

## HERITAGE PARK in Corpus Christi

*Heritage Park is the site of twelve historical Corpus Christi homes, the oldest dating back to 1851. Many of the homes are recorded as Texas Historical Landmarks and all have been beautifully restored. These twelve incredible homes are a tribute to the ethnic diversity and culture of the area. The Multicultural Center, located in the historic Galvan House, provides several events year round, giving visitors and residents alike a taste of the rich culture and tradition of the area. The Center also includes a Courtyard, Central Plaza and the Lytton Memorial Rose Garden.*

### **MERRIMAN-BOBYS HOUSE**

1521 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

The Merriman-Bobys House is the second oldest structure existing in Corpus Christi. (The oldest is the Centennial House located at 411 Upper Broadway.) The structure was built in 1851 by Walter Merriman, a lawyer and land developer. The house was used as a hospital during the Civil War and the yellow fever epidemic of 1867. Nearly one-third of the population, including Corpus Christi's only three doctors, died in the epidemic. The house had many owners over the years, including prominent



ranchers who used it as a town home. Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Bobys purchased the house in 1936 and the local chapter of the Texas Poetry Society held meetings here. Morris Lichtenstein bought the house and later donated it to the City in 1981. It was moved from its original location on the Bluff in 1982 and restored by the Corpus Christi Arts Council. This is probably the most unique structure in Heritage Park, yet the most typical of early Corpus Christi architecture. The open porch and shellcrete fireplace are good examples of Early Texas regional architecture. The three distinctive gables are the result of additions to the original structure which was built with native wood and square nails. The front entry includes a raised panel door bordered by sidelights and a full transom. The house operates as a restaurant.

### **BRITTON-EVANS 'CENTENNIAL' HOUSE**

411 NORTH BROADWAY STREET

This house was built by Captain Forbes Britton between 1849 and 1850. Captain Britton and his wife came to Corpus Christi after the Mexican War. One year later, Morris Levey of New Orleans became the owner of the property. During the Civil War in 1862 the house became a Confederate hospital. It was also used as a hospital and officers' mess hall for the Federal Army in 1866, and as a citizen's refuge during desperado and Indian raids during the 1870s. In 1880, George Evans



purchased the home and lived there until Southern Mineral Corporation purchased it in 1936. The structure is known as the oldest structure existing in Corpus Christi. The Centennial House is the finest example of masonry classic revival architecture in existence on the Gulf Coast of Texas. It is completely furnished with authentic antiques of the period, First Empire through 1859. Currently, it operates as a museum under the guidance of the Corpus Christi Area Heritage Society.

## **S. JULIUS LICHENSTEIN HOUSE**

1617 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

The Lichtenstein family moved to Corpus Christi in 1873. This Jewish family became prominent leaders in the business and civic communities of South Texas. The Lichtenstein Department Store was a major retail center for South Texas for over 100 years. In 1905, Julius Lichtenstein, son of the store's founder, built this house about nine blocks south of its present site. Julius and his wife, Carrie Weil Lichtenstein, lived in the home until 1913 and retained ownership until 1926. This Colonial Revival house is simple in detail and scale. The



turret with clerestory windows is typical of Victorian Period architecture. In 1927, the house was moved to its current site within the City of Corpus Christi's Heritage Park Complex. In 1977, the Junior League of Corpus Christi restored the house for use as the Creative Arts Center. The Creative Art Center, Inc., a non-profit education organization, provides programs and classes in the visual and performing arts for people of all ages.

## **SIMON GUGENHEIM HOUSE**

1601 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

This Victorian structure was built for Simon and Lila Bell (Solomon) Gugenheim in 1905. In 1941 Mr. Gugenheim a leading businessman in Corpus Christi, donated four lots on South Broadway to the YMCA to construct a new facility. He died in 1942 and Lila Bell passed four years later. Both are buried at the Hebrew Rest Cemetery in Corpus Christi. The structure was moved to this block in 1927 and relocated to its current site in the City of Corpus



Christi's Heritage Park in 1977. Camp Fire, Inc. restored the house to serve as offices in 1980. This is the only square turreted structure remaining in Corpus Christi. The tri-faceted porch, spanning gabled wings, and gingerbread details are typical of the late Victorian Period. The front rooms are furnished in the style of the 1900s.

