THE VILLITA ORDINANCE

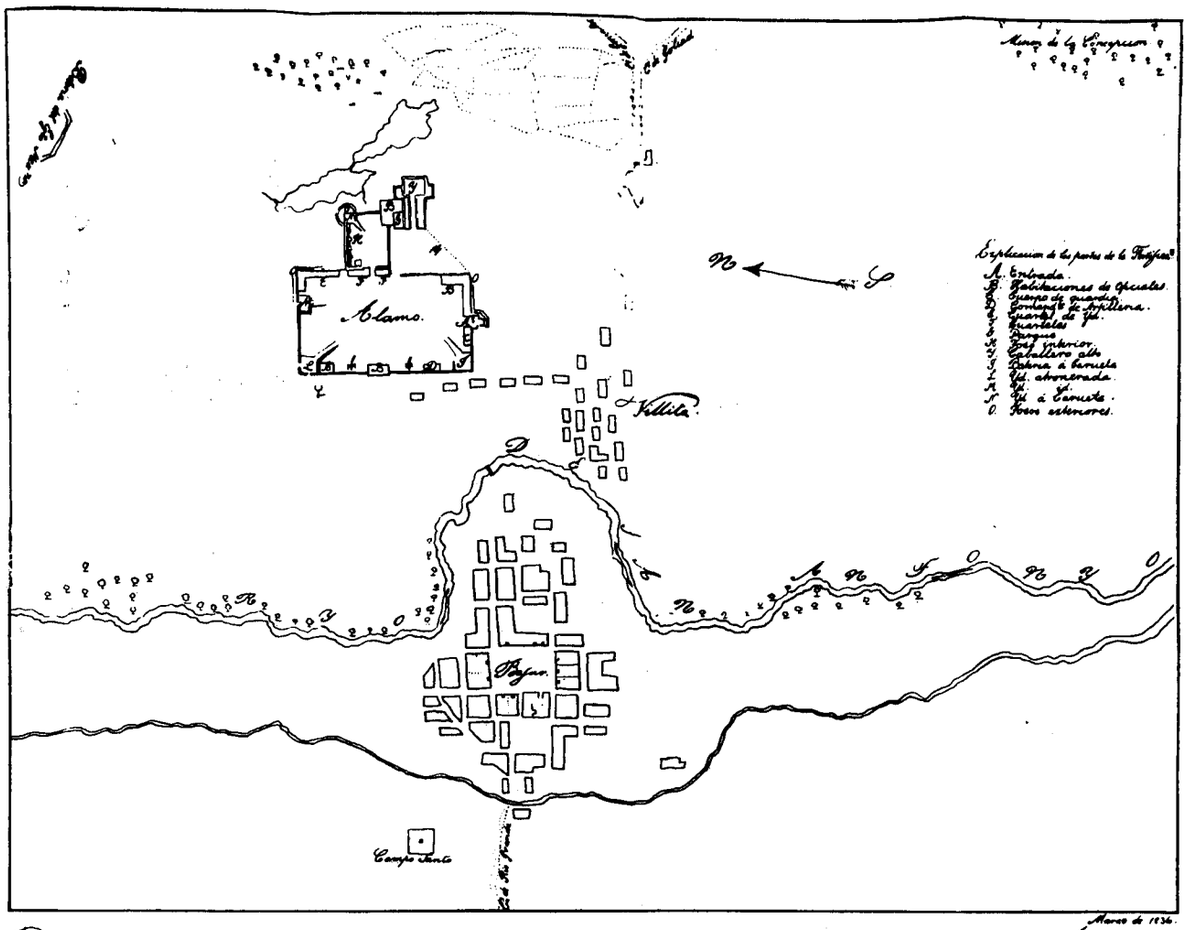
RE-CREATING "LA VILLITA" AS A PROJECT OF SAN ANTONIO: PROVIDING FOR ITS RESTORATION, PRESERVATION AND CONTINUATION; ENUMERATING CERTAIN IDEALS, HOPES AND PURPOSES: SETTING FORTH IN NARRATIVE FORM SOME OF ITS INTERESTING HISTORY; AT THE SAME TIME ORDAINING THAT VILLITA SHALL NOT BE A DEAD MUSEUM FOR MINCING SCHOLARS, BUT A PLACE FOR THE LIVING, AND THOSE NOT YET BORN.

