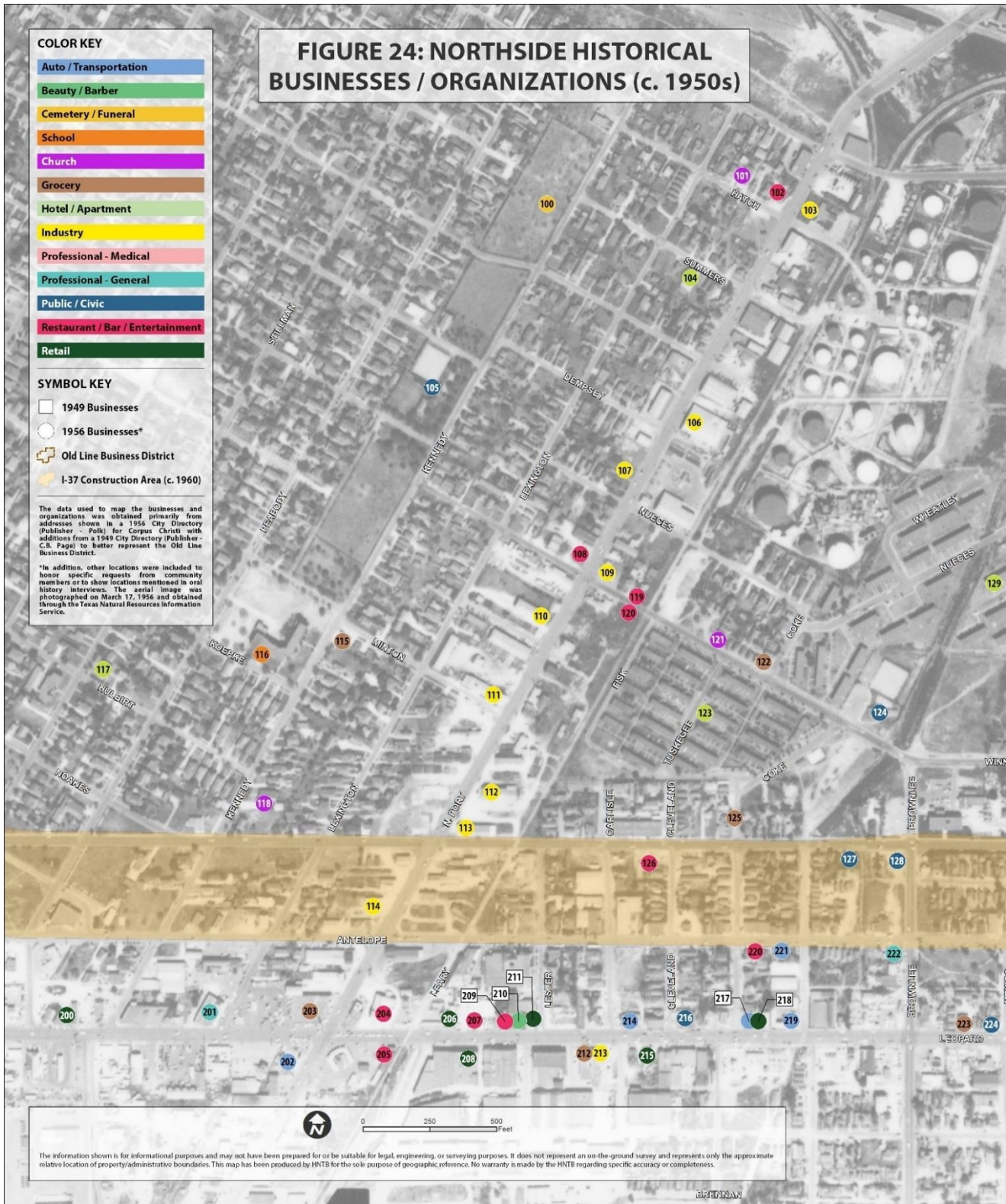
Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
363	Silco Leather Co.	722 N. Staples St.
381	Sisters of Mary Apostolate Convent	810 Antelope St.
390	Soliz Furniture Store	1118 Antelope St.
366	Star Barber Shop	1123 Antelope St.
332	Star Credit Clothiers	1022 Leopard St.
374	Success Club	717 Artesian St.
379	Texas Employment Commission	916 Antelope St.
313	TV Rental Service	1224 Leopard St.
344	Victoria Dry Goods Store	908 Leopard St.
305	Victor's Grocery and Market	1224 Antelope St.
306	Victor's Mens Shop	1220 Antelope St.
369	Waco Hotel	717 1/2 Waco St.
340	Wall Hotel	704 1/2 Artesian St.
371	Water Softening Service Station	1017 Antelope St.
391	Wilson's Auto Service Repair	1110 Antelope St.
349	Wolfson Furniture Co.	812 Leopard St.
356	Woolworth, F. W. Co.	707 Leopard St.
400s - Near Sam Rankin Street		
441	Ada's Beauty Shop	1101 Sam Rankin St.
413	Andrew Pickens Barbeque	1308 N. Alameda St.
432	Atlanta Life Insurance Co.	1211 Sam Rankin St.
400	Bessie's Beauty Salon	1527 Sam Rankin St.
445	Blue Monday (extant bar)	1023 Josephine St.
440	Booker T. Washington Elementary	1100-1114 Sam Rankin St.
416	Bradford's Radio Shop Repairs	1221 N. Alameda St.
422	Branch, Dr. Abner R. (Dentist)	1319 Sam Rankin St.
421	Brownlow, Dr. Hannibal, MD	1319 Sam Rankin St.
439	Calinett Fashion Shop	1121 Sam Rankin St.
433	Carline, Dr. William R. DDS	1211 Sam Rankin St.
428	Cash Way Grocery & Market	1313 Sam Rankin St.
417	Charles, Nick Grocery	1211 N. Alameda St.
403	Church of God in Christ	1515 Sam Rankin St.
449	Conoco Service Station	1001 Sam Rankin St.
410	Cotton Club	1604 Ramirez St.
425	Elmo's Barber Shop	1315 Sam Rankin St.
418	Erma's Diner	1331 Sam Rankin St.
414	Ever Ready Beauty Shop	1418 Chipito St.
430	Everybody's Food Store	1221 Sam Rankin St.

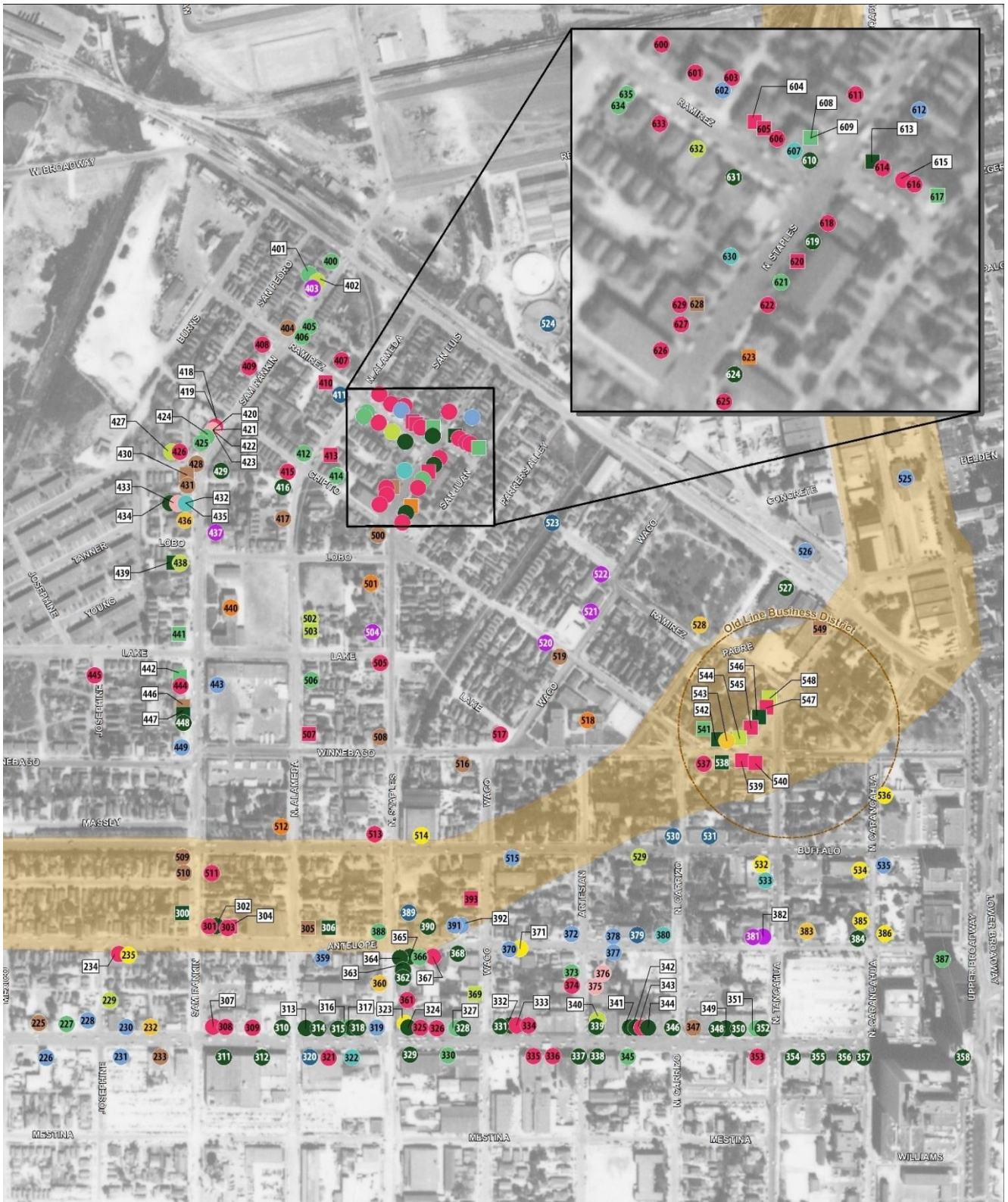
Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
415	Frazer's Drive Inn Restaurant	1223 N. Alameda St.
404	Garza, M.C. Grocery	1501 Sam Rankin St.
444	Griffin's Club	1017 Sam Rankin St.
431	Henry's Grocery & Market	1219 Sam Rankin St.
447	The Hornet Liquor	1013 Sam Rankin St.
436	Jackson & Flowers Funeral Home	1207 Sam Rankin St.
401	Laura's Beauty Salon	1517 Sam Rankin St.
434	Leathers Drugs	1211 Sam Rankin St.
407	Life Saver Café	1621 Ramirez St.
446	Lopez Grocery	1015 Sam Rankin St.
448	Mac's Liquor Mart	1011 Sam Rankin St.
408	Majestic Drive Inn Restaurant	1421 Sam Rankin St.
420	Medical Dental Building	1319 Sam Rankin St.
419	Miller's Barbeque	1331 Sam Rankin St.
442	Myrtle's Beauty Shop	1027 Sam Rankin St.
406	New Day Beauty Shop	1500 Sam Rankin St.
409	New Orleans Bar	1411 Sam Rankin St.
443	Nueces Transportation Co.	1024 Sam Rankin St.
402	Pitts Apartments	1517 Sam Rankin St.
411	Police Substation	1600 Ramirez St.
405	Powder Puff Beauty Salon	1502 Sam Rankin St.
424	Prewitt's Charm Clinic - Beauty	1317 Sam Rankin St.
438	Robinson Rooming House	1121 Sam Rankin St.
437	St. Paul Methodist Church	1202 Sam Rankin St.
426	Skinny's Drive Inn Restaurant	1502 Frank St.
427	Skinny's Rooming House	1502 Frank St.
429	Snow White Laundromat	1223 Sam Rankin St.
412	Steen's Barber Shop	1303 N. Alameda St.
435	Universal Life Insurance	1211 Sam Rankin St.
423	Williams, Dr. Henry J., MD	1319 Sam Rankin St.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
500s - North Alameda Street to "Old Line" Business Area		
502	Apartments	1110 N. Alameda St.
529	Apartments	915 Buffalo St.
543	Bailey's Funeral Home	807 Winnebago St.
540	Blue Willow Cafe	806 Winnebago St.
506	Busy Bee Beauty Shop	1020 N. Alameda St.
512	Carmelite Sisters Day Nursery	901 N. Alameda St.
524	City Sewage Treatment Plant	1200 W. Broadway
514	Corpus Christi Transfer Company	1120 Buffalo St.
527	Craine Furniture -Warehouse	1115 W. Broadway
539	Dixie Café	1007 N. Tanchua St.
544	Dixie Grill and Hotel	1007 N. Tanchua St.
510	Earl's Grocery	815 Sam Rankin St.
523	El Puente de los Amores (Bridge)	On Ramirez St.
533	Employers Casualty Co.	819 N. Tanchua St.
532	Forest Oil Corp.	801 Buffalo St.
500	Galan Grocery	1205 N. Staples St.
519	Galan's Grocery No. 2	1023 Waco St.
513	Garcia's Place	901 N. Staples St.
508	Garza, E. C. Grocery & Market	1001 N. Staples St.
516	Green Hornet Grocery	1001 Winnebago St.
546	Henry Price Shoe Shiner	1019 N. Tanchua St.
509	Hernandez Grocery & Market	817 Sam Rankin St.
504	Holy Cross Church	1101 N. Staples St.
501	Holy Cross Parochial School	1121 N. Staples St.
515	Humble Oil Service Station	1025 Buffalo St.
507	Johnny's Place	1000 N. Alameda St.
535	Johnson & Aills Service Station	822 N. Carancahua St.
511	La Toltec Tortilla Factory	816 Sam Rankin St.
526	Missouri Pacific Passenger Station	1100 W. Broadway
541	Modernistic Beauty Shop	1012 Chipito St.
528	Old Bayview Cemetery	1202 Ramirez St.
517	Oriental Garden	1102 Winnebago St.
547	Owl Cummings Billiards	1021 N. Tanchua St.
538	Pap Charlie's Shoe Shine Parlor	808 Winnebago St.
534	Price-Moore Oil Corp.	819 N. Carancahua St.
549	Pridgen-Kline Co.-produce wholesale	1061 N. Tanchua St.
542	Ruth's Quick Way Wash Service	809 Winnebago St.
522	St. John Baptist Church	1301 Ramirez St.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
521	St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church (now Macedonia Church of Our Lord)	1101 Waco St.
548	Simpson Hotel	1023 1/2 N. Tanchahua St.
518	Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior H. S.	924 Winnebago St.
530	South Texas Democratic Club	902 Buffalo St.
525	Southern Pacific Passenger Station	1101 W. Broadway
520	The Spiritual Church of Jesus Christ	1207 Chipito St.
537	Square Deal Bar	810 Winnebago St.
545	Star Barbeque	1013 N. Tanchahua St.
536	Sun Oil Co.	910 N. Carancahua St.
503	Swanne Inn	1106 N. Alameda St.
531	Texas Employment Commission	820 Buffalo St.
505	Toot & Tellum Cafe	1023 N. Staples St.

Map No.	Business/Organization Name	Address
600s - Map Inset (Ramirez Street at North Staples Street)		
613	Blue Front Store News	1430 Ramirez St.
628	Callahan's Super Market	1211 N. Staples St.
620	Chicken Coop	1218 1/2 N. Staples St.
603	Club Manhattan	1510 Ramirez St.
623	Cooking and Baking School	1210 N. Staples St.
605	Down Beat Club	1502 1/2 Ramirez St.
601	Embassy	1512 Ramirez St.
611	Flamingo Bar	1307 N. Staples St.
621	Graham's Barber Shop	1218 N. Staples St.
626	Harlem Theatre	1207 N. Staples St.
617	Hilltop Barber Shop	1420 Ramirez St.
635	Holt's Barber Shop	1519 Ramirez St.
615	The Hoot Club	1424 Ramirez St.
600	Hotel Coffee Shop	1520 Ramirez St.
606	In & Out Club	1502 Ramirez St.
607	Intl. Longshoremens's Assn. No. 1225	1305 N. Staples St.
629	Juardine's Cafe	1211 N. Staples St.
602	King Cab Co.	1510 Ramirez St.
632	King Hotel	1511 Ramirez St.
618	Mabel's Royal Grill Restaurant	1222 N. Staples St.
630	Martin Studio - Photographer	1217 N. Staples St.
634	Mitchell's Beauty Salon	1519 Ramirez St.
631	New Deal Liquor Store	1507 Ramirez St.
608	O.K. Barber Shop	1303 N. Staples St.
625	Palace Drive Inn	1210 N. Staples St.
616	Paradise Club	1422 Ramirez St.
604	Pardon Refugio beer	1504 Ramirez St.
624	Playhouse Shine Parlor	1212 N. Staples St.
614	Recreation Pool Club	1428 Ramirez St.
627	Regale Confectionery	1209 N. Staples St.
619	Savoy Liquor Store	1220 N. Staples St.
622	Skylark Lounge	1216 N. Staples St.
633	Smoke Shop Restaurant	1517 Ramirez St.
612	Star Cab Co.	1312 N. Staples St.
610	Sun Down News Stand	1301 N. Staples St.
609	Sun Down Shine Parlor	1301 N. Staples St.





Faith

Churches were not only places of worship; they were also places where the community gathered for social occasions, community events and to work toward social change. In 1994, Patrick Carroll, a history professor and chairman of the humanities division at Texas A&M Corpus Christi described the early role of African American churches: “After the Civil War, African American churches assumed a role that was second only to family ... They anchored and stabilized the African American community in the face of enormous adjustments they needed to make after slaves were freed.” Professor Carroll also said that the influence of African American churches “peaked after World War II and in the 1960s during the civil rights movement” (Reyes, 1994). In 1994, while Pastor Dale Laster was serving at St. Matthew Baptist Church, he was quoted regarding the role of African American churches in the community, “[Church] has always been the meeting place for the majority of African Americans. We take pride in this place [St. Matthew Baptist Church]. There were times when we could only meet in church, and that’s where all of our concerns were addressed, especially our social concerns” (Reyes, 1994).

Period articles from the *Corpus Christi Caller* and the *Corpus Christi Times* reflect the leadership of various pastors of Northside churches. Although there are many churches located within the Northside community, the churches which were either frequently mentioned in the newspaper articles and/or churches which were mentioned in several of the oral history interviews are those that are specifically addressed in this report in order to provide an overview of the role of churches in Northside. The specific churches discussed in this section are (in order of their founding in Northside): First Congregational Church, St. John Baptist Church, St. Matthew Baptist Church (also known as St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church), St. Paul United Methodist Church, Holy Cross Catholic Church and Brooks Chapel A.M.E. Church.