## **GALVAN HOUSE**

1581 NORTH CHAPARRAL

This house was built in 1908 by A.M. French. It was designed by his wife, Frances Garrett French, who wanted a home to accommodate both family and friends. French was an attorney, the founder of the First State Bank, and a surveyor for the construction of the Tex-Mex Railroad. He also founded and directed the first abstract title company in Corpus Christi. In 1942, Rafael Galvan purchased the house and it remained in his family until 1982. Galvan came to Corpus Christi in 1896, worked as a fisherman, and then became Corpus Christi's first Mexican-American police officer. He also established the Galvan Ballroom and was a founding member of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The Colonial Revival architecture is formal in appearance due to the classic Ionic columns on two levels. Beveled glass in the front doors and sidelights has 1½ inch bevels, much larger than usual. In 1982, the City purchased the house to serve as headquarters for the Multicultural Center and moved it to the present site in Heritage Park. The grounds surrounding the Multicultural Center include a replica carriage house, courtyard with gazebo and the Mary Elizabeth & Lee Lytton Memorial Rose Garden.



## **GRANDE-GROSSMAN HOUSE**

1517 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

Benito (Ben) Grande was born in 1862 and came to Corpus Christi with his family in the late 1870s. The Grande men were entrepreneurs who owned the Ben Grande Saloon, one of the largest and last old-fashioned cantinas in Texas. Ben succeeded his father in operating the family businesses, became a leader in the community, and built this house on Artesian Street in 1904. The Grossman Family began emigrating from Russia in the early 1900s. Ed, Henry, Simon and their sister, Ida Grossman opened a department store next door to the house on Artesian Street. Simon returned to Europe in 1921 and brought other family members to Corpus Christi. Ida Grossman Cohen bought this house in 1925. The Grossman Family donated the home to the City in 1982 and moved it to its current site. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Council One, restored the home in 1985. Bayfest, Inc. currently



operates this home. Revisions to the house changed the style from Victorian to Craftsman with elements of Prairie architecture. Dominant features include the stick style eave brackets and brick piers.

## **LITTLES-MARTIN HOUSE**

1519 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

Hattie Moore Littles is believed to have been one of the first black natives of Corpus Christi. In 1915, she and her husband, Willis, employed by John G. Kenedy, a rancher, and were baptized the first black Catholics of Corpus Christi. John G. and Marie Stella Kenedy were their godparents. Hattie and Willis were employed by many prominent families in Corpus Christi. When the Littles retired, the Kenedys gave them this house. Its original site is unknown, but it was moved to North Staples Street around 1918. The Littles' daughter, Mary Belle Littles-Martin, taught piano in the home for many years and lived there until her death in 1983. At that time, the house had been in her family for over 60



years. The house was moved to its current site in Heritage Park in 1986 and restored by the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) to serve as its Corpus Christi headquarters. The front rooms contain period furnishings and exhibits on Black history. The fireplace mantle is carved from Tigerwood, commonly know as "Nigerian Walnut", which is native to West Africa. The front door is hand-carved pine. The beveled wood siding, hip roof with projecting gable and chamfered bay suggest Queen Anne Victorian Cottage architecture. Decorative features include shingles on the facade between the windows and roofline and a small window in the gable. The primary objectives of the NAACP are to ensure that all civil rights provisions are upheld for all people, regardless of race, gender, age or creed, and to provide legal services when a civil right has been violated. The local chapter is also involved in educational, medical and employment awareness programs for community residents.

## **SIDBURY HOUSE**

1609 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

Charlotte Cook Scott Sidbury, a rancher, bank director, lumber company manager, and civic leader built this house in 1893. It was one of twin houses built as rental properties and was never occupied by Mrs. Sidbury. The Patrick Dunn family lived in the house for several years after one of the Dunn children died of a fever at their Padre Island ranch home. This house is the only remaining example of High Victorian architecture in Corpus Christi.



The asymmetrical Victorian structure has all the elements of the Queen Anne style including irregular outlines, verandas, balconies, and steep-pitched roofs. The “gingerbread” appearance is due to delicate and elaborate woodwork on the porches. The Moorish arch over the front steps and fanshaped eave brackets are the most distinctive features of the house. In 1927, the house was moved to its current site in Heritage Park. The Junior League of Corpus Christi restored it in 1977. The Junior League is an educational and charitable organization designed to promote community involvement and develop the potential of its members through effective volunteer programs.