FOREWORD

The Corporation of San Antonio has obtained ownership of "La Villita", the old Spanish "little village."

A military map, drawn while the guns of Santa Anna roared in bombardment of the Alamo, is here shown:

(Turn to next page)



Plano de la Ciudad de Sn. Antonio de Bajar y fortificacion del Alamo, levantado y labado por el Cor.l Ygnacio de Labastida Comandante de Yngenieros del Ejercito del Norte, quien lo dedica al E. S. General D. Vicente Filisola 2.o en Gefe del mismo Ejercito.

In this map can be seen the Villita, which is of great historical importance, and which is now on the border of the business district of San Antonio, antiquity standing side by side with the modern age.

"La Villita" was established by the Spaniards in 1722. The pattern of her destiny has been made by wars, depressions, floods, and the onslaughts of time - over it have flown six flags, - those of France, Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America, and the United States of America.

Today it stands as a forlorn ghost of vivid life and stirring events. Once the scene of art and culture, time has brought it down to a vile slum. Early steps must therefore be taken for its re-creation.

Tomorrow it will stand as a symbol of the accomplishments and sacrifices of the past, and as a Light pointing to the future.

Realizing the spiritual value and social possibilities of "La Villita", Mayor Maverick obtained for the City a major portion of the land required. It was obtained by trade from the San Antonio Public Service Company with land owned by the City of equal value,

but the Public Service Company is to be highly commended for its enthusiasm and willingness in making this project possible. In the original acquirement of the lan ds owned by the Public Service Company, as well as progressive accomplishments since, Mayor Maverick has been enthusiastically assisted by his colleagues:

C. Ray Davis
Commissioner of Taxation

Henry F. Hein
Commissioner of Sanitation,
Parks, and Public Property,

Louis W. Lipscomb
Commissioner of Fire and Police,

and

Paul E. Steffler
Commissioner of Streets
and Public Improvements.

For the improvement of this project, the National Youth Administration (NYA) under Mr. Aubrey Williams, National Administrator, has made an allocation of approximately $50,000 and will allocate $50,000 and more when and if necessary, making $100,000 available. Mr. Williams is enthusiastic, as is also Mr. Dave Williams, Assistant Administrator, who is a native Texan and distinguished authority on early Texan architecture. From these high officials, the project is receiving personal and sympathetic support.

Not only the NYA officials, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt is familiar with "La Villita" through personal visits and explanations by Mayor Maverick, and by official reports from the NYA. The project is also known by members of the Cabinet of the United States, other high officials, governors, many prominent business men, newspaper publishers, and educators over the nation.

Thus "La Villita" has already received wide-spread and substantial national recognition. The Villita Ordinance Follows:

AN ORDINANCE OI-355

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO:-

"LA VILLITA" is hereby officially re-created, and by this ordinance reorganized as a project of the Corporation of San Antonio, and a part of the life of its people.

The OBJECTIVES, PURPOSES, AND AIMS OF "LA VILLITA" are ORDAINED and DECLARED as follows:

I.

PRESERVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PAST

BUILD OFF TODAY AND TOMORROW

The present objective is to obtain possession, complete titles and physically clean "La Villita" and to restore and develop it into a comprehensive community cetner for the "life, liberty, and happiness" of the local citizentry. It shall be for the old and young alike; for the preservation of worthwhile things of the past, but always aiming to meet the needs of TODAY and TOMORROW. Planning shall be flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of generation after generation.

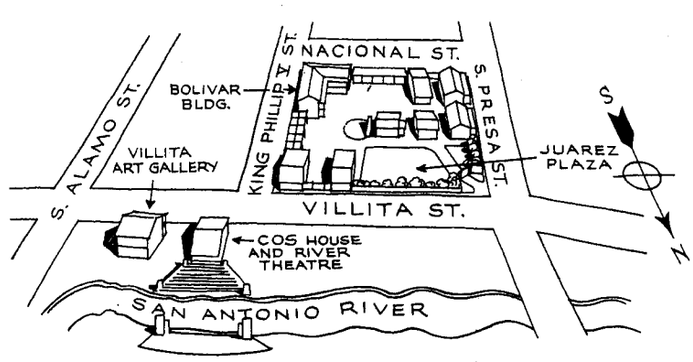
II.