First Congregational Church (Northside Dates: 1866–1962)

First Congregational Church can be traced to a meeting of congregants held in 1866 under the direction of the Reverend Aaron Rowe who served as a chaplain for the Union Army during the Civil War. The initial name of the group was the Freedman’s Congregational Church and then later Freedom Congregational Church who laid the foundation for a permanent church building in 1871 along the top of the bluff on North Upper Broadway (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012). It was at that location where Solomon Melvin Coles came to serve in 1877 before giving up the ministry in favor of devoting his full-time efforts to educating African Americans in Corpus Christi and founding a school for that purpose (Bruce Glasrud and Cecelia Gutierrez Venable, n.d.). The church building survived the 1919 hurricane (House of Antiques/Applied Photographics, 1919) but by the late 1940s had relocated to 921 Waco St. The Reverend Spurgeon Mayfield led the congregation from 1934 through 1939 while he worked to enrich education in the Northside community (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012). The Reverend Sidney R. Smith served the congregation in the 1940s through his death in the early 1960s (Brown, 1946) (Smith J., 2015). During his

tenure, the Reverend Smith formed bonds with other groups in the community and was even invited to speak from the pulpit at Temple Beth El by Rabbi Sidney Wolf in the early 1950s (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 2015). In 1962, the church merged with another group and became the First Congregational United Church of Christ. The last pastor of that group was Reverend Williams when the church closed in 1970. Some of the members then joined St. Paul United Church of Christ located on the south side in Corpus Christi (St. Paul United Church of Christ, 2015).

St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church (Northside Dates: 1874–Present)

According to an article in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church (St. Matthew Baptist Church) claims to have been founded in 1874, making it the oldest surviving congregation in Northside (Suydam, 1998). It was founded after a split with the Freedman’s Congregational Church which was established shortly after the Civil War. The St. Matthew Baptist Church campus is currently located at 1101 Waco Street, near Solomon M. Coles School.

During the 1940s, St. Matthew Baptist Church offered kindergarten for Northside children and two of the oral history interviewees attended there, Willie Hardeman and Anita Bouldin (**Figure 25**). Construction of the current church was completed in 1954. At that time, the Reverend C. H. Warren was Pastor. The building trustees included Chairman Joel B. Flowers, John Thomas, O.T. Martin, Dr. H. L. Brownlow, Harry Kenyon, H. E. Johnson, Charles Bolden, and Jessie Pitts.

The Reverend Elliott Grant pastored St. Matthew Baptist Church for more than 26 years (last sermon in 1989). During that time, he extended his role to include politician (first African American elected to the Corpus Christi School Board), peacemaker, and civil rights leader in the company of other community leaders. In 1968, under his leadership, St. Matthew Baptist Church sponsored the construction of North Side Manor, a low-income apartment complex on a property bounded by Sam Rankin, Chipito, West Broadway, and North Alameda Streets with additional units constructed in the 1400 block of Lake Street. To make the units affordable, federal supplements were allocated to reduce the rent to one-quarter of the family’s monthly income. The charter board for the project included John H. Thomas, former football coach, and Homer E. Johnson, a pastor and retired teacher (Deswysen, North Side Manor - Groundbreaking for Housing Project Set, 1968). At the ground-breaking ceremony for North Side Manor, the Reverend Grant said, “There are no overtones other than those that are devoted to the need for better housing of people of all ethnic groups who have been trapped in the ghettos with no hope of anything better ... We dedicate ourselves to the task of giving hope to those people who so desperately need hope” (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1968). In 1987, low-income homes for the elderly were constructed at 901 N. Alameda St. and named “Elliott Grant Homes” in honor of the Reverend Grant. The Reverend Dale Laster, pastor of St. Matthew Baptist Church, said in 1994, “The black church has always provided leadership, education and inspiration. For a church to neglect

any of those three would be devastating for a community” (Reyes, 1994). The St. Matthew Baptist Church campus continues its mission in Northside. One of the oral history interviewees, Willie Hardeman, attends services there.

Figure 25: St. Matthew Baptist Church in 2015



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2015

St. John Baptist Church (Northside Dates: 1875–1961)

After a hurricane devastated Indianola, a pastor and several other hurricane survivors fled to Corpus Christi and founded St. John Baptist Church in 1875. The congregation met in a barn until a meeting house was constructed at 1000 N. Broadway St. (corner of Broadway Street and Twigg Street) in 1876 where the choir was organized in 1902. In 1910, the church moved to 1305 Ramirez Street. In 1929, a new church building was erected at 1305 Ramirez Street and later the adjacent lot was purchased and a parsonage erected. A church annex was constructed on the enlarged site in the early 1940s. From 1948-1955, the church sponsored a regular radio broadcast (St. John Baptist Church, 2015).

In 1950, St. John Baptist Church at 1307 Ramirez Street was headquarters for the N.A.A.C.P. Fourteenth Annual Meeting where the Honorable Thurgood Marshall, the N.A.A.C.P. Special Counsel from New York, New York, delivered the convention address. The convention theme was, “Making Jim Crow an Outlaw in Texas,” a reference to the fight

against a group of “Jim Crow” laws that mandated segregation of Anglos and African Americans in schools, hotels, restaurants, on playgrounds, on buses and trains and in other public places (N.A.A.C.P. Texas Conference of Branches, 1950).

The Reverend Harold T. Branch led the congregation beginning in 1956 and was active in the civil rights movement throughout his lifetime. A new parsonage was purchased at 1709 Stillman Ave. (in Hillcrest) in 1956 (St. John Baptist Church, 2015). Under Branch’s leadership, the congregation relocated to the Greenwood neighborhood in 1961 and the church remains active in the Greenwood neighborhood today (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 2002). Please note that a separate congregation organized St. John First Baptist Church in Northside on January 22, 1961 and constructed a church building at 1620 N. Port Ave. in 1976 according to the inscription on that church building.

St. Paul United Methodist Church (Northside Dates: 1884–Present)

St. Paul UMC has had several names through history, but the original congregation was established in Northside in 1884. The Reverend Thomas Bruton led St. Paul UMC from 1948 – 1958, a time of growth and transition. Upon the completion of a modern, brick-clad church building in 1952, the St. Paul UMC congregation moved from 1109 Ramirez Street to the current location at 1202 Sam Rankin Street (**Figures 26 and 27**). The former church site at 1109 Ramirez is currently located within US 181 right of way acquired for Harbor Bridge which opened in 1959. However, the church relocated in 1952 before the Harbor Bridge plans were finalized c. 1954 and the relocation of the church does not appear to have been a direct result of highway construction¹². Other pastors that served St. Paul UMC include the Reverend R.L. Palmer (in Ramirez Street church location); the Reverend C.D. Owens (1972); and the Reverend E. Joseph Tanner (1984). There are also photographs in the St. Paul UMC Photo Collection of Dr. R. S. Mosby preaching there.

¹² None of the churches identified in the research for this report were relocated as a direct result of highway construction.

Figure 26: Congregation of St. Paul UMC led by the Reverend Thomas M. Bruton posed in front of the west wall of the church constructed in 1952



Source: Courtesy of the St. Paul UMC

Figure 27: St. Paul United Methodist Church in 2015



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2015

Judging from the photo collection of St. Paul UMC, the emphasis of the church has always been on children. There are many photos of groups of mothers with infants on their laps such as in **Figure 28** and Tom Thumb weddings¹³ such as in **Figure 29** (plays where children dressed up and pretended to get married). Recently, St. Paul UMC has devoted part of their property to the construction and maintenance of a play scape for the use of Northside neighborhood children.

A number of persons important to Northside history have been members of St. Paul UMC. Bernice Leonard, founder of Bethune Nursery on Howard Street (south of Northside) in 1942, was devoted to children and an active church member. Dr. Abner R. Branch, a Northside dentist, gave the stained glass window illustrating Gethsemane in the current sanctuary (Saint Paul United Methodist Church, 1984). Anita (Douglas) Bouldin's family gave the Good Shepherd stained glass window and two pews in the current sanctuary. Three oral history interviewees, Anita Bouldin, Emile Bolden and Billy Ray Sayles are current members and active volunteers at St. Paul UMC.

¹³ Tom Thumb weddings were plays in which children pretended to get married. These plays became popular after the wedding of Charles Sherwood Stratton (General Tom Thumb in the Barnum Circus) and Lavinia Warren in the 1860s (Cavendish, 2013).

Figure 28: St. Paul UMC, baby contest, c. 1955; ladies and babies left to right are: Mae Madison with her son Anthony Madison; Ruby Huff and her grandson Marcus Huff; Lorenza Gilmore and her son Kenneth Gilmore



Source: Courtesy of the St. Paul UMC

Figure 29: Tom Thumb wedding at St. Paul UMC, c. 1955. "Bride and groom" are Myrna Topsy and Gerald Bell and Paulette Brooks is the young lady on the left in the top row



Source: Courtesy of the St. Paul UMC

Holy Cross Catholic Church (Northside Dates: 1914–Present)

Father Mark Moeslein founded Holy Cross Catholic Church mission in 1914 to serve African American Catholics in Corpus Christi. The first church building was constructed in 1917 through the generosity of Mother Katherine Drexel. The church was open to and attended by the diverse community that lived in Northside according to oral history interviewee Irene (Reyna) Canales who attended there in the 1930s and 1940s (Canales I., 2014).

At the time the mission was founded, there were only three known African American Catholics in Corpus Christi. However, through the devotion and pastoral care of Father Moeslein, 108 African American Catholics were baptized by the time he left Corpus Christi in September 1926. In 1915, The Reverend Mother Marie Katharine Drexel (now Saint Katharine Drexel who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament) purchased the land and provided the capital required to construct a two-story building that housed the church on the first floor and a school on the second floor. Mother Drexel devoted her life and her fortune to educate American Indians and African Americans by founding Catholic schools dedicated to serving those populations. While Father Moeslein served at Holy Cross, a church building, parochial school and a convent were constructed. In 1923, the school was expanded to serve 200 students, adding to the educational opportunities for African Americans (Holy Cross Catholic Church, 2014). The school was closed in 1965 after Vatican II changed the ways nuns were compensated (Hardeman M. S., 2014). Holy Cross Church today (**Figure 30**) continues to be comprised of a racially and ethnically diverse congregation and serves the community with events such as sponsoring an annual Thanksgiving feast the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day to share a holiday meal with residents of the community. The music director of Holy Cross Church, Marsha Shaw Hardeman, provided an oral history interview for this report. Terri Longoria was the primary facilitator for the Northside History Project open house held at Drexel Hall of Holy Cross Church on November 13, 2014. Terri Longoria also organized the publication that commemorated the 100-year anniversary of the church in the book titled: *Centennial Jubilee September 14, 2014 Holy Cross Catholic Church*.

Figure 30: Holy Cross Church in 2014, the year the congregation celebrated their 100-year anniversary



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2014

Brooks Chapel A.M.E. Church (now Brooks A.M.E. Worship Center) (Northside Dates: 1928–Present)
Brooks Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church was established in 1928 and located for many years at 2314 Hatch St. The current church is named Brooks A.M.E. Worship Center and is located at 2101 N. Port Ave. (**Figure 31**).

Figure 31: Brooks A.M.E. Worship Center at 2101 N. Port Ave.



Source: Photo by C. Lynn Smith, HNTB, 2016

Athletics

Many of the oral history interviewees spoke of the athletic talent present in the Northside community. The Reverend Claude Axel currently pastors Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church located on Mestina, just outside of the area defined as Northside for this project. The Rev. Axel grew up in Northside and has vivid memories of the athletic talent that sprang from the community. In his oral history interview, he described athletes he remembered including: Roy “King Fish” Hicks, a 7-ft high jumper; Roosevelt Porter, who ran 100 yards in 9.6 seconds; and Robert “Good Will” Skinner who was an outstanding pitcher (Axel, 2014). The Reverend Axel also mentioned Bobby Smith, a graduate of Roy Miller High School and a member of the team that made it to the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Division 4A state football semi-finals in 1959. Bobby Smith was the first African American to be named as a Division 4A all-state high school football player in Texas. Smith went on to play college football at North Texas State and then professional football for a total of three seasons. In 1964 and 1965, Smith played for the Buffalo Bills who won the American Football League Championship both years. In 1966, Smith played for the Pittsburgh Steelers (Purvis, 2015) (American Football League Hall of Fame, 2003). The Reverend Axel also spoke about Johnny Roland, another graduate of Roy Miller High School, a Division 4A all-state high school player and a member of the Division 4A state championship team in 1960. Roland played for the University of Missouri and then played professional football for eight seasons, seven for the St. Louis Cardinals¹⁴ (1966–1972) and one for the New York Giants (1973) (National Football League, 2015). Roland went on to coach for a number of professional teams including the Chicago Bears for ten years and other teams such as the New York Jets (Chicago Tribune, 1993). Other graduates of Roy Miller to play in the NFL were: Edward Marshall and Glen Holloway from the class of 1966; Levi Johnson and Ernest Price from the class of 1969.

Baseball was a popular sport in Northside. Frederick Douglas arrived in Corpus Christi in 1937 and played on a semi-pro baseball team called the Corpus Christi Sluggers. Douglas and his family lived in the D. N. Leathers Housing project in Northside in the 1940s. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Douglas coached the Corpus Christi Bluejays at T. C. Ayers Park in Northside. The Bluejays were a women’s softball team who took the game seriously and traveled to neighboring towns to compete. Sam Johnson arrived in Northside in the early 1950s and to date has worked as a barber in the neighborhood for over 62 years. He recalled watching Satchel Paige, John Newcombe, Hank Aaron, Sam Toothpick Jones and Willie Mays when they came through Corpus Christi barnstorming¹⁵ (Johnson, 2014). From 1957–59, residents enjoyed watching the Corpus Christi Giants, a minor league team based

¹⁴ From 1960–1987, the St. Louis Cardinals were a professional football team. After the Cardinal football team moved to Arizona, a professional baseball team adopted the “St. Louis Cardinal” name (Pro Football Hall of Fame, n.d.).

¹⁵ Barnstorming was a practice used by big-league players to play exhibition games and earn money between baseball seasons.

in the city. Children in the neighborhood played baseball as well as football in a field behind Booker T. Washington School according to Willie Hardeman in his oral history interview.

During segregation, Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High School students were not allowed to compete in the UIL. However, the Coles’ students competed in the Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL) and the athletic statistics from that league are available for 1940–1968. PVIL was originally organized in 1920 by the Colored Teachers State Association of Texas and the Negro School Division of the State Department of Education in 1923. The original organization was placed under the authority of Prairie View A&M College and became the PVIL. In addition to athletics, PVIL included competition in typing, declamation, music, and extemporaneous speaking. At its peak, PVIL offered opportunities for students from 500 African American schools to compete. In 1965, the decision was made to open the UIL to all students (regardless of race) but the actual merging of the two systems took several more years and PVIL was not disbanded until the end of the 1969–1970 school year. **Tables 4–9** show the PVIL records for Solomon M. Coles athletes who competed at the state level of PVIL (University Interscholastic League, 1940–1968).

Record of Solomon M. Coles¹⁶ PVIL Competition at the State Level from 1940–1965

Table 4: PVIL Football State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Team
1947	2A	Fort Worth Terrell 13, CC Coles 6	Green Hornets Team
1948	2A	CC Coles 6, Dallas Washington 0	Green Hornets Team
1952	3A	Waco Moore 14, CC Coles 0	Green Hornets Team
1960	3A	CC Coles 38, Wichita Falls Washington 21	Green Hornets Team

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

Table 5: PVIL Baseball State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Team
1965	3A	CC Coles 9, Gilmer Valley View 2; CC Coles 4, Gilmer Valley View 1	Green Hornets Team

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

¹⁶ Solomon M. Coles School is shown as “Corpus Christi Coles” in the PVIL online records and is abbreviated in this table as “CC Coles.”

Table 6: PVIL Tennis Boys Singles State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Athlete
1947	2A	Beaumont Hebert def. CC Coles, 6-2, 6-2	James Sanders
1948	2A	CC Coles def. Beaumont Hebert, 6-1, 6-2	James Sanders
1952	2A	Houston Yates def. CC Coles, 6-2, 6-3	Willie Gerard
1953	3A/2A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-3, 6-4	James Gerard
1954	3A	CC Coles def. Houston Yates, 6-3, 6-0	Ferris McGarity
1955	3A	Port Arthur Lincoln def. CC Coles. 3-6, 6-4, 6-3	Ferris McGarity
1959	3A	CC Coles def. Houston Yates, 6-2, 6-1	Carl Tippen

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

Table 7: PVIL Tennis Boys Doubles State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Coles Athletes
1947	3A	San Antonio Wheatley def. CC Coles, 6-2, 8-6	Clyde Ford/ James Gerald
1948	2A	Beaumont Herbert def. CC Coles, 6-4, 6-16	Clyde Ford/ James Gerald
1950	2A	CC Coles def. Abilene, 9-7 (only one set played)	Sanders/Woodson
1953	3A/2A	Port Arthur Lincoln def. CC Coles, 7-5, 1-6, 6-4	Curtis Lewis/ Ferris McGarity
1954	3A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-4, 6-3	Ferris McGarity/ James Clemons
1955	3A	Houston Yates def. CC Coles, 6-1, 6-0	Jimmy Jones/ Chester Smith
1959	3A	CC Coles def. Beaumont Hebert, 4-6, 6-1, 7-5	Carl Tippen/ Shelton

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

Table 8: PVIL Tennis Girls Singles State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Coles Athlete
1946	2A	CC Coles, Score not listed	Annett Thomas
1947	2A	CC Coles def. Spencerine Cole, 6-1, 6-0	Juanita Mitchell
1948	2A	CC Coles def. San Antonio Wheatley, 6-0, 8-6	Juanita Mitchell
1949	2A	CC Coles, Score not listed	Juanita Mitchell
1950	2A	CC Coles def. San Angelo Blackshear, 6-2, 7-5	Juanita Mitchell
1950	2A	Cora Lee McMarion, CC Coles	No name – Coles' student second place
1953	3A/2A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-2, 6-1	Minnie Price
1954	3A	Beaumont Hebert def. CC Coles, 6-4, 6-1	Minnie Price
1957	3A	CC Coles, Score not listed	Gussie Griffen
1958	3A	Houston Wheatley def. CC Coles, 6-3, 6-2	Joyce Salone
1959	3A	Houston Yates def. CC Coles, 6-2, 6-2	Mae Francis Bolden
1959	3A	Houston Yates def. CC Coles, 6-2, 7-5	Mae Francis Bolden
1961	3A	Lufkin Dunbar def. CC Coles, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4	Seth Haywood

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

Table 9: PVIL Tennis Girls Doubles State Level Competition Record

Year	Level	Score/Opponent	Name of Coles Athletes
1947	2A	CC Coles def. Foster	Juanita Mitchell, D. Sykes
1948	2A	CC Coles-No opponent listed	Cora McMarion/ Juanita Mitchell
1949	2A	CC Coles-No opponent listed	Cora McMarion/ Juanita Mitchell
1950	2A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-0, 6-0	Cora McMarion/ Juanita Mitchell
1953	3A/2A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-1, 6-3	Minnie Price/ Nenia Bruce
1954	3A	Port Arthur Lincoln def. CC Coles, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3	Minnie Price/ Nenia Bruce
1955	3A	CC Coles def. Port Arthur Lincoln, 6-1, 1-6, 6-4	Jo Ann Ross/ Gussie Griffen
1956	3A	CC Coles-No opponent listed	Betty Wilson/ Jo Ann Ross
1957	3A	CC Coles-No opponent listed	Betty Wilson/ Jo Ann Ross
1958	3A	Port Arthur Lincoln def. CC Coles, 6-1, 6-0	Joyce Salone/ Mae Francis Bolden
1959	3A	Houston Yates def. CC Coles	Mae Francis Bolden/ Beatrice Williams
1961	3A	CC Coles def. Gladewater, 1-6, 6-3, 6-0	Beatrice Williams/ Seth Haywood

Source: Prairie View Interscholastic League, University Interscholastic League Website, at <https://www.uiltexas.org/history/pvil>, accessed 5/5/2015.