## **JALUFKA-GOVATOS HOUSE**

1513 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

The Jalufka-Govatos House was built by James Jalufka about 1905 at 1408 N. Mesquite Street in what is known as "Old Irishtown." His father was originally from Moravia in Austria (present-day Czech Republic) and immigrated to the United States at an early age. James and his wife, Helen J. "Captain", maintained an outstanding rose garden at the original site of the house. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American War, World War I, and was prominent in the South Texas cotton industry. She was an entrepreneur and acquired the name "Captain" when she successfully operated a boat works at the old Pleasure Pier in downtown Corpus Christi. Pete and Minnie Lee Govatos, members of a family active in the City's Greek Community since the 1920s, purchased the home from the Jalufkas in 1944. Residents of Corpus Christi since 1940, they lived in the house until Minnie Lee's death in 1960. The Govatos Family operated three restaurants in Corpus Christi and were active in the establishment of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. The house changed ownership several times until it was acquired by the City in 1987 and moved to Heritage Park. Unusual paired columns defining the front porch and a bay window are typical of Southern Bungalow architecture. The house is accented with gently pitched broad gables supported by knee braces. The foundation is a good example of rusticated block. The house was restored by the Czech Heritage Society of South Texas for offices and meeting rooms. The Czech Heritage Society of South Texas is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserve, maintain, and promote the customs, language, heritage, and social relationship of American people of Czech descent. Membership is open to all persons interested in the preservation of Czech heritage and culture.



## **WARD-MCCAMPBELL HOUSE**

1501 NORTH CHAPARRAL STREET

Mary Alice Ward McCampbell, widow of Nueces County Attorney William Berry McCampbell, built this house around 1908 on Water Street, a few feet from Corpus Christi Bay. The seawall, which now protects downtown Corpus Christi from flood tides, was not completed until 1941. In 1919, a hurricane came in suddenly and the storm tides isolated residents of Old Irishtown from the Bluff's high ground. Mary Ward McCampbell and her three sons watched the storm from this house. As the tides rose, they fled to the second floor and watched the flood waters rise over 20 feet to the second story porch. They later recalled seeing entire houses, dead animals, and debris flow past the porch. Early in 1920, Mary McCampbell died of pneumonia; her family said she contracted while standing watch on the porch during the storm. Her eldest son, William Ward, sold the house to his cousin in 1921. The Ionic capital, lattice enclosures and wraparound porches are typical of the Classic Revival architecture. The house was donated to the City in 1983 and moved from its original site one block away. It has been restored by the Irish Cultural House, Inc. for offices and meeting rooms. Irish Cultural House, Inc., a non-profit organization, provides information and educational programs on the influence of the Irish culture and language in the Corpus Christi area.



## **LAWRENCE HOUSE**

The Lawrence House was built in 1893 on McBride Lane. It was moved to Heritage Park in 1999. The house was too big to be moved through the streets so it was loaded on a barge and shipped down to the cargo Dock, then loaded on a trailer. Theodore Merchant "Buddy" Lawrence was married to Cora Garret Lawrence and had six children. Buddy Lawrence was one of Nueces County's first residents to become involved with the vegetable truck farming industry during the 1890's. Shipping from Corpus Christi opened the market for the local farming community. Mr. Lawrence was appointed as County Judge in 1902 to fill a vacancy. He was later elected to serve until 1908 and when his term ended he went back to farming. In 1910, he was elected Nueces County Commissioner and served in that position until 1932. Buddy Lawrence fostered the "New Roads" movement, developing "cow trails" into paved roads. During his term the first road system was built as well as the construction of the first causeway over Nueces Bay. The house was restored by the Veteran's Band of Corpus Christi and it uses the house for practice sessions today.

## **STEAMBOAT HOUSE**

The home's name comes from its double-decker round porches resembling the front of a steamboat. The house was built in 1890 by Capt. W.T. Ropes, whose brother Col. Elihu Harrison Ropes aspired in 1889 to dredge a ship channel through Mustang Island to create a deepwater port to serve extensive

Ocean Drive developments, including his luxury hotel, the Alta Vista, then located in the 3300 block of Ocean Drive.

Ropes' steamboat house was moved in 1920 from Denver Street to 802 Carancahua St., at the corner of Coleman Street. On December 3, 2007 the Steamboat House made a second move to the 1500 block of Mesquite Street to join the other collection of historical homes in Heritage Park, making it the twelfth home.

*Information provided by the Corpus Christi Landmark Commission.*

[www.cclandmarks.org](http://www.cclandmarks.org)