DESCRIPTION OF LA VILLITA AND SURROUNDINGS

The physical outlines of "La Villita" are as follows:

a. "LA VILLITA", usually understood as that property in the neighborhood of Presa, Villita, Alamo and Nueva Streets, but for the purpose of this ordinance it shall consist of the lands, houses, gardens, wells, cisterns and little plaza bounded by Nacional, Presa, Villita and King Philip V streets;

b. "THE COS HOUSE," on Villita Street across from "La Villita". This property takes its name after General Martin Perfecto Cos, the brother-in-law of Santa Anna, who lived there a number of years and in December, 1835, at this place signed Articles of Capitulation to the Colonial Troops of Texas after the Battle of San Antonio.



c. THE RIVER BANK THEATRE, with its seats and structures behind the Cos House, now being completed as a part of the River Beautification Project. Here people can congregate and produce their own historical pageants and contemporary plays, with folk songs of the Southwest, or with choral singing of all nations; where also, facilities can eventually be offered to meet the mechanical, lighting, and technical requirements of modern stage productions in what may become the New Theatre of America.

d. VILLITA ART GALLERY, also across the street from "La Villita", one of the newer structures, having been built in 1849. This building, with its already developed and developing art life, shall be continued in its present nature, a community workshop gallery.

III.

PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE, RESTORATION

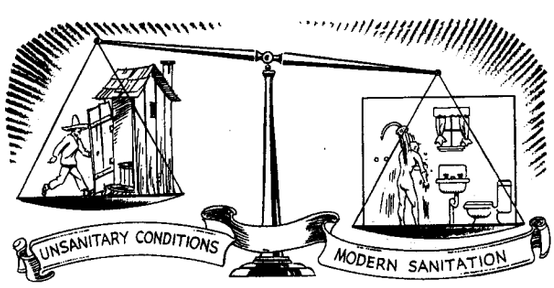
The contemplated ideas and work plans of "La Villita", bounded by Nacional, Presa, Villita, and King Philip V Streets and described in II - a, shall be shown in more detail in this Section.

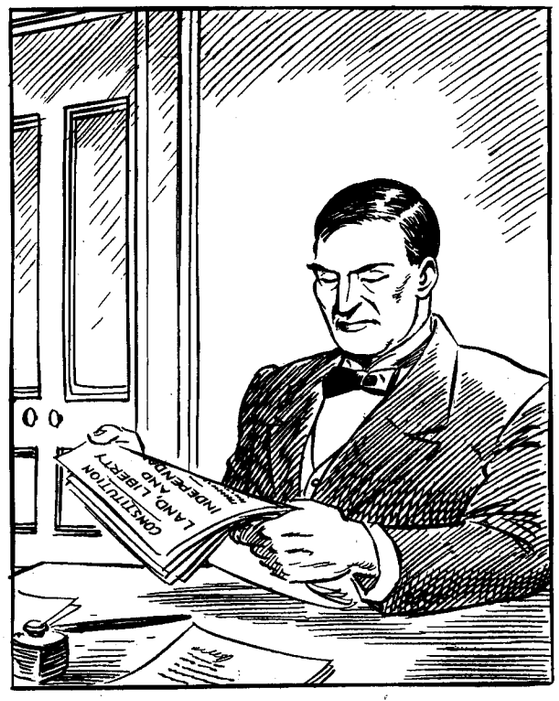
In this block are seven original homes. They are to be restored. On the vacant land a plaza is planned, as well as an interior street, a building for a museum-library-forum-restaurant, and various minor structures. The whole property shall be properly landscaped with Texas trees, shrubs and flowers; - and especially shall there be vegetable as well as flower gardens; there shall be proper drainage, with streets, sewers, and other public improvements.