Beginning in 1954, Northside students had the option to attend the school of their choice, but most selected either Roy Miller or Solomon M. Coles for high school, both within walking distance from Northside residences. In 1960, the Roy Miller High School football team won the Division 4A UIL football championship and the Solomon M. Coles High School football team won the Division 3A championship of the PVIL (University Interscholastic League, n.d.). The 1960 dual football championships are evidence of the athletic talent present in Northside at that time.

On June 4, 2015, the 1965 Solomon M. Coles PVIL State Champion Baseball Team coached by John Clay was honored at Whataburger Field during a Corpus Christi Hooks minor league baseball game. The 1965 Coles “Green Hornets” team was the first team (either PVIL or UIL) from Corpus Christi to win a state baseball championship. Robert D. Campbell, who had been principal at Solomon M. Coles in 1965, presented championship rings to the state champion team members who were able to attend the ceremony (in alphabetical order by last name): Jimmy Hall (3rd Base); Gates Hardeman (Pitcher); Jeff Lloyd (Manager); James Randle (Catcher); Preston Randle (Outfield); Thelton Roberts (2nd Base); Billy Sayles (Outfield); and Thomas Walker (Shortstop). Other members of the 1965 team included Clem Adams (Pitcher); Eddie Brooks (Pitcher); Johnny Elias (Catcher); Robert Floyd (1st Base); Clarence Jefferson (Outfield); and Arnold Scott (Outfield). **Figure 32** shows the autograph signing at Whataburger Field on June 4, 2015.

Figure 32: Billy Ray Sayles (left) and Thomas Walker (right) signing autographs with the 1965 Solomon Coles State Champion Baseball Team on June 4, 2015



Source: Photo by C. Lynn Smith, HNTB, 2015

Cemeteries and Parks

Old Bayview and New Bayview Cemeteries

The primary function of a cemetery is usually thought to be a final resting place for loved ones and a place to pause and remember those who have passed away. In Northside, especially from the 1920s through the 1950s, cemeteries also provided opportunities for strolling and enjoying the beauty of flowers and trees maintained by the city. Northside contains two cemeteries. Old Bayview Cemetery dates from 1845 during the U.S. Army encampment led by Zachary Taylor and the cemetery is located along the bluff bounded by Ramirez Street, Waco Street (formerly Topo Street), West Broadway Street and Padre Street (**Figures 33** and **34**). The second cemetery is New Bayview Cemetery, also known as Hillcrest Cemetery because it is located in the Hillcrest neighborhood. Both cemeteries are designated as Historic Texas Cemeteries by the Texas Historical Commission. The City Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for mowing the grass and trimming the shrubs and trees but is not responsible for restoring or repairing the stones. The responsibility for monument maintenance is typically undertaken by the families of those interred or by volunteer cemetery groups interested in cemetery preservation. Many of the headstones of both cemeteries have suffered from neglect and vandalism.

Figure 33: Old Bayview Cemetery on January 30, 1987; view of the dead mesquite tree and the cylindrical stones on which Adela Hernandez played as a child when her grandfather was caretaker of the cemetery



Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*.

Figure 34: Old Bayview Cemetery on November 11, 1975



Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* Photo Archive

According to a *Corpus Christi Times* 1945 newspaper article and the 1949 city directory, Old Bayview Cemetery was once named “Cemetery Beautiful” but the new name never really caught on (Bynum, 1945). Adela Hernandez’ grandfather, Hinio Clark, was the resident caretaker of Old Bayview Cemetery for over 36 years beginning in the 1920s. During his tenure, he maintained the cemetery as a garden, “with bluebonnets, roses, poppies and daisies shaded by ancient live oaks, hackberry and ebony trees” (Bynum, 1945). The last person buried in Old Bayview Cemetery was Perry Boone, a longshoreman whose parents Martin and Laura Boone were interred at Old Bayview. Perry Boone’s parents drove the Lichtenstein family (who founded Lichtenstein’s Department Store) to Corpus Christi from Indianola after the famous 1886 hurricane destroyed the city of Indianola. When the Nueces Hotel opened in Corpus Christi in 1912, Perry Boone worked as a waiter there. In 1926, he caught the first mooring line (rope) from the first ship that entered the new Port and Boone was one of the organizers of the original African American ILA Union in the city (Walraven, 1989). The cemetery is closed to burials now.

Figure 35: New Bayview Cemetery (also known as Hillcrest Cemetery)



Source: Photo by C. Lynn Smith, HNTB, 2015

The New Bayview Cemetery, also known as the Hillcrest Cemetery, is located between Peabody and Kennedy Avenues in Hillcrest (**Figure 35**). The cemetery was established in 1887 when H.E. and Hattie Luter deeded 14 acres to the Bayview Cemetery Association. The cemetery received 760 burials between 1899 and 1913 according to a handwritten burial register at the Corpus Christi Public Library. The Dr. H. J. Williams Memorial Park, formerly Hillcrest Park, is within the cemetery’s original footprint and it is not known whether any of the park facilities are located over unmarked graves. Father Michael Howell, a local priest, reported spending many hours researching both Old Bayview and New Bayview Cemeteries. Howell said, “many bodies [from New Bayview Cemetery] were transferred to Rose Hill Cemetery starting in 1914” (Spruill, 2010). Some headstones remain, many in poor repair. In 2011, New Bayview Cemetery was designated as a Historic Texas Cemetery (Spruill, Cemetery gets historic designation New Bayview will receive protections, 2011).

Parks

In 1938, Mayor A.C. McCaughan invited the public to celebrate a new building erected by the city for the playground located in a park called the “Colored Recreation Park” bounded by Lobo, Lake, East and Sam Rankin Streets in Northside (*Daily Voice*, 1938). In 1945, Park Commissioner Green Moffett described his vision for a Northside “Park for Negroes” off Winnebago Street, next to the D. N. Leathers Center along a drainage ditch [Salt Flats Drainage Ditch] to the Main Turning Basin of the Port. Moffett was quoted as saying that work had begun on the site that was once a “low, unhealthful, unsightly, swamp ... unfit for planting” (Bynum, 1945). The article went on to say that in the previous two years, trash and junk had been dumped into the area to raise the level and “over all a surface of good black top-soil is settling. The level of the area has been raised more than five feet” (Bynum, 1945). Commissioner Moffett’s plan was to begin planting shrubs in the top soil to landscape a new park. A study of historic aerial images from 1938 shows the location of the swampy area, an area marked on a 1937 map as Salt Lake. Memories of the swamp (Salt Lake) were described in several of the oral history interviews. Although Moffett appeared to have good intentions, the Salt Lake “park” land appears to have remained too low and wet to function as a healthy environment for a park or for housing. Marsha Shaw Hardeman described how the swamp or lake attracted Northside children even though their parents had told their children to stay away from it. Her recollection of the “forbidden” area is quoted below:

There was a lake ... close to public housing. And it was a lake that ran from T. C. Ayers [Recreation Center/Park], from Winnebago Street, really, all the way to the railroad tracks. And it was grown up with bushes, and trees, and things, and – there was always a flow of water. You could always hear it. And – and we were forbidden to go there, as kids, because it was like a swamp, really. You think on it as an adult. It was a swamp, so anything could happen to you. And there was a lot of mold on the rocks. You could cross over – from one side to the other, but it was always real muddy, and when you did the crossover, the mold was there, and so, it made it real slippery. And so you could fall in at any time. It wasn't very deep, but it was dangerous. I mean, there could have been snakes there. There probably were snakes there and frogs, and things that – we were too young [in the 1950s] to understand the dangers there. But we had a cousin, and he was the only boy of our group. And so he would take us down there to the lake and – we were “going exploring” doing something that we weren't supposed to be doing. And it was – very clandestine, and don't tell anybody, and don't tell your mom And I think back on it now, and it stunk to high heaven, because it was sewage coming down there, too.”

Lack of recreation facilities for African Americans was perceived as a contributing factor to delinquency of youths by the Negro Recreation Committee who sponsored a 1945 survey. Their survey reported that African Americans represented 7 percent of the Corpus Christi population and 8.4 percent of the city’s delinquency. The issue of concern was that the

1945 statistic represented a 75 percent increase in delinquency among African Americans from the previous year and therefore the committee called for additional recreational facilities to address the problem. The National Recreation Association completed their own survey and concurred that more recreational facilities for African Americans were needed. The study by the national group cited inadequacies in the Northside area including the lack of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at Booker T. Washington Elementary School and the lack of outdoor recreation facilities at Solomon Coles School. On the positive side, the study reported full-time city staff at the Coles' gymnasium and the D. N. Leathers Center and vacation bible school being offered for two weeks in the summer by St. Matthews Baptist Church and St. Paul UMC. For the Northside area, the study contained recommendations for construction of an outdoor swimming pool, a year-round community program in the Solomon M. Coles gymnasium (to replace the community center in the former United Service Organizations [USO] building in the 1200 block of North Staples Street), immediate planning for a larger community center and a neighborhood playground in the Booker T. Washington School area (Mathews, 1946).

In late 1946, the newspaper announced a plan for the "T. C. Ayers Community Park for Negroes" on land north of Winnebago Street, between Josephine and Coke Street. The park design included a swimming pool, softball field, tennis court, picnic and play areas. It was named in honor of Mr. Thomas Carleton (T. C.) Ayers (1876–1937), a Northside resident who was principal of Solomon M. Coles School from 1916 through 1923 and again from 1923 until his death in 1937 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1946). The park contained a community building known as the T. C. Ayers Recreation Center.

According to Emile Bolden, his uncle, Charles Bolden was the first African American to manage the T. C. Ayers Recreation Center (Bolden, Edited Oral History Transcript, 2015). The Reverend Claude Axel spoke in his oral history interview about a club called, "Les Circle Monsieurs" organized by Charles Bolden for young African American men. Membership in the group was based on three qualities: citizenship, character and commitment. The club had monthly meetings and other activities open to members only but they also sponsored dances at T. C. Ayers Recreation Center, and those dances were open to teenagers throughout the city (Axel, 2014). Many of the oral history interviewees spoke about the fun they had attending the dances at T. C. Ayers Recreation Center in the 1950s and 1960s. Joel Mumphord recalled playing softball in the summertime at T. C. Ayers and going on fishing trips in Corpus Christi Bay – trips organized by the city of Corpus Christi staff from T. C. Ayers Recreation Center (Mumphord, 2014). An addition was added to the T. C. Ayers Recreation Center in 1972, a pavilion where basketball was the popular activity (**Figure 36**) (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1972). The park is bisected by the Salt Flats Drainage Ditch which appears to have been constructed and subsequently widened and improved in an effort to clean up the swampy area known as Salt Lake. Currently the Salt Flats Drainage Ditch is concrete-lined and partially covered by a concrete cap.

Figure 36: Photo of basketball being played at Ayers Recreation Center in February 1998



Source: Photo by David Pellerin; *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 9, 1998

Dedicated on June 9, 1971, T. C. Ayers Swimming Pool was located across from the T. C. Ayers Recreation Center and adjacent to the Northside branch of Bethune Nursery which at that time was located on the southeast corner of Buffalo Street (later Martin Luther King Drive) and Coke Street (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1971). Lamont Taylor was one of the first lifeguards at the T. C. Ayers Swimming Pool (Taylor, 2014).

Hillcrest Park is a linear recreation area located west of the T. C. Ayers Recreation Center/Park, between Kennedy and Peabody Avenues, in the Hillcrest neighborhood. The park is located within the boundary of New Bayview Cemetery established in 1887. The park/cemetery once separated the residences of Anglos and African Americans in Hillcrest according to Dick Swantner's recollection in his oral history interview (Swantner, 2014). The name of Hillcrest Park was changed to "Dr. H. J. Williams Memorial Park" in honor of a former teacher who became a physician who served Northside for over 30 years. Dr. H. J. Williams was very active in working toward obtaining civil rights for all citizens. According to the City of Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Department website, the Dr. H. J. Williams Memorial Park has 5.13 acres and contains a grill, backstop, baseball field, basketball court, a play unit, a picnic unit, a restroom, shelter and softball field (City of Corpus Christi, n.d.). However, the list of amenities appears to be outdated because the current amenities observed did not include a baseball or softball field.

Music

According to many of the oral history interviewees and the newspaper accounts, musical talent was appreciated and nurtured in Northside. Most churches had an organized choir and some churches also had a band. Music was taught in both the public and parochial schools of Northside. There were at least two private music teachers in the neighborhood, Mrs. Mary Belle Little Martin (Mrs. Martin) and Mrs. Reed. In her oral history interview, Anita Bouldin described piano lessons from Mrs. Reed whereas Marsha Shaw Hardeman and Thurma Hilton told about piano lessons from Mrs. Mary Belle Martin. Marsha Shaw Hardeman, who currently serves as the music director of Holy Cross Catholic Church, remembered the music lessons taught by the nuns at Holy Cross Catholic School. She recalled how the nuns taught the students to harmonize with one another and Marsha Shaw Hardeman and her choir members later used their harmonization skills to develop the gospel choir at Holy Cross Catholic Church (Hardeman M. S., 2014).

For dances and other social events, local bands provided the music. The Pick Wick Band was based in Corpus Christi in the 1930s through at least 1940 when their 15-piece band, directed by Ed Grant, played in a 3-day Emancipation Diamond Jubilee celebration (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1940). The Pick Wick Band also played in other cities according to Marsha Shaw Hardeman whose grandfather, Gabriel Green, played in the band (Hardeman M. S., 2014). The ILA Band (from Local No. 1225) was another band that played for community events (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012).

Jazz clubs in Northside were a big draw in the 1940s and 1950s and **Figure 24** shows the location of the clubs c. 1950s. Many famous bands and jazz musicians played in Northside Clubs before they were booked into larger venues in other parts of Corpus Christi. Sam Johnson spoke in his oral history interview about the cotton pickers walking down from Leopard Street to the Old Line to hear music at the clubs located there (Johnson, 2014). The Cotton Club was on Ramirez in the 1940s but later moved. Constructed in 1941, the Harlem Theatre was a movie theatre in Northside but later the building housed the Cotton Club. At one time the Palace Club was located across the street from the Harlem Theater. Mrs. Phyllis Crecy Ridgels' father, Elmore Crecy, operated the Down Beat Club on Ramirez Street just west of the ILA Hall. Elmore Crecy was instrumental in securing musicians, such as Fats Domino and Ray Charles, to come to Corpus Christi to perform. According to his daughter, when the musicians he booked drew a large crowd, they performed at the Skylark Club which was a larger club than the Down Beat Club. The Skylark Club was located on the second floor of the building shown in **Figure 37**. Elmore Crecy's brother, Calvin Coolidge Crecy, operated C.C. Crecy Liquor and the Ebony Recreation Spot (a club which superseded the Skylark Club) (Strasburg J., *Jazz Giants: Northside nightclubs hosted kings of swing*, 1998).

The building shown in **Figure 37** is vacant today. The exact date of construction for the building shown in **Figure 37** is uncertain but the building was not present on a 1938 aerial

image. However, in the 1949 city directory the Savoy Liquor Store at 1220 N. Staples St. was listed and that business was located on the first floor of the building shown in **Figure 37** (Texas Natural Resource Information Services, 1956) (C. B. Page Directory Company, 1949). Therefore, the building was constructed sometime between 1938 and 1949. However, the building was likely constructed c. 1940 because Florence “Bu” (Chapman) Pleasant, a singer and pianist from Northside, was born in 1933 and in an oral history interview she recalled childhood memories of her father waking her up after he closed his liquor store on the first floor of the building and he took her upstairs to the club on the second floor to listen to music and meet with musicians who performed there (Pleasant).

Figure 37: Photo of the Ebony Recreation Spot (formerly the Skylark Club) in 1200 block of North Staples Street



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2015

Because the clubs attracted world renowned entertainers, the clubs were busy and were a big part of the Northside economy. The segregation present during that time meant that even if the touring African American musicians played at Corpus Christi venues outside of Northside, the African American musicians stayed at hotels and homes in Northside because they were not allowed to stay elsewhere. This discriminatory practice gave Northside residents the opportunity to get to know many of the jazz greats. Rianard

Jackson's father, Owen "Bubba" Jackson, owned the Cotton Club on Ramirez Street. Rianard Jackson described Northside during the height of the jazz scene: "It'd be like downtown New York - lights everywhere, people dressed up, suits and ties. No one came slouchy" (Strasburg J., *Jazz Giants: Northside nightclubs hosted kings of swing*, 1998).

In 1940, the Solomon M. Coles High School 30-piece band, directed by J.C. Lee, played at the Emancipation Diamond Jubilee celebration (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1940). After schools were integrated, Northside students were able to choose which school they wanted to attend. For high school, most chose either Solomon M. Coles or Roy Miller High School and both had strong music programs. Adela Hernandez spoke of a young man named Pedro Espitia who lived on San Pedro and loved the way the Solomon Coles band played. Young Mr. Espitia joined the band as the only non-African American member at that time and he went on to be a professional musician. Ms. Hernandez said that everyone looked forward to hearing the Solomon Coles Band play in the annual Buccaneer Days Parade because they not only played well, they danced at the same time (Hernandez, 2014). The music director for Solomon M. Coles High School from 1946 to 1967 was Don T. Haynes, Sr. (**Figure 38**), and according to Anita Bouldin, he loved marches, especially those composed by John Philip Sousa (Bouldin, 2015).

Figure 38: Don Haynes, Sr., music director for Solomon M. Coles School from 1946 - 1967, playing the saxophone on his front porch on February 16, 1998



Source: Photo by David Adame; *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

Other schools attended by Northside children had strong music programs as well. Lamont Taylor's love of music began at Crossley Elementary School through a group called the Crossley Minstrels organized by Mr. Bryant (Taylor, 2014). Thurma Hilton fondly remembered Mrs. Ray, the choir director at Roy Miller High School, and Mrs. Earhart who organized the jazz dance team.

