

Bullock Museum restores rare Spanish Colonial mission gate from San Antonio

Two halves of the gate reunited for the first time in new *Becoming Texas* exhibition

OCTOBER 30, 2018 (AUSTIN, TX) — More than 250 years after it was made by a master craftsman, a Spanish Colonial mission gate from the San Antonio area will be a key architectural feature for visitors when the Bullock Texas State History Museum opens the new exhibition *Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here* on December 10. The two halves of the gate will be on view together after significant restoration, reunited for the first time since they protected a San Antonio mission generations ago.

"There are very few architectural Texas mission-related artifacts remaining from the 17th and 18th centuries, and to have one of such importance is incredible," said Bullock Museum Director Margaret Koch. "The gate has such a presence. It's a survivor with a fascinating story to tell."

At different points in the history of the missions in San Antonio, building pieces were sold, including this gate to the Ruiz-Herrera family. Made of mesquite, this gate remained on the family's ranch in Bexar County for decades, with an oral history of its origins passed down through generations.

"We are so fortunate to be able to share this remarkable artifact with the public, due to the generosity of Evie Herrera Patton, a descendant of the Ruiz-Herrera family, and the Texas State History Museum Foundation," said Koch.

In 1984, Kay Hindes, City Archaeologist for San Antonio, conducted extensive research on the gate after it was uncovered on the Ruiz-Herrera family ranch. Experts verified that the gate certainly came from a San Antonio mission, and when closed it would have been a formidable deterrent to intruders, designed to protect its inhabitants from attack.

Prior to its removal to the lab, the two leaves of the gate were leaning one atop the other against an exterior wall of a jacal on the ranch, leaving the top leaf more exposed to the elements. Suffering from water and insect damage, the leaf was missing all but one of



Conservator Catherine Williams utilized handmade paper to restore the damaged half of a rare Spanish mission gate, allowing it to be stable enough for display in *Becoming Texas*, opening December 10 at the Bullock Museum.

its vertical stiles, and there were significant voids within the wooden rails throughout, making it too unstable to display upright.

With funding provided through the Texas State History Museum Foundation, the Bullock Museum gained approval from Herrera Patton to engage Austin conservator Catherine Williams of Silver Lining Art Conservation. Williams utilized handmade paper to fill the voids and provide additional stability for the gate, enabling it to be displayed upright. The paper was then painted to blend discretely with the wood. A special mount and glass enclosure constructed specifically for the gate will provide the proper support while on view in the exhibition.

"We spent about 200 hours researching and testing to determine the best materials and processes, and 400 more doing the actual work," said Williams. "The key to this project was finding a solution that included compatible materials that would age along with the gate, and that would not negatively affect the artifact long term."

For more information about *Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here*, opening at the Bullock Museum on December 10, visit TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512)936-8746.

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Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here is curated by the Texas State History Museum with funding from the State of Texas and the Texas State History Museum Foundation.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM

The Bullock Texas State History Museum includes three floors of exhibitions, IMAX® and special-effects theaters, a café and museum store. The Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals to display original historical artifacts and host exhibitions that illuminate and celebrate Texas history and culture. For more, visit TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

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