Indeed, there shall be a definite plan - both as to physical lay-out and structures, and of future activities and purposes. These plans are hereby adopted by the City Commission, and made a part of the law and policies of the Corporation of San Antonio. The purpose of this Commission shall theretofore be to carry put the plans here contemplated, but it must be borne in mind that blind adherence to a fixed plan when not found feasible is stupid; therefore, the plans should be sufficiently flexible to meet mistakes in planning when recognized and as there are changes in social, political, and economic conditions not now contemplated.

Restored Villita will be a living example of indigenous Texas architecture, in itself an expression of our pioneer forefathers' reactions to the hardships and necessities of the times. Settled by the Spanish, "La Villita" was never-the-less on the far frontier and therefore original and independent in its conceptions. As time rolled on there came other influences, French, Anglo-Colonial, German-American, and climatic, which latter had relation to the indigenous character of the architecture.

The restoration shall not be theatrical; nor will it be a mere lifeless copy, a sterile, strangulated art form. And although restoration shall be faithful, convenience shall not be sacrificed. All houses and buildings shall have modern conveniences, sanitation, shower-baths and tubs, electricity, heat, light, air and air-conditioning if possible. There is no sense in being uncomfortable and unhealthy in order to be "authentic", - - to say the least, modern plumbing is as necessary as the preservation of the past.





Benito Juarez

IV.

NAMES OF PLACES: JUAREZ, BOLIVAR BUILDING, AND HIDALGO:

The Plaza shall be called Plaza Juarez, in honor of the great Benito Juarez, patriot and president of our sister Republic of Mexico. Juarez, a simple Indian peasant, had a sublime understanding of constitutional government and the freedom of the people. Indeed, he was a patriot of all the Americas, for it was Juarez who deposed and shot Emperor Maximilian, the European interloper; he it was who saved constitutional government in Mexico, and by this act constitutional government for the American continents as well. It is the purpose of this Commission eventually to place a statue of Juarez on this plaza.

The museum-library-forum-community building shall be known as the Edificio Bolivar (pronounced Beau-lee'-vahr) or Bolivar Building, after the great patriot of South America, Simon Bolivar. From youth to the grave he fought with his blood for the independence of South American countries, and its exploited Indian pupolations, notwithstanding he was of noble Spanish family and one of the wealthiest men of all Latin-America. His life was marked in early marriage by the tragic death of his beautiful wife, followed by spectacular , tenacious bitter fighting for independence through all the years. He died without a centavo, his enormous estates having been sacrificed for his patriotic ideals and love for his people.

He, like Juarez, is a patriot of all the Americas, and his name is thus especially honored in order to assure South America and Central American republics of the sincere friendship of the North American people for those of Central and South America.

The single interiot street shall be known as Calle Hidalgo, after the Washington of Mexico, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who proclaimed the Independence of Mexico on the 16th of September, 1810. He was a brave and honest man. This great patriot was degraded

as a priest and was shot as a rebel in 1811, but the blood he spilled on the soil of the American continent meant liberty for a great nation, and an example of sacrifice, Christian life, and patriotism to all the world.

Miguel Hidalgo

V.

DECLARED A PUBLIC UTILITY

For the purpose of this ordinance, the property set out as "La Villita" in Section II - a and more fully described as to planning in Section III and IV of this ordinance shall be known as a public utility, a community center, to be used, operated and governed by the City for public purposes, upon rules and regulations set up by the Mayor, and such other ordinances as shall appear necessary. It is the function and duty of this Commission to complete titles to the property, at reasonable prices and as soon as practicable, and upon the rights and powers of this municipality in eminent domain if necessary.

VI.

A PURPOSE: PROMOTION OF WORLD PEACE

Among the high and most important purposes of "La Villita" is the promotion of peace, friendship and justice between the United States of America and all other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as well as of nations of the world. In special dedication of Peace and Good Will, and Pan-American understanding is the Bolivar Building, Plaza Juarez, and Hidalgo Street.

VII.

ANOTHER PURPOSE: PRESERVATION OF EARLY TEXAS AND SPANISH CULTURE: ARTS AND CRAFTS.