Florence Chapman was born on July 22, 1933, to Eula and Atley Ollinger Chapman. Florence quickly became known as "Bu" and after she married she was known as Bu Pleasant (**Figures 39** and **40**). According to Corpus Christi locals, she was a fabulous jazz singer and pianist from Northside. She developed her love of music with the help of her father who owned a building in Northside which she referred to as "The Roof." She described the building as having five store fronts where her father operated a bar and a liquor store and the Skylark Club was upstairs (Pleasant). According to a newspaper interview with Bu Pleasant in 1988, if jazz superstars were in town, her father would come home after he closed his liquor store at 10:00 p.m. and wake Bu up and tell her to get dressed so he could take her to hear jazz bands. In that way, she listened to jazz and met famous musicians such as Count Basie, T-Bone Walker, Oscar Brown and Big Joe Turner and she was sometimes able to play music with them from a young age. Knowing those musicians helped her establish her New York career when she got older. She survived a tragic car accident in 1952, but suffered facial scars which may have prevented the stardom that she had seemed destined to achieve. After the accident she played piano for Arnett Cobb and with the Rhythm Kings. She returned to Corpus Christi in the 1980s and played at the Atrium Lounge at La Quinta and at the Hilton Hotel where her home town was able to appreciate her live performances. Even after she was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she played at the Ultimate Yacht Race festivities to standing ovations. Her brother, Atlee Chapman, was a trombonist who played with Bu when he had the opportunity. He was also a very talented musician and in 1979 he toured Russia with B. B. King (Kruse, 1988).

Figure 40: Bu Pleasant singing jazz at La Quinta Hotel Atrium Lounge in Corpus Christi on June 21, 1982



Source: Corpus Christi Caller Times Photo Archive.

Figure 39: Bu Pleasant at the piano in 1982



Source: Corpus Christi Caller Times Photo Archive.

Strong Sense of Community

Each person interviewed for this report spoke about the strong sense of community among the residents of Northside. The Reverend Claude Axel said in his oral history interview, “The neighbors were wonderful. Anytime my mother sent me to get a teaspoon of sugar or a little bit of flour from a neighbor, most of the time I returned with a cupful of flour or sugar. In those days, we didn’t have much in terms of material things but we never missed a meal. Thank God for the neighbors” (Axel, 2014). Billy Ray Sayles expressed similar thoughts when he described arguments with his Sociology professor who seemed to think that the whole African American society was underprivileged. And Sayles said he “didn’t get it,” because when he was growing up he didn’t feel underprivileged or denied anything. Although his family did not have a big yacht, they were “happy, with plenty of love.” He said everyone in the neighborhood took care of their children and the neighborhood had “strong ladies” (Sayles B. R., 2015).

The teachers of Northside were powerful influences in the lives of the Northside children and were integral to the strong sense of the community. Oral history interviewee James Smith offered a perspective on the influence of teachers toward children in Northside, particularly Robert Campbell who taught fifth grade at Booker T. Washington Elementary and later served as a teacher and then principal at Solomon M. Coles School. Mr. Smith explained, “Mr. Campbell and Mrs. Campbell¹⁷ cared about kids. The teachers there, they instilled in you to be proud, to work, to strive He was one of the ones that, if he saw a need - I can actually and honestly tell you that a lot of those teachers, Mr. Campbell and others fed a lot of kids. They clothed kids too. They gave out of their own pockets. They didn’t have to, but that’s just how strong that community was” (Smith J., 2015).

¹⁷ Mrs. Elizabeth Campbell taught school in the south side of Corpus Christi.

Catalysts of Neighborhood Change

Over time, the ethnicity, number of residents, infrastructure, housing stock, schools, and economic resources of Northside have transformed in reaction to catalysts that have, in many cases, affected the entire city of Corpus Christi. This section of the report begins with a description of what the Northside area looked like when the city was established and then examines several catalysts for change observed by the persons who contributed oral history interviews to this report and according to newspaper articles and other archival research related to changes in Northside.

Northside in the Early Days

In 1839 Henry L. Kinney and William P. Aubrey arrived and set up a trading post on the western shore of Corpus Christi Bay. Maintaining a brisk business with Mexico, Kinney's trading post formed the core of what grew into the village of Corpus Christi (Long, 2010).

When the U.S. annexed Texas in 1845, the U.S. considered the Rio Grande to be the southern border of the state. However, Mexico maintained that the Texas/Mexico border was defined by the Nueces River. Therefore, the settlement on the western shore of Corpus Christi Bay was located in the contested Trans-Nueces region, and was selected by General Zachary Taylor as the site of a large encampment of the U.S. Army as it prepared for war with Mexico (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012). After the 1845 explosion of a steamship killed seven soldiers, General Taylor's engineers laid out a burial ground on land donated by Henry L. Kinney. That burial ground is known today as the Old Bayview Cemetery located at West Broadway Street and Waco Street, in Northside. The cemetery is considered the oldest federal military cemetery established in the state although it is also a public cemetery and contains the remains of early residents, pioneer families, clergymen, local politicians and veterans of at least five wars (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1969).

By 1846, Corpus Christi was home to approximately 50 families and was named the county seat of newly created Nueces County. The town plan was recorded in July 1852 and shows Broadway Street and about 24 blocks of what is now known as the east side of Northside (Nueces County Records, 1852). By 1860, the population of Corpus Christi increased to 1,200 and included teachers, doctors, lawyers and clergymen; several schools, churches and fraternal lodges were also present. During the Civil War, the town was a commercial hub for the Confederacy, resulting in its eventual occupation by Union forces in 1863, which lasted into the 1870s (Long, 2010).

African Americans historically accounted for a relatively small percentage of Corpus Christi's population originally comprised mainly of slaves brought to the area by Anglo settlers. The African American community numbered fewer than 60 individuals at the beginning of the Civil War. After emancipation, they settled in an area established by the Corpus Christi City Plan of 1852 (Nueces County Records, 1852) and shown in legal addresses as the Bluff (roughly bounded by Chipito, Buffalo and North Alameda [named "Black Street" in 1852]

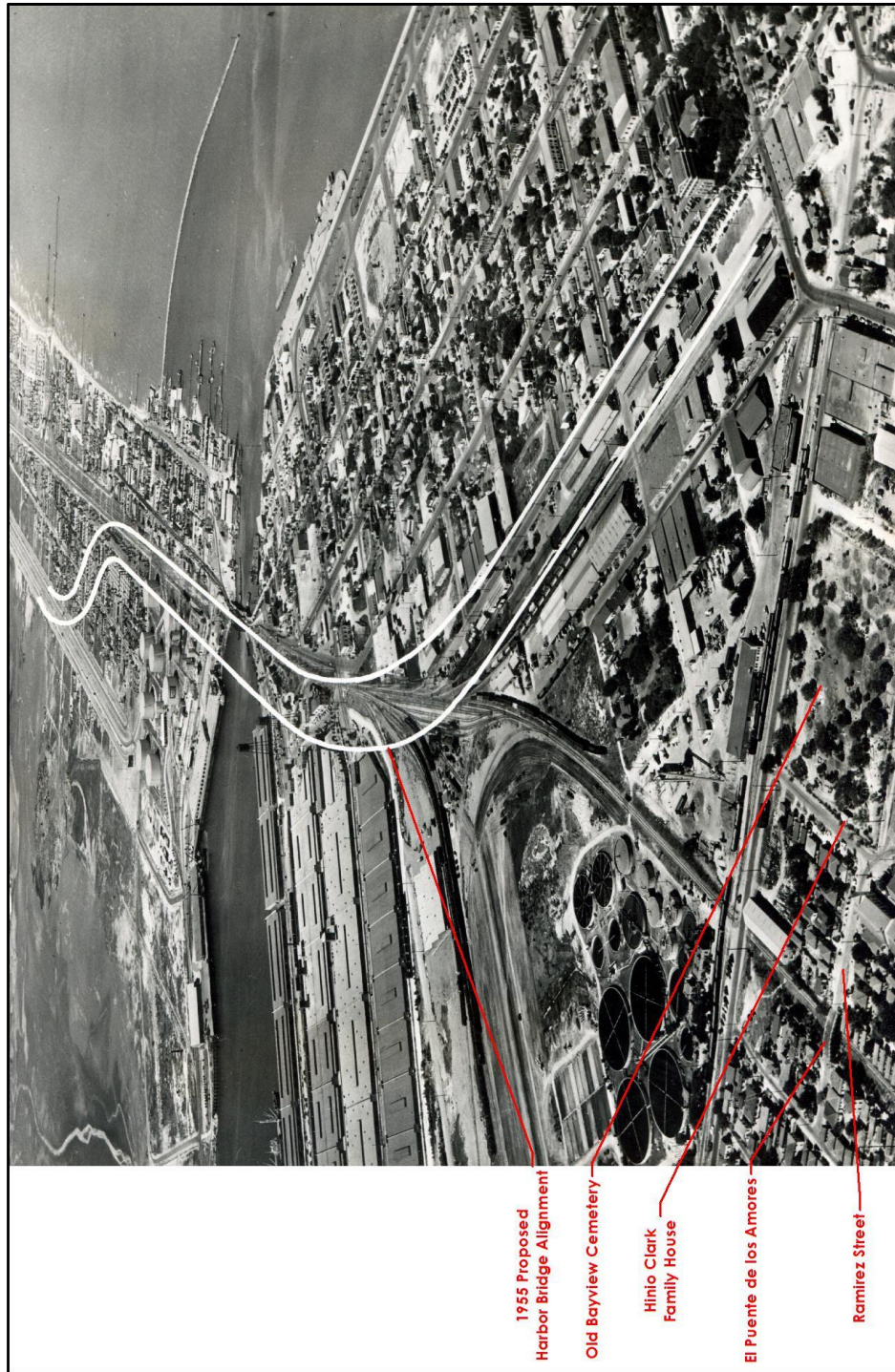
Streets) and were joined by a small number of soldiers from the U.S. Army's all-African American 25th Infantry (also known as "Buffalo Soldiers), part of the occupying force stationed in the city at the war's end (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012).

Arrival of Railroads and Establishment of La Colonia Mexicana

The railroad was influential in the development of Corpus Christi beginning in the 1870s and direct impacts to Northside were felt by 1886 when the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad (later Southern Pacific) entered Corpus Christi via a causeway over the water at the junction of the Corpus Christi and Nueces Bays and then following a route through Northside along Cabra Street and then Black Street (now North Staples Street). Initially the railroads provided transportation to market the locally produced crops and livestock. In addition, trains brought building supplies and other goods to the city. To construct the rail route, a ditch or trench, which the locals called "La Cortada," was dug through the bluff to accommodate the gradual grade requirements for the railroad track (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012).¹⁸ A bridge was constructed on Ramirez Street to carry the street traffic across the "below grade" railroad tracks constructed in the trench (**Figures 41** and **42**). According to oral history interviewees Adela Hernandez and Virginia Lerma, the bridge on Ramirez Street was called, "El Puente de los Amores" or "The Bridge of Lovers." La Colonia Mexicana was originally a predominantly Hispanic community, platted in 1910 in the area now referred to as Washington-Coles (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012). A Southern Pacific spur near Hughes Street below the bluff led to a station house between North Broadway Street and Galivan Street (now US 181) just north of Aubrey Street (**Figure 43**).

¹⁸ La Cortada was later translated into English as "The Cut" and appears to be the origin of the expression "The Cut" or "the Cuts" (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012) an expression used locally to describe the area in Northside where the clubs were located that provided music and other social activities that attracted visitors from beyond the Northside area.

Figure 41: July 6, 1955 aerial view with notations for Hinio Clark's house in Old Bayview Cemetery, and El Puente de los Amores, and the original Harbor Bridge alignment



Source: Corpus Christi Caller Times Photo Archive

Figure 42: Annotated aerial photo detail showing development in Northside near Solomon M. Coles



Source: Annotation by HNTB; 1938 historic aerial photo courtesy of The Housing Authority of the City of Corpus Christi

Figure 43: Photo from 1955 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot displaced by the construction of US 181 approaches to the Harbor Bridge, view facing north



Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* Photo Archive; Subject: Harbor Bridge Construction.

By 1914 the San Antonio, Uvalde and Gulf Railroad, commonly called the “Sausage,” had reached Corpus Christi. A railroad passenger depot was constructed (c. 1915) along West Broadway Street below the bluff and east of Old Bayview Cemetery (**Figure 44**). Railroad tracks ran along the edge of Northside, on the far side of West Broadway Street. The San Antonio, Uvalde, and Gulf Railroad changed names over time and is currently owned by Union Pacific Railroad which still operates in Corpus Christi today.

The city experienced rapid growth in the early twentieth century as a direct result of the expanding rail network. The railroads also generated a surge in tourism for Corpus Christi, as the city was better connected with more densely populated areas of the state and region. Railroad agents, who were especially influential at the time, promoted Corpus Christi as an all-year seaside resort, “where the weary can come for rest, the invalid come for health, and the gay devotee come for pleasure” (Kilgore, 1972).

Figure 44: Union Pacific Railroad Station in 2015 facing north (formerly station for the San Antonio, Uvalde and Gulf Railroad)



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2015

Development of Hillcrest

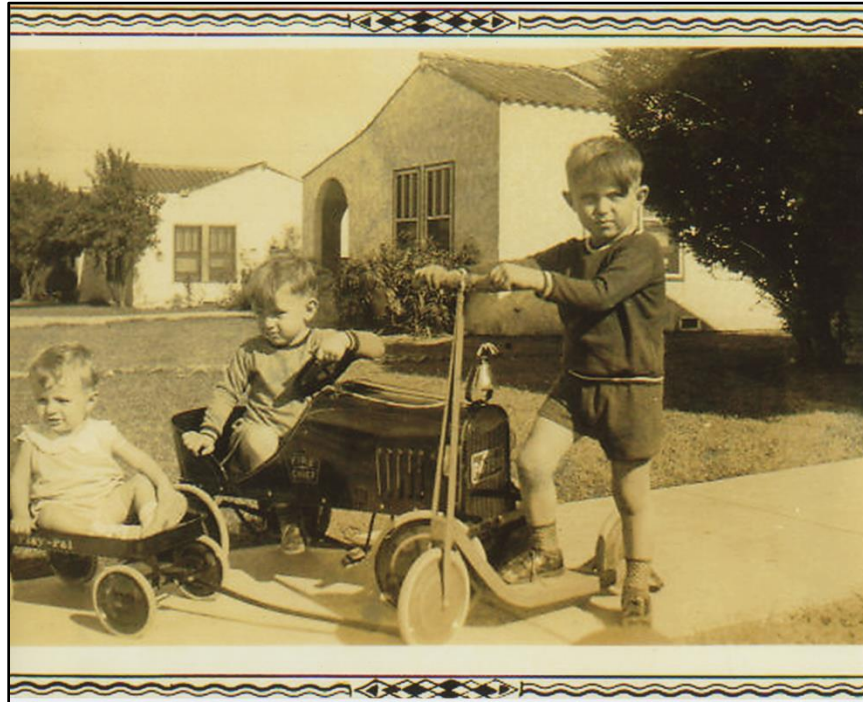
The Hillcrest neighborhood, located on the city's northwest side, is generally bound by West Broadway Street to the north, Nueces Bay Boulevard to the west, I-37 to the south and North Port Avenue to the east. The neighborhood known as Hillcrest is composed of several separate subdivisions and additions that have a shared developmental history from the early 1900s (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012). In the 1930s, residents of Northside's northwest side (west of Kennedy Avenue) were predominantly Anglo and the northeast side of Northside (east of Kennedy Avenue) was home to African Americans and Hispanics (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998). By 1944 census tract 4, also known as the Washington-Coles area, was reaching its capacity and the Corpus Christi Planning Commission recommended that African Americans be permitted to move further west to ease the crowding (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1999). This recommendation did not take effect until 1948, the first year when African Americans were allowed to purchase homes west of Kennedy Avenue (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1999).

Dick Swantner and his family, who are Anglo, lived at 6406 Peabody in Hillcrest (**Figures 45 and 46**) in the 1930s. He recalled that A. C. McCaughan developed Hillcrest and held the mortgages on the homes there. Mr. Swantner described that during the Depression, McCaughan spoke to each Hillcrest home owner and said that if they kept up the houses and kept the lawns mowed, he would accept the mortgage payments when the residents were able to pay. According to Mr. Swantner, that was how Hillcrest residents survived the Depression and McCaughan did not lose any money because everyone eventually paid all they owed.

Located east of the Hillcrest Cemetery, Lexington and Kennedy Avenues (considered to be part of Hillcrest today) were occupied by African Americans in the 1930s and perhaps earlier. Mr. Swantner reported that he and his brother Tom's best friends were African American and lived on Kennedy Avenue, the street on the east side of the Hillcrest Cemetery/New Bayview Cemetery that separated Peabody and Kennedy Avenues:

J. B. and John Howard White [were our best friends], and they were older than we were, and they were, you know, sweet, good kids, and they came over, and we used to play football in the cemetery, and they – at their house they had no electricity, because that part – that one area had no electricity yet, and everything was coal oil. And they raised pigs, and so, they had a wagon, and a – a horse, and – they'd go down to the old courthouse, and get what was left over from what they fed the prisoners, and bring it home, and feed their pigs, and we got to go with them, which was a great adventure (Swantner, 2014).

Figure 45: Tom, Dick and Bob Swantner (left to right) on the sidewalk in front of their home at 6406 Peabody in Hillcrest, 1932



Source: Private photo collection of Dick Swantner

Figure 46: Photo taken in 1932 of Dick, Tom and Bob Swantner (left to right). Their family's home at 6406 Peabody is visible in the background



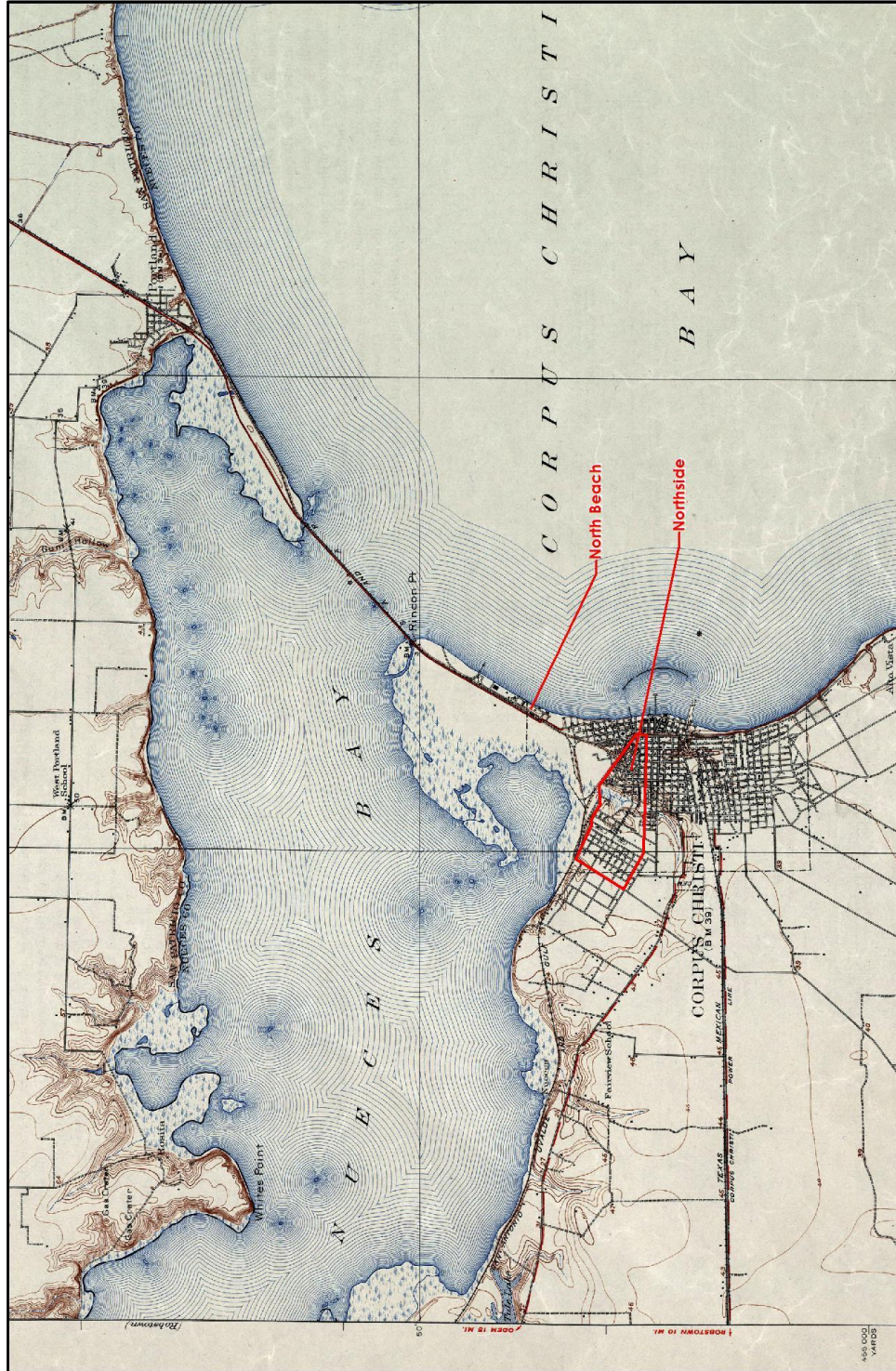
Source: Private photo collection of Dick Swantner

Beginning in the late 1940s, African Americans began moving into Hillcrest west of Kennedy Avenue. Joel Mumphord's family moved into Hillcrest in 1969 and he recalled what Hillcrest was like at that time, "Hillcrest, when I was growing up, was one of the most beautiful places that you can drive through. Like I said earlier, landscaping was beautiful, everything was immaculate, I mean, everybody knew each other, everybody helped raised each other's family kids." Mr. Mumphord expressed his opinion about the effect that the closing Crossley Elementary School in 2000 had on Hillcrest, "Once you lose the elementary school, well, you're doomed" (Mumphord, 2014).

Construction of the Port of Corpus Christi

Virginia Lerma, who was interviewed for this report, recalled stories of when, prior to the construction of the Port, her fishermen uncles walked to North Beach to board their fishing boats (Lerma, 2015). **Figure 47** illustrates the Corpus Christi coastline before the Port was constructed and shows how this pedestrian journey would have been possible until the construction of the Port, a facility that would bring jobs, economic development and other changes to the city.

Figure 47: Detail of 1922 Topographic Survey by J.M. Whitman,
U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey; annotation by HNTB, 2015

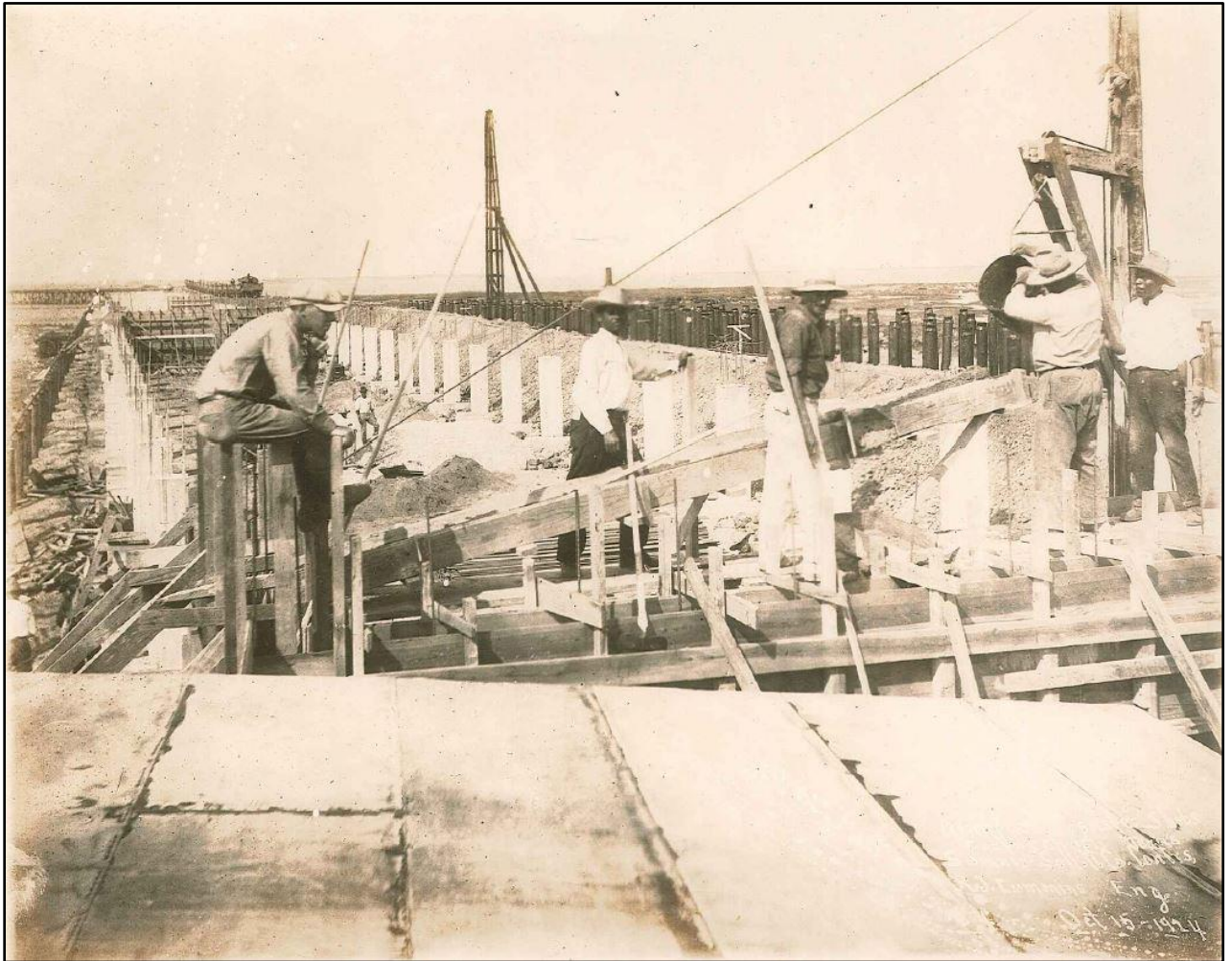


Source: University of Texas Perry Castaneda Library Online Map Collection

Roy Miller, a three-term mayor of Corpus Christi, realized the devastating hurricane of 1919 could provide an opportunity to launch a campaign to secure a deep water port for the city. Miller was an energetic and charismatic man whose leadership transformed Corpus Christi from a village to a young city through the paving of the first 12 miles of streets; the construction of a municipal wharf; the securing of an incinerator; the installation of a modern water system; and the establishment of a professional fire department. During his tenure as mayor, the bluff that separated uptown and downtown was terraced and topped with a balustrade contributing much to the beautification of the city. After Miller suffered a surprising loss in his bid for his fourth mayoral term in 1919, he used his position as publisher of the *Corpus Christi Caller* newspaper (now *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*) to campaign for a deep water port in Corpus Christi. On May 22, 1922, Miller's efforts were rewarded when President Warren Harding signed legislation authorizing the construction of the Port. The completion of the Port construction was celebrated on September 14, 1926, exactly seven years to the day after the disastrous hurricane of 1919 (Givens, 2014).

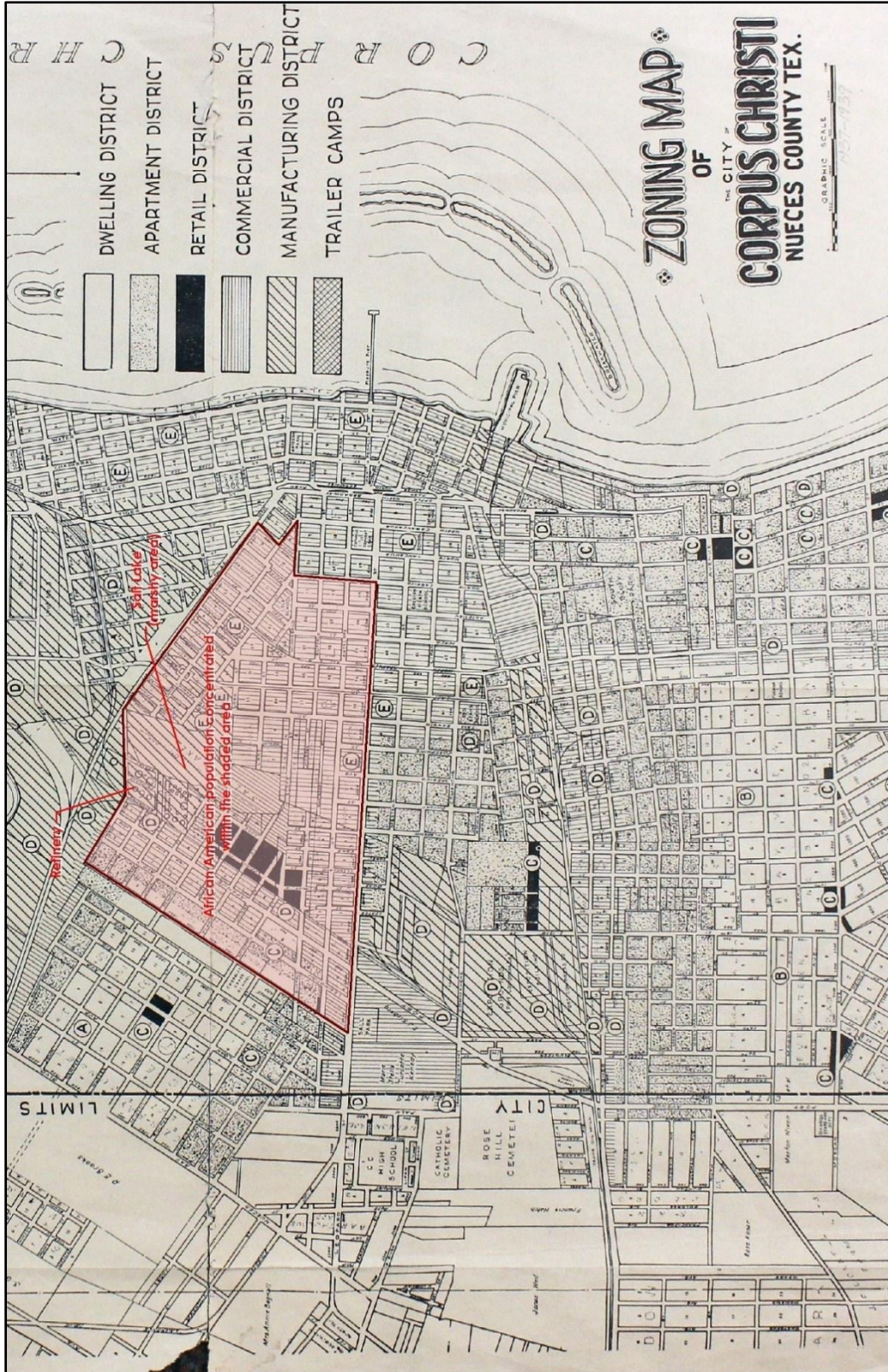
People of many races and ethnicities and their families came to Corpus Christi to construct the Port (**Figure 48**). Oral history interviewee, Virginia Lerma, perceived a large increase in the African American population of Northside after the construction of the Port began. This is not surprising considering that the population of African Americans in Corpus Christi was 456 in 1920 but grew to 1,951 in 1930, (Bruce A. Glasrud, et al., 2012) an increase of 328 percent. The roughly triangular area in Northside bounded by Kennedy Avenue on the west; West Broadway Street (along the top of the bluff); and Leopard Street on the south (**Figure 49**) was one of the few areas where African American residents were accepted in the 1920s and 1930s, although this area was not exclusively populated by African Americans. Rather, Northside had an ethnically and racially diverse population. As the population of Corpus Christi rose, the influx of the African American population was concentrated because there was essentially only one area where African Americans were accepted to live during that time. This attitude was a result of segregation legislated in Texas and many other states beginning in the late 1800s. In Texas in 1889 the legislature repealed an 1871 law that barred separation of races on public carriers such as trains. Other laws followed requiring separation of schools, libraries, washrooms and tuberculosis hospitals (Bringing History Home, 2005). Consequently, the area east of Kennedy Avenue became crowded and many members of other ethnic groups relocated because they had the option to do so. In the 1940s, public housing for Hispanics and Anglos was constructed outside Northside whereas the 1940 public housing for African Americans was built within the east side of Northside. This area was designated as census tract 4 by the U.S. Census Bureau and housing development. Within census tract 4, housing development was restricted because part of the land consisted of a marshy area named Salt Lake and by the 1930s a refinery occupied several blocks west of Salt Lake. Census tract 4 contained the majority of the African American population in the 1930s and 1940s and therefore it also contained the African American operated businesses, where African Americans were welcome to shop, dine, worship, go to school and seek recreation. **Figure 50** shows census tracts 4 and 5 in 1965 and by that time African Americans were living in the Hillcrest neighborhood which comprised census track 5. **Figure 50** appears to show the same census tract boundaries described in 1940, except the 1965 map shows I-37.

Figure 48: Anglo, African American and Hispanic men constructing the Port in 1924



Source: Courtesy of the Port of Corpus Christi Authority

Figure 49: Zoning c. 1937 with the area outlined where African Americans could live at that time



Source: Corpus Christi Library Map Collection, Call No. M 352.961

Figure 50: Census tracts 4 and 5 in 1965



Source: Detail from *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* Map Collection

Development of the Oil and Gas Industry in Corpus Christi

In 1930, the discovery of oil in Nueces County led to the development of petrochemical facilities at the Port as well as the creation of jobs which lessened the effects of the Depression in Corpus Christi.

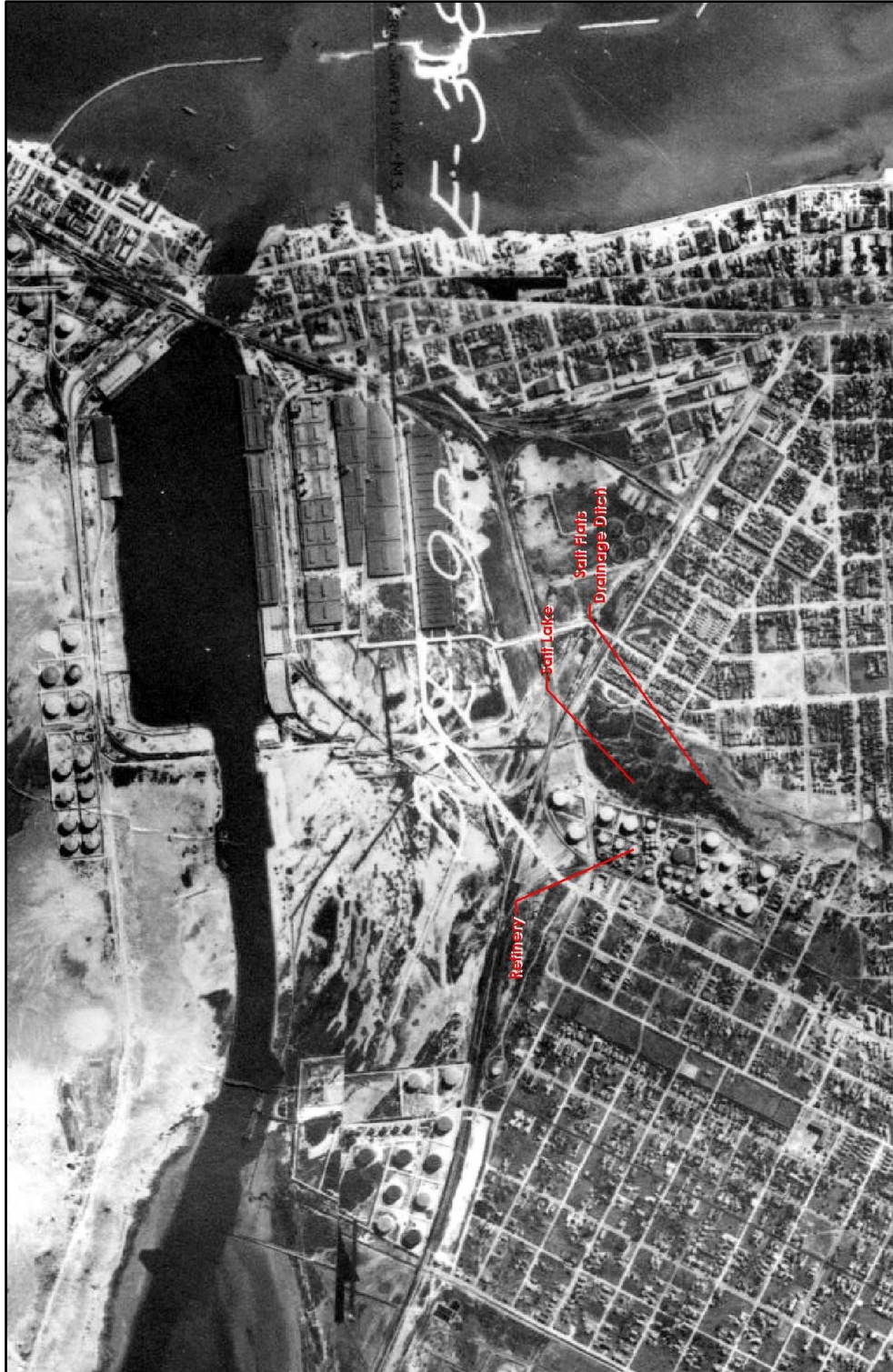
To transport petroleum products, the oil companies built docks and other facilities, such as tank farms, at the Port. Refineries and other heavy industries were quickly established along the ship channel and near the Port. By 1951 there were six refineries in Corpus Christi, including complexes for the Taylor Refining Company and Pontiac Refining Company (later CITGO). Petroleum and petroleum products replaced cotton as the primary product moved through the Port. Additionally, 24 natural gas plants were within a 50-mile radius of the city (Heines, 2002). By 1987, 22 docks in the Port handled only petrochemicals and petroleum products (Long, 2010).