The heritage of Early Texas, of great value must be preserved. Likewise, San Antonio has a population of 90,000 Spanish-Mexican-Americans, many of whose ancestors have lived here over two hundred years; it is desired to preserve their culture and traditions, and to always accord them the prestige and dignity to which they are justly entitled.

To this end of a living Community Center, "La Villita" shall have, maintain and operate, in several of the restored buildings, Arts and Crafts Shops in which under-privileged youth through the facilities of the NYA, the City of San Antonio and their successors, will be given work experience in the designing and making of ceramics, glass, tile, pottery, sculpture; Woodwork - furniture, wood carving, puppets; the making of authentic reproductions of early Texan objects, furniture, etc.; Weaving - rugs, serapes, blankets, basketry; Leather work - bookbinding, saddlery; Metal work - wrought iron, decorative tin, jewelry; Fine Prints - woodcuts, etching, block prints, lithography.

All this will help in establishing a standard of fine design and workmanship both for the worker and the buyer, and to open the way to financial independence of those who pre-apprentice and produce here.

It is reasonable and proper to note, however, in this ordinance and resolution that the recent revival, or attempts at revival of arts and crafts have often proved failures in this country. This is because we Americans have refused to admit that we are in an age of machine mass production. Conscientious and romantic-minded ladies have rushed to the mountains of Tennessee to teach a handful of hill-billies how to spin and weave; graduates of Columbia, dressed in shorts and wearing Basque caps, have invaded Santa Fe to teach the Indian his tribal customs and just exactly how to sing, dance, and hammer silver as a happy Ex-Warrior should in all good conscience do.

Through it all the hill-billy and the Indian and the poor citizen wanted a regular job, an automobile, a home, medical care, electricity, clothing, education, groceries and the convenience of mass production. Such people have not been satisfied by the low living standard gained by production of "arts and crafts in which they had little interest, and which articles, often ugly perversions, useless, and of poor quality, are panned off on credulous and gaping tourists.

Therefore "Villita" shall not be a mere center of wearers of quaint costumes who live detatched lives, and do not understand the problems of the day. Indeed, modern life is on the one hand, production by machine, and on the other disposition of surplus time into study, re-creation, work one likes to do, and a way of life.

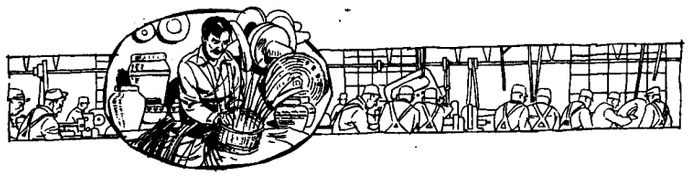
The objectives of "Villita" in this particular field shall therefore be two:

First: fostering the production of arts and crafts which are useful, true in design, of good quality and workmanship, and which can be sold at a profit; and

Second: the training of youth to fit into the modern complex life of a merciless machine age.

With such special objectives, "La Villita" may assist in solving the problem of mass production to meet ordinary utilitarian needs, and likewise that of a way of life,

where there is beauty, happiness and culture.



VIII.

RENAISSANCE OF CULTURE OF THE GREAT SOUTHWEST

An important purpose shall be the study of the Great Southwest - roughly speaking, all of the land of the Republic of Texas, twice the size of the present state, - Oklahoma, Southern Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. The history of the Southwest has been largely neglected; let there be a Renaissance of the culture of the Southwest, with its center at "Villita". Indeed, historic "Villita" once restored will enable this and succeeding generations to visualize in their true setting the significant events and personages in early Texan and American history of the Southwest.

IX.

SOCIETIES' BUILDING - HISTORICAL LITERARY,
SCIENTIFIC AND CONSERVATION

It is the purpose to establish in one of the restored houses a "Societies' Building." This building shall be for the convenience at reasonable rentals, of the various societies approved by the Mayor for all historical, literary, scientific and conservation purposes, being such organizations as the Villita Art Gallery, The Yanaguana Society, Conservation Society and others of a similar nature.

X.

BOLIVAR BUILDING - MUSEUM, LIBRARY,
FORUM, COMMUNITY CENTER

In the Bolivar Building shall be established the Spanish-Mexican-Texan museum-library-forum-community center with hall, reading and study rooms, patio, pools, and gardens. It shall be the purpose of this place to aid in research, study - especially in visual education - for amusement and happiness, to the average citizen as well as the scholar. The City's Spanish archives shall be stored within, as well as any other Spanish writings; purpose being to preserve the early history of the City and Texas, and to have a repository of Spanish literature, old and new, both for its actual value and for the promotion of Inter-American Peace. There shall also be literature concerning Spain and Latin-America written in the English language. By the same token, included shall be the history and literature in English, of early Texas. These activities in the Bolivar Building shall also be:-

a. An integral part of the Carnegie Library and a branch thereof, all in harmony with Section 66 of the Charter of the City of San Antonio and ordinances passed under this section. This branch library being hereby blanketed in as a part of the Carnegie Library.

The Library Board is hereby directed to include this objective in the annual budget, making preparation for occupancy and the management and selection of books and literature at once.

b. A branch of the Witte Museum, having such pieces and exhibits as are suitable to "La Villita". The governing board of the Witte Museum is also directed to take and include this objective in their annual budget and by making preparation for occupancy and management, and the selection of proper museum pieces and art works.

c. A Tourist Information Center, or Travel Bureau, or "House of Hospitality" with proper facilities for comfort and complete information needed by tourists and travelers. In the discretion of the Mayor, this Tourist Center may be placed in another part of "La Villita".

CONCLUSION

A WAY OF LIFE: HUMAN BETTERMENT

All the foregoing having been enacted and declared, it is well to repeat that the center shall not and must not be a restoration and reconstruction of the dead past, and a ghost village for the mincing walk and dusty ways of scholars, but likewise for the average living citizen. Even a jitter-bug has the same constitutional right of life and liberty as the scholar who is crammed with knowledge and will not disgorge it. Moreover, there are more jitter-bugs than scholars.

ABOVE ALL, THIS PROJECT WILL BE FOR HUMAN GOOD, FOR LETTING PEOPLE LEARN HOW TO MAKE A LIVING, TO HAVE A WAY OF LIFE; FOR CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND FREEDOM. ----------

and further, that the physical scope of the area shall be increased as time goes on; that included also shall be expanding activities in human betterment, such as health education, social welfare, and the progress of the times.

By motion previously adopted, the Villita Committee, its members being the joint authors of this DECLARATION, RESOLUTION AND ORDINANCE, have been authorized by the City Commission to affix their names to this original document, as of special honor, and that in the future their names shall not be forgotten:

R. W. Mickler
Executive Director

Fenner Roth
N. Y. A. District Administrator

O'Neill Ford
Project Architect

Col. M. L. Crimmins
Research Agent

Hamilton Magruder
Manager for City

J. Blanding Sloan
Arts & Crafts

Atlee B. Ayres
Consulting Architect

Dahl Dewees
Consulting Architect

George Johnson
N. Y. A. Architect

James T. Perry
N. Y. A. Structural Engineer

E. M. Todd
Project Supervisor

J. C. Norby
Project Supervisor

Thos. Coghill
City Engineer

Wm. B. Blanchet
Legal Advisor

Stewart King
Trees, Shrubs, Flowers, Vegetables

E. J. Altgelt
Land Agent

Mrs. Mildred Taylor Sloan
Journalist

Maury Maverick

Floyd McGown

Due to the high opinion the Commissioners, with the Mayor, have of this project, all officials, Mayor and Commissioners, hereunto attach their names, desiring also to share in the honor of establishing this great project.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 12th day of October, 1939, in the two hundred and seventeenth year of original "La Villita", and in the first year of its re-creation.

Maury Maverick
M A Y O R.

C. Ray Davis
Commissioner of Taxation

Henry F. Hein
Commissioner of Sanitation,
Parks, and Public Property

Louis W. Lipscomb
Commissioner of Fire and Police

Paul E. Steffler
Commissioner of Streets
and Public Improvements

ATTEST:

J. J. Patterson
City Clerk.