Because the oil and gas industry shipped their products from the Port, storage tanks and other facilities were located near the Port, west and north of the Northside area. By 1937, a refinery had been constructed south of West Broadway Street and between North Port Avenue and Salt Lake (**Figure 49**). By 1938, a historic aerial photograph shows that the refinery had expanded further into Northside and occupied the area between the east side of the railroad tracks east of Port Avenue and Salt Lake (now the Salt Flats Drainage Ditch), and from West Broadway Street to Nueces Street, one block north of Winnebago Street (**Figure 51**) (Texas Natural Resource Information Systems, 1938). From the La Retama Library map collection, a 1940 map produced by Blucher Engineering Company labeled the land occupied by the refinery north of Salt Lake as “General American Transportation Corp.,” indicating ownership of the refinery in 1940. The property was later owned by Southwestern Oil and Refining Company (Malan, 2009). In the 1950s, although the residents knew the oil and gas facilities were close, they were not yet concerned about potential effects from the petrochemicals. That perception changed over time as James Smith commented:

We didn't think of it [the proximity of the refineries] as being as dangerous as it was. ... Back then, you didn't think of it, the pollution that it was causing. ... When I was there growing up, I think there might have been, maybe one or two explosions [that we heard about] but they were further back [in time], and they did not really have that much of an impact [on us] at that time; but as time went on, it [the refineries] started to have an impact. It was just something that you just took for granted. It's like, if I'm going to move here, I know the refineries-- refineries are there. If they are going to explode, well I knew that when- - when I moved there. I think the only thing that we did not count on was it polluting the water and the grounds, saturating the grounds and everything like that. As time went on, I know of older friends that have had health problems/issues from that, because of that, but at the time, you being that young, you don't really think of that (Smith J., 2015).

Historic aerial photographs at NETROnline, show that sometime between 1995 and 2002, the refinery shown in **Figure 51** had been removed. The former refinery site is currently vacant but the neighborhood remains surrounded on two sides by refineries.

Figure 51: Detail of aerial view from 1938 showing Salt Lake and the refinery with in census tract 4 in Northside; annotation by HNTB, 2015



Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System, Index - 14

World War II and Subsequent Housing Development

In 1940, Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi was established and the construction of the facility created 9,348 jobs at its peak in January 14, 1941 (Leatherwood, 2010). Many Northside residents fought in World War II and subsequent wars as evidenced by portraits of those who served our country that are hung on the walls of Oveal Williams Senior Center in Northside. Veterans from throughout the country were introduced to Corpus Christi as a result of being stationed at the NAS, and many returned to settle in the city after the war ended. Nationwide there was a housing shortage as persons who fought in the war returned home, married, and began having children. In response to the housing demand, the federal government created lending programs through the Federal Housing Administration and Office of Veterans Affairs. Fueled by the new financing methods, housing developers found land on the south side of Corpus Christi to develop, partially because the Northside area was completely developed by the 1940s. According to Herb Canales:

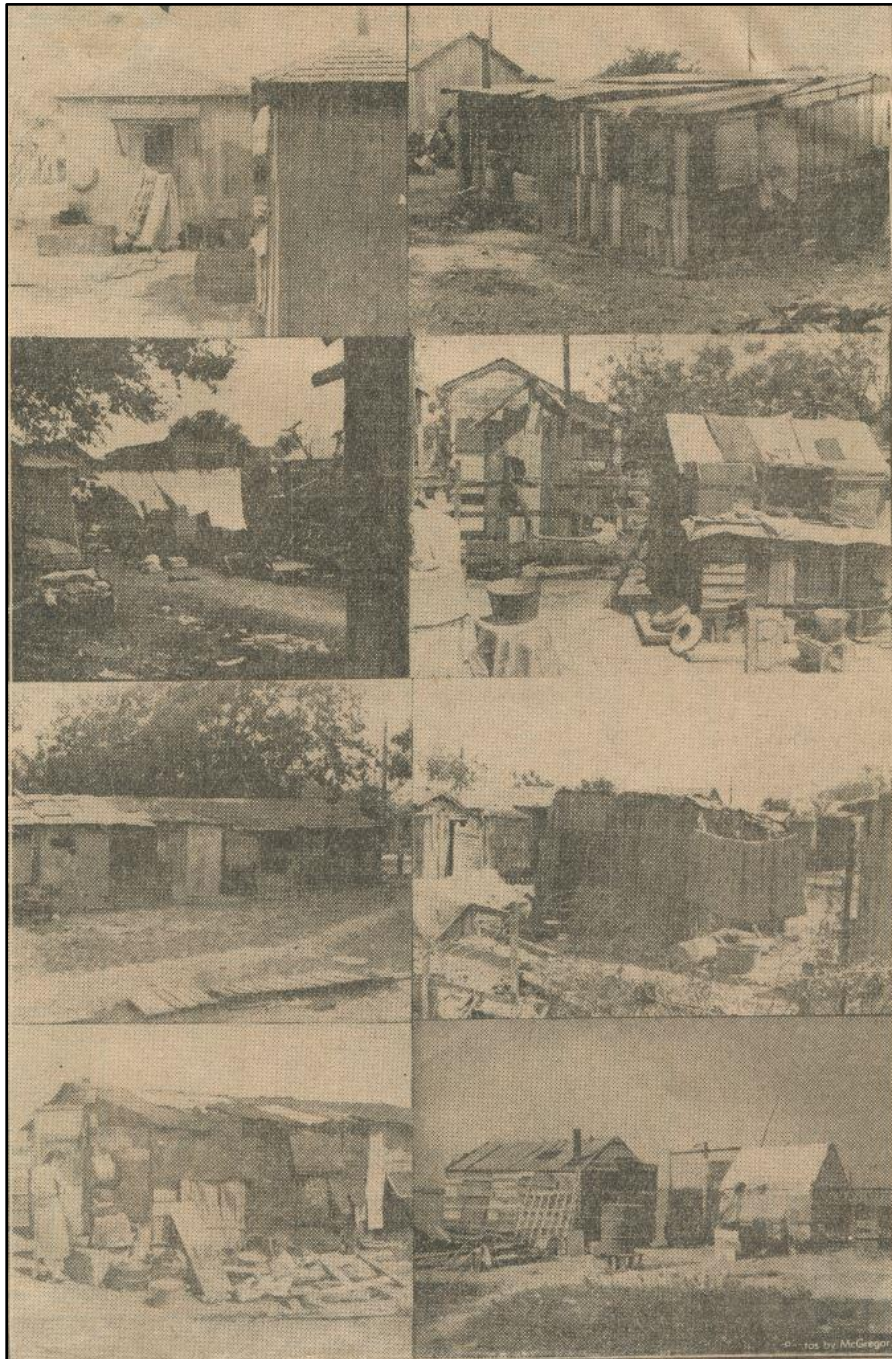
[Hillcrest] was the premier, sort of residential area in the city, at the time. But that started to change after World War II. When the GIs came back, and, I mean, when they got the GI bill, so the city started growing, at that point, and became more industrial. ... the city started growing south and continued to do so. So, a lot of people moved out of that [Northside] area (Canales H., 2014).

There were also discriminatory lending practices, present in both private and government lending programs, which prevented many African Americans from purchasing new homes on the south side of the city.

Public Housing and Other Subsidized Housing

In February 1938, Mayor McCaughan called for a study to determine which slums and how many slums would be appropriate to clear under a federal government program where 90 percent of the expense would be covered by a federal loan or grant and 10 percent would be raised from the local area. If the study revealed a need to clear slums, a local housing board would be formed and bonds would be sold to insure repayment of a loan from the government (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1938). Later that year, the newly formed Corpus Christi Housing Authority (CCHA) reported the results of a slum clearance survey which was a precursor to the clearance of slum dwellings to make room for government sponsored housing projects. The study revealed more than 500 homes in the city's poorest areas had families with five to nine persons sharing a single bedroom, 1,200 families using outdoor toilets and 68 homes with no toilets at all (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1938). These findings were the catalyst to a CCHA effort to demolish some of the worst substandard dwellings to make way for three low-cost housing projects segregated by race and named for important historical figures in the community which each was designed to serve. Examples of slum housing in Corpus Christi were photographed by Doc McGregor and published in the *Corpus Christi Times* in July 1938 and are shown in **Figure 52** (McGregor D. , 1938).

Figure 52: Newspaper photos of slum housing in Corpus Christi in 1938

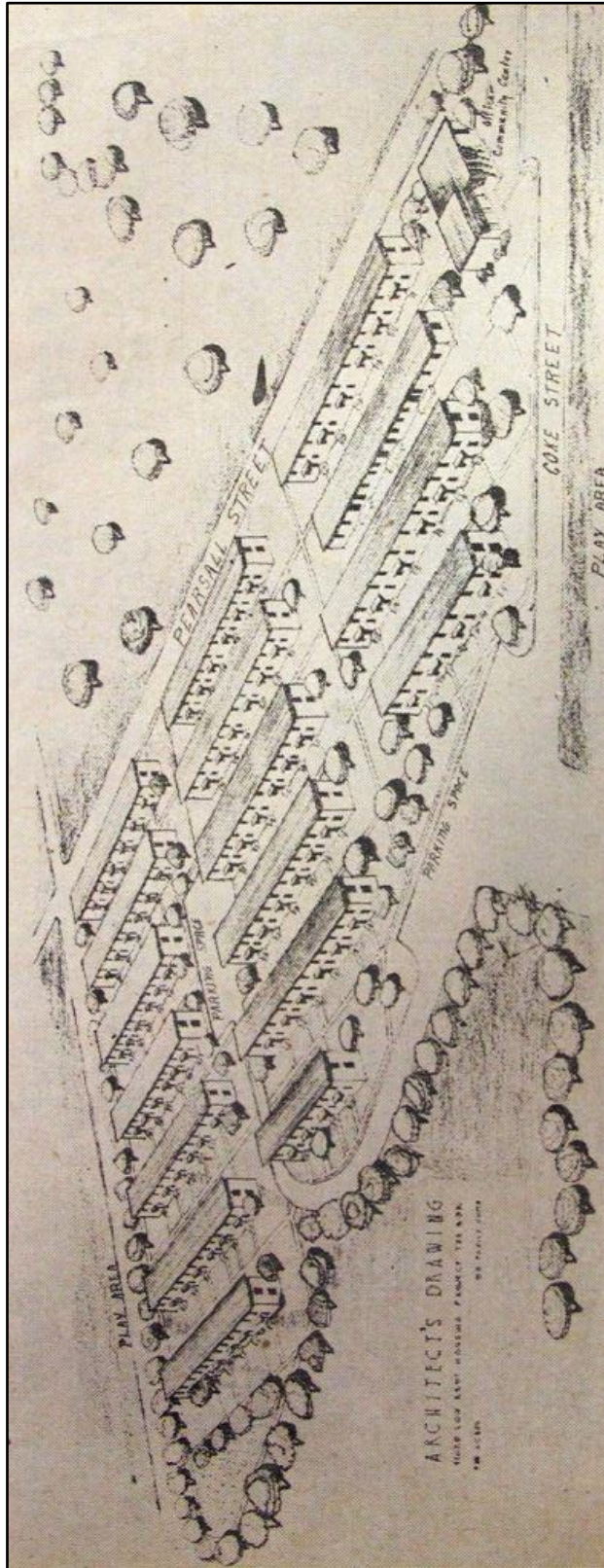


Source: "Here is Why Social Workers Say Slum Clearance is Needed," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 10, 1938;
Photos by Doc McGregor

Two CCHA housing projects were constructed outside Northside, Kinney Place designated for Anglos (later known as George Wiggins Homes) and Navarro Place designated for Hispanic residents. The third housing project was D. N. Leathers Place (now known as the D. N. Leathers I) for African Americans in Northside. The Northside project was named after a prominent African American leader, D. N. Leathers, who was a member of the local Masonic Lodge (Mead & Hunt (Richard Mitchell), 2012). The area's streets, Fisk, Tuskegee and Xavier, were renamed for historically African American colleges.

All three housing projects were built to similar designs, with long rows of one-story and two-story flat-roofed rectilinear buildings built of structural concrete. The buildings were clad in dashed stucco and grouped in courts. The complex design included an office, community center and play areas (**Figure 53**) (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1940). The D. N. Leathers Center opened to house 98 families in December 1940, but was not officially dedicated until August 17, 1941, after the flagpole and a plaque were installed at the administration building. By that time, 24 additional units had been added for a total of 122 units in D. N. Leathers Center (known today as D. N. Leathers I) (**Figure 54**).

Figure 53: Architect's rendering of D. N. Leathers Center (later known as D. N. Leathers I)



Source: Tenant Selection for Negro Housing Unit Set for August," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, June 2, 1940

Figure 54: D. N. Leathers I in 2015



Source: Photo by Sean Wray, HNTB, 2015

The low-income housing concept involved a sliding scale whereby the project manager would accept rent in proportion to each family's income but not to exceed one-quarter of their income. The original project manager was Carlyle Leonard who continued to manage the complex at least through 1952 according to a newspaper article dated in that year. To a community where indoor plumbing was seldom available previously, the housing project was popular because it offered hot and cold running water, natural gas and lights included in the affordable rent (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1941) (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1952). The executive director of CCHA in 1952, Mrs. Edna Garrett, explained the demand for housing that precipitated the construction of Leathers Center No. 2 when she said, "It was shown in the 1950 census that 82 percent of housing available to Negroes is substandard ... meaning that although they are only 6 percent of the local population, they occupied 14 percent of substandard housing" (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1952).

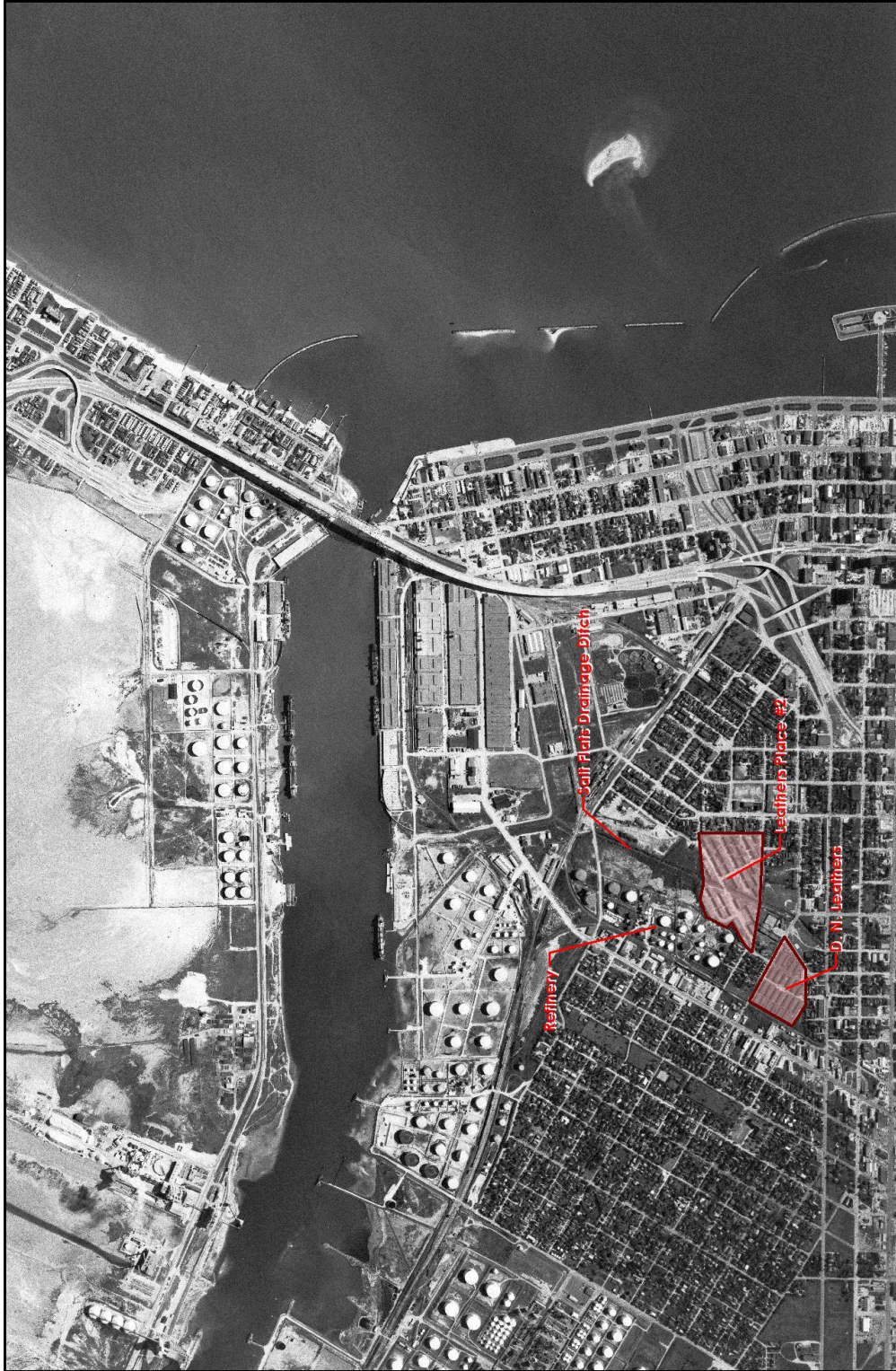
Leathers Place No. 2 (also known as Leather's Center No. 2) was constructed on land that had formerly been Salt Lake (the "swamp") in Northside but which had been filled in during the 1930s with the intent to convert the land to a park. Within the area labeled on the 1937 map as Salt Lake, the Salt Flats Drainage Ditch was probably originally constructed in the

late 1930s (visible on a 1938 historic aerial) as a way to drain water from that area into the Main Turning Basin of the Port (**Figure 55**). The drainage feature is labeled on a 1947 map located at the Port of Corpus Christi Authority Engineering Department but according to oral history interviewees, the area remained swampy in the 1940s and the early 1950s. From a study of historic aerials, the historian concluded that sometime between 1956 and 1960, the Salt Flats Drainage Ditch was improved with a concrete lining and by 1960, it was partially covered with a concrete cap from where it began near Buffalo Street (now Martin Luther King Drive) to Nueces Street, in the area once occupied by the Leathers Place No. 2 housing project (**Figure 55**). Leather's Place No. 2 housing periodically flooded and the housing was demolished in 1999 (Malan, 2009). The Salt Flats Drainage Ditch remains uncovered from the northern edge of where Leathers Place No. 2 was sited to the Main Turning Basin of the Port.

The demand for low-cost housing continued to grow but the CCHA felt pressure from the local Real Estate Board and local developers who opposed further government housing projects. Instead, they wanted private development to fill the need for low-cost housing (*Corpus Christi Press*, 1949). Led by the Reverend Elliott Grant, St. Matthew Baptist Church sponsored the construction of North Side Manor Apartments utilizing a loan guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration (**Figure 56**). The housing units were located on two parcels with the majority of the units to be constructed on a site bounded by Sam Rankin, Chipito, West Broadway and North Alameda Streets. The eleven residential apartment buildings included units ranging in size from one to four bedrooms. Federal supplements were in place to reduce the rent to one-quarter of the family's monthly income. A non-profit organization was formed to pay city, school, and county taxes. The charter board of trustees included John H. Thomas, former football coach, and Homer E. Johnson, a retired teacher and pastor (Deswysen, *North Side Manor - Groundbreaking for Housing Project Set*, 1968). The construction began in 1968 and was completed in 1969 (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1969).

The Elliott Grant Homes opened in May 1987 and their namesake, the Reverend Elliott Grant, was present for the ribbon cutting ceremony. The Reverend Grant was pastor of St. Matthew Baptist Church for many years (1962–1989) and was also the first African American appointed to the Corpus Christi Independent School District Board of Trustees in January 1978, (Ozio, *Grant is named trustee*, 1978) and later that year was elected to the school board in a landslide vote in 1978 (Ozio, *Grant knocks 'em dead*, 1978). The homes are located at 901 Alameda St. in Northside and were designed to accommodate low-income elderly people.

Figure 55: Detail of aerial photograph taken December 17, 1960 with annotation showing the location of Leather's Place No. 2 and the expansion of the refinery constructed in the 1930s



Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System (12-17-60_2-55); annotation by HNTB, 2015

Figure 56: The Reverend Elliott Grant studying the architect's rendering of North Side Manor Apartments sponsored by St. Matthew Baptist Church



Source: Ed Deswysen, North Side Manor Groundbreaking for Housing Project Set, *Corpus Christi Times*, September 10, 1968

Ethnic Population Shifts

The earliest African American settlers in Corpus Christi, such as Mariah Merriweather Cox and her daughter Sallie Cox Garcia, cleared land on “The Bluff,” an area still notated on the City of Corpus Christi GIS Map Viewer. The Bluff is roughly bounded by Tanchua Street on the east; Leopard Street on the South; Sam Rankin Street on the west; and Lobo, Chipito, Waco, and Ramirez Streets on the north. In Northside, prior to the construction of the Port in the 1920s, the Hispanic population was concentrated in Colonia Mexicana which was north and east of The Bluff. Colonia Mexicana was bounded by Chipito Street on the south, Salt Lake on the west, West Broadway Street on the north, and San Juan Street on the east. Virginia Lerma was born on San Juan Street [or St. John’s Alley] and she recalls only Hispanics living in her neighborhood prior to the construction of the Port (Lerma, 2015). In the early 1930s, according to oral history interviewee Irene (Reyna) Canales, the population consisted of “Hispanic, Anglo and some blacks” (Canales I., 2014).

Hispanics began finding homes outside of Northside before African Americans had the option to do so. At least two factors seem to have contributed to increased housing and education opportunities for Hispanics, the founding of LULAC and the sheer number of Hispanics living in Corpus Christi such that by 1967, Hispanics outnumbered Anglos in the city (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998).

The organization of LULAC was closely associated with Corpus Christi. In the early 1920s, a council of the Order of the Sons of America (an early Hispanic organization) was founded in Corpus Christi by Louis Wilmot, Joe Stilman, Dave Barrera, Al Cano and Desi Luna. Ben Garza of that Order led his organization and other Latin groups to merge forces and form LULAC. In 1929, at LULAC’s first convention (which was held in Corpus Christi) Ben Garza of Corpus Christi was elected as first president (LULAC, 2015). LULAC has been instrumental in securing rights for Hispanics and continues to be influential in public policy.

The Hispanics in Corpus Christi were always a much larger percentage of the population than the African Americans and the Hispanics strength through numbers may have helped that group to find opportunities to relocate outside of Northside earlier than their African American neighbors. By 1967 the city’s population was about 50 percent Hispanic, 42 percent Anglo and 8 percent African American. In the 1950s and 1960s, as the African American population expanded west of Kennedy Avenue, many Hispanics and Anglos moved out of census tracts 4 and 5. Today, Kennedy and Lexington Avenues are considered part of the Hillcrest neighborhood. However, the platted additions that contain Kennedy and Lexington Avenues (such as Shoreline Park and Sunnyside Addition) were originally developed for African Americans whereas the area west of New Bayview Cemetery, from Peabody Avenue to Nueces Bay Boulevard, was occupied primarily by Anglos and then, by the late 1930s, by Anglos and Hispanics.

The percentage of the Corpus Christi population that was African American has remained fairly constant (between approximately 4 to near 8 percent) from the 1920s, but the increase in the number of African Americans present in Corpus Christi grew as the city's population grew. However, the areas available to African Americans for housing and business locations grew very slowly. Because of the overcrowding, the 1944 Corpus Christi Planning Commission recommended opening Hillcrest west of Kennedy Avenue to African Americans but this recommendation was not enacted until 1948 (*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 1999).

In 1946, a local paper reported that a survey of recreational facilities was conducted by James Madison, a field representative for the National Recreation Association. In order to assess the adequacy of recreational facilities for African Americans in Corpus Christi, Mr. Madison studied the distribution of the African American population in the city and he projected that by 1950 there would be 3,000 African American residents in the Carver Addition (a suburb on the south side); 400 in the Agnes Street area (just south of Northside); and 6,000 in the area bounded by Kennedy Avenue, North Port Avenue, North Tanchua Street, West Broadway Street and the Trans-Mexican Railroad tracks. He noted that he did not anticipate any population increase in the Northside area he defined for his study, perhaps indicating that the area was so crowded at that time that there was no room for a population increase. He also indicated that he did not anticipate any increase to the African American population in the Agnes Street area (Mathews, 1946) and the reason for that conclusion is not clear.

Segregation laws and discriminatory practices by banks, mortgage lenders, and insurance companies appeared to play a role in determining the housing options available for African Americans. Marsha Shaw Hardeman said that African Americans, even those with impeccable credit, could not get a mortgage loan locally when she was growing up. According to Marsha Shaw Hardeman, her family was the first African American family to purchase in Greenwood Park (near Moody High School in Corpus Christi) and they could only find one mortgage company who would finance their new home, a company located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. With the lack of available credit to African Americans as well as "Jim Crow" laws that limited where African Americans could eat and shop, the African American population was concentrated in Northside. Consequently, the commercial area operated by African Americans was located in Northside as well and therefore, even those African Americans able to find housing on the south side (the area south of I-37 today) continued to travel to Northside to shop, dine, attend school and participate in recreational activities in the 1950s (Hilton, 2015).

Northside began to change significantly in the 1950s. E. R. Hawkins, a resident who grew up on the Northside, left the neighborhood in 1941 to serve in the Army Air Corps, and then returned to the neighborhood in 1953. Mr. Hawkins was interviewed by the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* in 1998 and furnished the following quote:

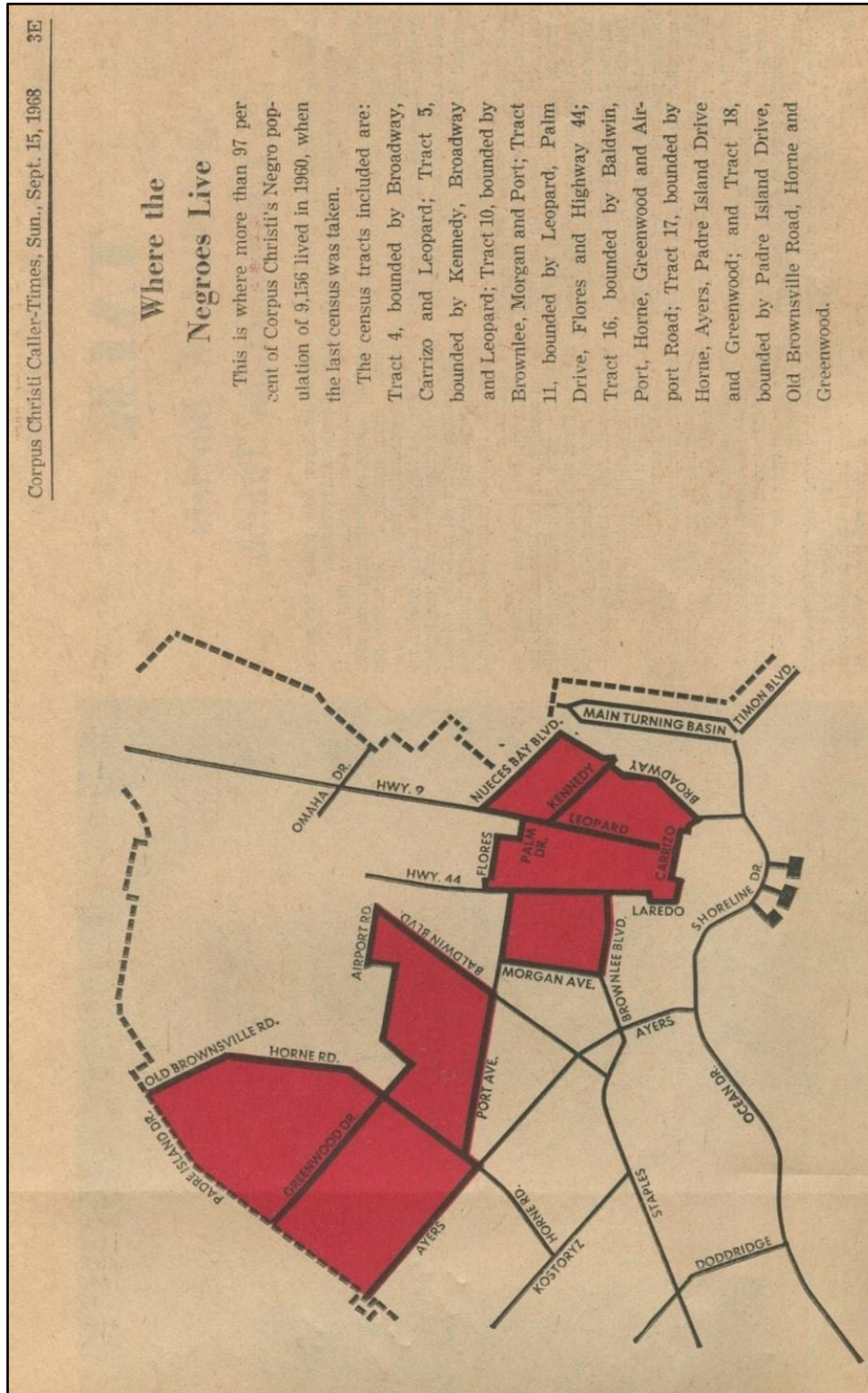


By the time I got back, the blacks had started infiltrating Hillcrest. ... And it didn't take that long. Once they started moving in, the whites moved out (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998).

In addition, the 1998 article said that according to Hawkins, "Blacks in the 1950s also started landing better jobs and leaving the Northside altogether, settling near the site of Moody High School, which would open in 1967, and in a strip along Greenwood known as New Addition" (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998).

A 1968 supplement to the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* illustrated where 97 percent of African Americans lived in Corpus Christi per the 1960 census and that graphic is shown in **Figure 57**. This graphic shows an expansion of the African American population from census tracts 4 and 5 in Northside to five additional census tracts.

Figure 57: Illustration of where 97 percent of African Americans lived per the 1960 census



Source: Corpus Christi Caller-Times, Where the Negroes Live, September 15, 1969, p. 3E

Over time, population declined in census tract 4, bounded by West Broadway Street, Carrizo Street, Leopard Street and Kennedy Avenue. **Table 10** shows the ethnic population breakdown and the population decreases by decade from 1960 through 1990. During those 30 years, the population in census tract 4 decreased by approximately 48 percent (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998).

Table 10: Census Tract 4 Population and Ethnicity Changes

Census Decade	Ethnicity			Total	% Change in Total Population from 1960
	African American	Anglo	Hispanic		
1960	3,606	1,373	1,011	5,990	N/A
1970	2,420	689	680	3,789	-37%
1980	2,206	445	752	3,403	-43%
1990	1,306	619	1,171	3,096	-48%

Source: (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998)

In contrast, the total population from 1960–1990 in census tract 5 (Hillcrest bounded by Kennedy Avenue, Leopard Street, Nueces Bay Boulevard and West Broadway Street) remained relatively constant although the ethnicity changed over time as shown in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Census Tract 5 Population and Ethnicity Changes

Census Decade	Ethnicity			Total	% Change in Total Population from 1960
	African American	Anglo	Hispanic		
1960	699	2,133	897	3,729	N/A
1970	2,022	559	559	3,140	-16%
1980	1,633	892	1,167	3,692	-01%
1990	1,304	659	1,070	3,033	-19%

Source: (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998)

Desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement

Prior to the founding of LULAC, many cities lacked public schools for Hispanics (LULAC, 2015). By 1912, public schools designated for Hispanics were operating in Corpus Christi such as Cheston Heath Elementary where Virginia Lerma (born in 1924) attended and later Adela Hernandez also attended the school. The separation of Hispanics and Anglos in the Corpus Christi school system appears to have ended by the early 1940s. In the 1941 thesis entitled *Education in Corpus Christi 1846–1900* written by Gladys Gibbon, she lists the public schools in Corpus Christi in 1941 and notes that Solomon M. Coles School is “Negro” but makes no other ethnic or racial notation. Ms. Gibbon’s did note that in 1940, the Corpus Christi schools made the study of the Spanish language compulsory in grades second through fifth and this may indicate that Hispanics and Anglos were being educated together, or at least that Spanish was considered an important language for all students to learn (Gibbon, 1941).

The Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* mandated the desegregation of schools (The National Center for Public Policy, 1954). However, de facto segregation for African Americans continued after the ruling because most African Americans lived in Northside and therefore continued to attend their neighborhood schools, Booker T. Washington Elementary and Solomon M. Coles Junior-Senior High. As was true of many southern schools, the Corpus Christi School Board did not immediately take steps to integrate schools to include African Americans following the Supreme Court ruling. This delay was noted by the Honorable Thurgood Marshall, Special Council for the N.A.A.C.P. in New York City and Marshall traveled to Corpus Christi to address the situation. In his oral history interview, Willie Hardeman recalled that Thurgood Marshall came to Solomon M. Coles School to speak to parents and to some of the students and to explain that he planned to speak to the school board and advise them that if they did not integrate the Corpus Christi schools, the N.A.A.C.P. would file a lawsuit against them. Marshall also clarified that if they agreed to integration, “I’ve got to have kids who are willing to go.” According to Willie Hardeman, his mother “volunteered” him to be one of the first African American students to attend W. B. Ray High School and, in the middle of his 10th grade year, he changed from Solomon M. Coles School to W. B. Ray High School located at 1002 Texan Trail (off South Staples Street), on the south side of the city (Hardeman W., 2014). Some parents chose to move their children to other newly integrated schools such as Crossley Elementary in Hillcrest and Roy Miller High School located south of Leopard Street and west of Palm Drive, not far from Northside. Still other parents chose to keep their children in historically African American schools.

The Civil Rights Movement was at its height in the 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it unlawful to discriminate in terms of jobs or housing on the basis of “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, required equal access to public places and employment, and enforced desegregation of schools and the right to vote” (National Park Service, n.d.). The

passage of the Civil Rights Act was a great step forward but did not change attitudes or practices overnight. The *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* published a supplement (Section E) to the September 15, 1968, edition of the newspaper titled, “The Negro in Corpus Christi.” This supplement was published approximately five months after the April 4, 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a key leader in the Civil Rights Movement. The supplement provides a snapshot of the struggle of African Americans in society in general and in Corpus Christi specifically. The supplement opens with Barbara Jordan’s¹⁹ answer to the question, “Who does speak for the Negro?”

...I’ll answer that question – no one.

No one can.

You see, the Negro stands silhouetted against a thriving and abundant America, and his presence, his very presence on the American scene, speaks for itself.

Nobody needs to try to say what he is for him. He says it by being here. What does he want? He wants ‘in.’ The Negro wants ‘in.’ He wants you to hear, understand his condition. He feels that if you do this – if you really listen to him as he speaks through his presence and understand his condition – he feels you will save him.

And that in the process of saving him you will save this country.

And in the process of saving this country, you save yourselves (page 2E).

In the articles of the supplement, the picture painted was one of multiple challenges faced by the African American community in terms of housing, poverty, unemployment, underemployment and lack of business opportunities. However, there were some expressions of hope and several expressions of gratitude that in Corpus Christi there had been no riots and that relations between African Americans and the police had been greatly improved under the administration of Mayor Ben McDonald (1961–1963). Several stories described persistent housing discrimination in Corpus Christi but also the recent adoption of an open housing ordinance by the City Council. In spite of the challenges, several people described Corpus Christi as a good place for African Americans to live, especially when compared to other southern cities.

Construction of the Harbor Bridge and I-37

Prior to the construction of the current Harbor Bridge, a bascule bridge (completed in 1924) was utilized by the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad (later Southern Pacific) to cross the entrance to the newly constructed Port. The bascule bridge carried one set of railroad tracks and two highway lanes (one in each direction) across the Port entrance and the

¹⁹ First African American woman elected to the Texas Senate since 1883.

bridge operated for ship traffic by swinging the center section up to a vertical position (**Figure 58**) to allow ships to enter the Port Turning Basin. Thirty minutes prior to when a ship announced that they wanted to pass, the bridge personnel began lifting the bridge in order to allow time for the ship to stop safely if the bridge lift malfunctioned. When the bascule bridge was open to ship traffic, the bridge was closed to highway traffic causing inconvenient highway delays on the highway from Corpus Christi to Portland (Hemphill, n.d.).

In the 1950s, the City of Corpus Christi and the Port were interested in expanding the capacity of the Port to accept larger ships with deeper drafts. Simultaneously, the Texas Highway Department wanted to build a highway bridge high enough to allow ships to pass underneath the bridge with no traffic delays. By that time, Southern Pacific was not doing well in Corpus Christi so they were willing to sell their right of way across the entrance of the Port to the Texas Highway Department (now TxDOT). In the late 1950s, the Port, the City of Corpus Christi, the Texas Highway Department and Southern Pacific Railroad were able to reach agreements which allowed the entrance to the Port to be widened and the channel depth increased in conjunction with the construction of the high Harbor Bridge. After the completion of the Harbor Bridge in 1959, the bascule bridge was demolished in order to widen and deepen the port entrance. The railroad track laid by the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad in 1914 (later owned by Southern Pacific), was eventually removed after the railroad right of way was purchased by the Texas Highway Department. The Harbor Bridge was constructed high enough to allow traffic to cross the entrance to the Port without any interruptions to highway traffic. The resulting grade of the Harbor Bridge (completed in 1959) was too steep to accommodate rail and Southern Pacific abandoned their operation in Corpus Christi. In his oral history interview, Herb Canales recalled his first trip across the Harbor Bridge:

And I remember when we first went across the bridge in my father's 1957 Ford Station Wagon ... we went across with my grandmother, my mother's mother. But it was so high that she was scared, and so she pulled out a rosary, and started praying, because she was sure that the bridge was going to collapse on us. ... So, I just remember it as being exciting, because I had never seen anything like that.

Figure 58: Bascule bridge raised to allow a tugboat to pilot a ship through the entrance to the Port Main Turning Basin



Source: Courtesy of the Port of Corpus Christi Authority

In the early 1960s, the construction of I-37 followed the completion of the Harbor Bridge. **Figure 59** shows the Northside area cleared in order to construct I-37. Noted on **Figure 59** are the locations of D. N. Leathers Center as well as the Reyna House, where Herb Canales' maternal great grandparents lived in Northside. The composition and character of Northside had begun to change following the post-World War II housing boom to the south and due to desegregation which provided more options to African Americans for housing, schools, shopping, offices and entertainment venues. The introduction of the I-37 freeway caused additional changes to Northside, primarily in the form of: 1) the displacement or relocation of businesses from the Old Line business district to North Staples Street; and 2) the visual, and some say psychological, barrier that I-37 created between Northside and the rest of the city. However, according to Lamont Taylor, there was a thriving African American community in census tracts 4 and 5 through 1972, which was 12 years after the I-37 construction was completed (Taylor, 2014).

Figure 59: Aerial dated 1955 of area cleared for construction of I-37 in Northside with Reyna house noted, view facing west



Source: *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, I-37 Photos; annotation by HNTB, 2015

Merger of the African American and Anglo International Longshoremen Association (ILA) Local Unions

In 1931, an ILA Hall was constructed of brick in the heart of Northside at 1305 N. Staples St. (McGregor J. F., 1931). In 1949, the hall housed the union office for the African American Deep Sea Local No. 1225 as well as the ILA Liquor Store (C. B. Page Directory Company, 1949). According to oral history interviews, in addition to the union offices, the hall also contained a shoe shine parlor, a drug store and a donut shop. Billy Ray Sayles recalled an office for the ILA Warehouse Local No. 1281 located in the hall at 1305 N. Staples St. Billy Ray Sayles was the last president of the ILA Warehouse Local No. 1281, before the 1983 merger which integrated the local ILA Warehouse unions. Melvin Polk, Sr. (the father of oral history interviewee Herman Polk) was the last president of Deep Sea Local (No. 1225) and the first president of the Deep Sea Local after the merger which created an integrated Deep Sea Local ILA Union in Corpus Christi (Polk, 2015). Mr. Sayles, Mr. Herman Polk and Mr. Doward Kinney (another longshoreman interviewed for this report) recalled that while the ILA Union Hall was open in Northside, it was the center of commerce in the community which was fueled by the excellent wages paid to the union workers. The second floor of the hall served as a venue for social functions such as the Solomon M. Coles prom attended by Rose Marie Irving, Billy Ray Sayles' mother (Sayles B. R., 2015) and other community dances (Polk, 2015). The hall closed prior to the merger of the African American and white ILA locals on April 1, 1983.

Doward Kinney recalled some of the changes he saw to the longshoremen membership customs as a result of the 1983 merger. Before the merger, Mr. Kinney said the longshoremen would meet in the union hall each day and pray before they went to work. Mr. Kinney also remembered that at the weekly union meetings, the members would discuss how to help any longshoremen who had been hurt as well as other people in need in the community. At the meetings, the members took up monetary collections to provide resources to help the community. The union members discussed other general needs and concerns within the community and how the longshoremen could help to make life in the Northside community better. In general, Mr. Kinney felt that the merger was a good thing for the union as a whole because it created more efficiency and more training opportunities. However, the merger brought changes to the seniority system. As a result of those changes, African Americans did not seem to receive as many work opportunities as they had previously and many sought employment in other fields in order to support their families (Kinney, 2015).

In 1984, the building was purchased by Main Attraction Enterprises, a company associated with Felix Vela and Robert Glenn and the building functioned as a restaurant on the first floor and a social hall on the second floor (Cardenas, New social hall's grand opening set

Aug. 23, 1985). By 1992, the hall was advertised for sale or lease when former ILA Union president Mr. Melvin Polk, Sr. posed in front of the building (**Figure 60**) (Ray, 1992).

Figure 60: On September 6, 1992, Milton Polk, last president of Corpus Christi Local No. 1225 and first president of the integrated local ILA union posed in front of the former ILA Hall



Source: Photo by Jay Janner, *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

A third ILA local was the Cotton Headers Local No. 1347, which in 1979 was headquartered in a home off Greenwood Drive, on the south side. In that year, Melvin Polk, Sr. (father of Herman Polk) served as president and his son, Herman Polk, was a member of the Cotton Headers as was Homer Kinney (father of Doward Kinney) (Harbor City Temple No. 1314, 1979). The Cotton Headers Local No. 1347 merged with ILA Warehouse Local No. 27,



created as part of the 1983 merger. Then in the late 1990s, all the locals merged into one ILA local Union (Kinney, 2015)

Although integration of the local unions had been mandated by a district court ruling in 1971, the African American and Anglo ILA chapters from the southern states had appealed to Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter to overlook the segregated ILA chapters because the members, especially the African American members, supported the continued segregation as it allowed the African American unions to operate under African American leadership and seniority system while enjoying the excellent wages obtained through the ILA organized labor. It was President Reagan who finally enforced the laws and court ruling prohibiting segregation and Reagan forced the southern African American and Anglo ILA chapters to merge. In Corpus Christi, the merger of the local African American and Anglo chapters officially occurred on April 1, 1983, but the ILA Hall closure in Northside occurred prior to the official merger (Sayles B. , 2015). In his oral history interview, Mr. Sayles said that the loss of the ILA Hall meant that union members who lived on the south side no longer frequented Northside businesses because they no longer were in the neighborhood to visit the hall. Therefore, the business community suffered a decrease in demand for their goods and services and many closed their doors (Sayles B. R., 2015). Doward Kinney has worked as a longshoreman since before the merger and he reported that the seniority systems of the African American and white locals were different and, after the merger, the members of the formerly African American ILA local union were at a disadvantage in terms of seniority which meant fewer opportunities for work. The merger also ended long-standing ILA traditions during meetings held in Northside, including prayer during meetings and taking up collections to help community members and groups in need (Kinney, 2015). The ILA unions in Northside had periodically hired men in the community on a part-time basis as required to load and unload large ships, providing a good income for many Northside residents who were not union members; their incomes, as well as union member incomes, had supported Northside businesses.

In 1981, the Corpus Christi Public Elevator exploded killing nine workers and injuring 29. Following the incident, the Corpus Christi Port Authority officials reported a 36 percent drop in grain shipments at the Port. In 1982, Lee Noble, president of ILA local 1224 (white local), reported a slowdown in labor required at the Port. He said that bagged goods, such as bags of grain, were labor intensive and provided more employment than other types of cargo. Joe Galan, the business agent for ILA Local 1224, explained that 10,000 tons of bagged goods would provide a couple of weeks of work for 100 to 120 longshoremen. However, in April 1981, work for longshoremen was down and on Friday, April 16, 1982, only 12 men of Local 1224 were paid and those men had only worked for 4 hours each. Noble remarked that the slowdown seemed to be caused by a number of factors: 1) deregulation of rail which resulted in the Port of Corpus Christi charging higher rail fees than competing ports such as Beaumont and Brownsville; 2) the 1981 explosion at the Public Grain Elevator; 3) a



“sluggish national economy;” and 4) a shift from bagged goods to bulk grain shipments which were less labor intensive than bagged goods (Winkler, 1982). The decrease in bagged good shipments to and from the Port in Corpus Christi resulted in a decrease in demand for longshoremen labor. In addition, the 1983 merger had an adverse effect to the seniority standings of the formerly Northside ILA local union members. Because work opportunities on the docks are based on seniority, the result was a decrease in work hours and income for African American longshoremen (Kinney, 2015). The decrease in longshoremen income and the abandonment and subsequent sale of the ILA hall in Northside had an adverse effect to the economy of Northside.

Efforts to Revitalize Northside (1964–Present)

HIALCO

In 1964, as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, a new social agency was formed by African American members of the Northside community and the Nueces County commissioners. The name of the agency was “HIALCO” which stood for “Hillcrest, Ayers, Leathers and Coles,” the neighborhoods of Northside which the agency was dedicated to serve (Savage, Corpus Christi library director hopes to rebuild trust in historic Northside neighborhoods, 2012). In 1967, HIALCO was allocated a room within the new Leathers Community Center (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1967). After the Booker T. Washington Elementary School students were moved to the Solomon M. Coles campus in 1973 (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1973), HIALCO operated out of the former school building at 1114 Sam Rankin St. (Figure 61).

Figure 61: Lena D. Coleman, Executive Director of HIALCO in front of the agency located in the former Booker T. Washington School building



Source: Photo by Juan Cardenas, *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, March 1, 1984

One of the primary missions of HIALCO has historically been to train disadvantaged residents of the Northside to find jobs. In 1977, HIALCO incorporated with the Opportunity



Industrialization Centers of America (OIC) to become HIALCO-OIC, but the organization is still commonly referred to as HIALCO. In 1984, in the agency's 20th year of operation, Lena D. Coleman claimed that HIALCO was the only community-based organization certified by the Texas Education Agency as an adult vocational training center (Cardenas, HIALCO marks its 20th year, 1984). Joe and Elnora Dixon recalled that the agency was active when the Dixon's moved across the street from HIALCO in the mid-1980s. The Dixons expressed that HIALCO "was a hot spot for young adults aggressively pursuing job training programs" (Smith R., 1992). In 1987, Ms. Jo Jordon was the director and she fought to keep the HIALCO Incubator and Business Support Program operating during its second year, even after funding for the program was severely cut (Phelps, 1987).

In 1992, the City proposed using \$237,000 in federal funds to build a new building for HIALCO to replace the former Booker T. Washington School building which they had shared with other services. The city had previously paid the utilities (about \$27,000 per year) and allowed the former school building to be used by the community organizations (HIALCO, senior citizens center and Head Start program) for \$1 per year rent. However, the building was in need of renovations which the city deemed too costly to undertake. Therefore, in 1992, the city proposed to build a new facility for HIALCO next to a senior center which had already been planned. At the time the new facility was proposed, Councilwoman Betty Jean Longoria, who represented the district that included HIALCO, expressed concerns that the organization needed "to prove it can operate much-needed programs to help community members" (Smith R., City proposes to build new home for HIALCO, 1992). The chairman of HIALCO's board of directors in 1992, Cheyenne Eichelberger, claimed that HIALCO had been instrumental in securing the federally funded Elliott Grant Homes and had played a vital role in establishing the Jefferine Lytle Estates, residential homes (located outside Northside) for persons with disabilities. He pointed out that HIALCO activities included sending out job-opening announcements to churches (Smith R., Many in community fear HIALCO has lost its way, 1992).



Leathers Community Center

In 1967, the new Leathers Community Center (Center) was dedicated. The Center contained 2,700 square feet and eight rooms dedicated for use by local agencies for programs intent on contributing to the betterment of the people in the Northside area. Initial occupants included:

- Office for Charles Bolden, the coordinator for the HIALCO Council
- A City-County Health Department well-baby clinic
- YWCA's Economic Opportunity Program
- City Recreation Department Classes in upholstering and sewing
- Texas Employment Commission Council representative (once a week)
- Basic Education Classes taught by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)²⁰ workers
- Teenage Recreation Groups
- Senior Recreation Groups

The frame building was a former Navy barracks building given to the CCHA and moved from the airport to Leathers Center (*Corpus Christi Times*, 1967).

North Side Business Association

In 1983, Mary Williams (**Figure 62**) was instrumental in organizing the “North Side Business Association” (NSBA) and Joe Wharton was elected to serve as the organization’s first president. NSBA was concerned with the area bordered by Chipito Street, North Staples Street, West Broadway Street, and Sam Rankin Street which some people refer to as the “Cut.” Mr. Wharton was the operator of the PJ&G Grocery Store at 1701 Van Loan Ave. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mary Williams operated Mary’s Epitome Entertainment Center on the northwest corner of North Staples and Chipito Streets (former location of the Harlem Theater) and she also operated Mary’s Epitome of Fashion on North Staples Street in the building which had once housed the USO during World War II and later the Cooking and Baking School/Community Center in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The goals of NSBA included generating interest in improving the physical appearance of businesses in the area north of I-37; requesting increased police involvement in the area, and beautification of the community. The organization initially had between 70 and 80 members. President Wharton said the group was seeking additional²¹ Community Development Block Grant funding for census tracts 4 and 5 (an area that included Washington-Coles and Hillcrest) to provide loans for businesses to improve their properties (Cardenas, North Side business association is formed, 1983).

²⁰ VISTA was an antipoverty program created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and was a component of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty (Corporation for National & Community Service, n.d.).

²¹ The North Side Business Association received a total of \$200,000 in block grants in 1983 (Rothschild, Pie-slicing: Some won, some lost pleas for block grants, 1983)

Figure 62: On July 9, 1986, Mary Williams of North Side Business Association posed in Northside



Source: Photo by Ely Marsh, *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*

By 1985, the NSBA membership had dropped to 45 and Jerome Bradford was president and Mary Williams was vice president. At that time Williams commented, “It’s not like it was ... The last few years it has constantly deteriorated.” Bradford and Williams scheduled a meeting with the City staff to discuss the issues including concerns about crime and the need for a clean-up campaign to include the demolition of deteriorated structures (Rothschild, Northside firms seek attention, 1985). The NSBA sent a letter to the city to request a meeting on May 9, 1985, to discuss the problems in Northside, in which the association appealed on behalf of the children:

We are concerned about our school children and senior citizens that are living in the area of the Cuts. We know what you all [residents of the Cuts] are going through that have to live in an environment where there is all kinds of crime, dope pushers, dope addicts, prostitution, litter and stagnation. Let’s save our children from the sight of all this crime.

A child believes what he or she grows up around is right. Well if that is true, what do you think is in the minds of all those little innocent children that cannot help themselves where they live or where they go to school? They need our help (Cardenas, Northside woes spur meeting with officials, 1985).

City Manager Ed Martin wrote a letter in response to the NSBA's letter requesting assistance to problems in Northside, especially in the 'Cuts.' The City Manager's letter described special police patrols, increased code enforcement, street improvements and traffic studies to improve living conditions in the area. He stated that \$80,000 was budgeted to remove "blighted" buildings and help displaced families with relocation. He called on the citizens of the area to demonstrate a commitment to match the city's commitment to clean up the area. NSBA President Bradford claimed the city was not doing enough (*Corpus Christi Caller*, 1985). The association disbanded in the late 1980s, about the time that Williams gave up on her business hopes in Northside because she said, "It just turned into a very, very low-class area." She moved to El Paso after her business closed (Strasburg J., *Forgotten Neighborhood: History of Northside's isolation has gone unwritten*, 1998).

Hands for Hillcrest

CITGO established the Hands for Hillcrest program in May 2012. The program was reported as a three-year investment of up to \$1.5 million toward non-profit organizations in Corpus Christi that provide crucial services to Hillcrest residents related to education and job skills, health and the environment. Examples of the types of assistance provided through this program included: free day care for 112 children while the family worked or studied; back packs and school supplies; donated books; CITGO employee volunteers as big bothers or big sisters; personalized services to increase academic improvement at Roy Miller High School; repair of 17 homes; and free health checks. The program resulted in an improved academic record and a 94 percent graduation rate for the 63 students at Roy Miller High School that received the personalized services through the program (CITGO, 2013).

Relocation of North Side Manor Apartment Residents

In 2013, the City of Corpus Christi broke ground on a new apartment complex named The Palms at Leopard Street, a 120-unit housing project intended to replace the aging North Side Manor Apartments in Northside (Willden, 2013). Constructed on a site near Roy Miller High School, the new apartments opened in February 2015. Roslind Coats, a 21-year North Side Manor resident was pleased with the change when interviewed by the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* at the grand opening. Ms. Coats said, "They're nice. We can't ask for anything better. [The neighborhood] is a lot better than what we was in at first. We've got an H-E-B down the street, food places right down the street – everything is accessible to us" (Woolbright, 2015). The city plans to demolish North Side Manor Apartments which became too expensive to maintain properly.

Summary

The history of Northside in Corpus Christi begins with the history of Corpus Christi as a fishing village surrounded by farms and ranches that brought their harvests and livestock for sale in Corpus Christi and to transport their goods to distant markets via rail or ship. The economy received a boost with the establishment of the Port and the development of the petrochemical industry. Lack of housing options for African Americans and the availability of African American schools in Northside contributed to the development of a strong, primarily African American community in Northside from the 1930s through the 1970s. That community was largely self-contained because it contained schools, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, grocers, retail stores, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Many factors contributed to the dispersal of the African American community to other parts of the city and the eventual closing of many of the Northside businesses. Some of those factors included the desegregation of schools and eventually the desegregation of housing. The construction of the Harbor Bridge and I-37 displaced some of the businesses and houses and created a visual barrier between Northside and the rest of Corpus Christi. The population shift away from Northside went hand in hand with the closing of schools in the neighborhood. In the 1980s, after the merger of the local African American and Anglo ILA chapters, the ILA Hall was abandoned and left a void because the ILA Hall had served as a gathering place where the well-paid Longshoremen would spend their money at businesses located in the hall and the surrounding area within the Northside community.

Beginning with HIALCO's establishment in 1964, there have been a number of organizations and programs launched to revive the Northside community which is fondly remembered by those who grew up there in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Currently the best example of success in reviving the spirit of Northside is found within the halls of Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School. This school is creating and operating programs that give youth the opportunity to succeed after those same youths have left other high schools where they did not feel that success was possible. Each Coles' student who earns their high school diploma has the option to graduate either from the high school they originally attended or from Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School. In the summer of 2014, 341 Coles' students returned to their original high school to graduate. However, about 20 students decided to graduate wearing the green and white of Solomon M. Coles Special Emphasis High School and these students comprised the first Solomon M. Coles High School graduating class since the high school closed in 1967 (Rodriguez, 2014). All graduates were awarded a medal with the image of Solomon Melvin Coles hung from a green and white ribbon. To close this report with the success of Solomon M. Coles School seems appropriate given that the school was named after a man of vision who offered a public education to African Americans in Corpus Christi beginning in 1878.

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