

**Robstown Area Historical Museum Community Archive Drive
Proposal Submitted to Robstown Historical Area Museum by Jonathan Cortez**

Introduction:

This proposal is submitted to the Robstown Area Historical Museum to begin thinking about the proposed project outlined below. I have been thinking about this project for some time and I believe if we work together we can make it a very successful event. As I currently work through my Masters in Public Humanities, I am constantly developing every necessary part of the project; completing a grant proposal (attached in a separate file), building a project guide, constructing evaluation forms, etc. As part of my master's program, I need to complete a summer practicum and I will be willing to complete it at the Robstown Area Historical Museum working on the proposed project. Below are my goals and objectives.

Goal(s):

- 1) Increase public contribution to the Robstown Area Historical Museum
- 2) Add to the amount of archives (i.e., photos, documents, objects, etc.,) that the Robstown Area Historical Museum holds
- 3) Create a public presence and awareness via Facebook about the Robstown Area Historical Museum

Objective:

- 1) Hold a community archive drive that will allow people to bring their archives and contribute to the Robstown Area Historical Museum

Questions: As we move forward, these are some starting logistical questions we need to answer in order to get the project off the ground.

- 1) Does the Robstown Area Historical Museum want to move forward with the project?
 - a. If so, please look over the grant proposal so I can submit ASAP.

- 2) Does the museum want a Facebook presence?
- a. If so, I can manage the Facebook with permission from the board. Perhaps be the considered the social media liaison.
 - b. Please look at the link to see a sample of the sorts of Facebook posts I will contribute: <https://www.facebook.com/events/915592831861198/>
 - i. I made a mock Facebook event for the project, but the Facebook for the museum will be more about the history of the museum and pictures of the history of Robstown. We could then ask people to contribute their memories.
- 3) Who does the museum believe they could partner with within the community?
- a. We can start making connections and I can make a similar, more professional, proposal for these connections. Things to consider when thinking about connections: funding, resources (video cameras, scanners, volunteers), and a space to hold the event.

This should be enough questions to get started. Many more logistical questions will be answered as we proceed with the project. Again, I thank the Robstown Area Historical Museum and Jo Ann Patillo for listening to my passion and wanting to increase community participation in Robstown.

Very best,

Jonathan Cortez
Doctoral Student | American Studies
Brown University
Jonathan_cortez@brown.edu

***Below is a condensed version of a paper I completed for Public Humanities**

Ruminations on a Community Archive Drive

Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.

-- Michel-Rolph Trouillot

With the increase of museum resources and a push for local outreach, the Robstown Area Historical Museum could increase community participation, increase the amount of documents the museum currently holds, and fill gaps in local histories. I am proposing a “Community Archive Drive” event for Summer 2016 as an open call for community members to contribute to the history of Robstown.

I began thinking about this project while conducting my fieldwork for my undergraduate honors thesis on the topic of the Chicana/o Movement in Robstown. Because a lack of primary sources in museums and libraries, I had to track down archives from local citizens. Once this labor of love began, an abundance of extremely rich documents came from the people I interviewed, which led me to realize there has to be more. The “Community Archive Drive” is my attempt at bringing forth these histories while increasing community participation.

Following is a review of three public humanities projects that I feel can serve as frameworks for building a successful event. These three projects include: Chicana por mi Raza: Uncovering the Hidden History of Chicana Feminism, the Massachusetts Memories Road Show, and the Bracero History Archive. Each of these projects will provide a piece of what will constitute the framing for the “Robstown Area Historical Museum Community Archive Drive.”

Initiated by Dr. Maria Cotera out of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Chicana por mi Raza has collected and processed approximately 1500 archival items from women throughout the U.S. This project’s use of interviews before the archival collection process allows for the participants to be more open to allowing digitization of their personal archives. Similarly, I believe allowing people to share their stories along with their documents adds metanarratives thus increasing the amount of information and personal stories. Creating a document that can be voluntarily filled out at the archive drive, or perhaps signing up for participatory interviews, will allow space for metanarratives. There could also be a booth set up for people to record a quick memory about growing up in Robstown and present a visual component to the museum.

The Mass. Memories Road Show project’s detailed handbook serves as the best guide moving forward with the archive drive. Specifically, the section on local planning and team responsibilities can be altered to fit the needs and resources of the Robstown Area Historical Museum. I also believe writing up a project guide itself can be a helpful tool to stay organized as the project moves forward.

The Mass. Memories Road Show, however, only allows for participants to choose three photos to contribute. I do not believe there should be a limit to the amount of photos contributed. Also, the museum should accept not only photos; but documents, artifacts, etc. This brings up an interesting question: What if there are too many archives? I think in the case of the Robstown Area Historical Museum (RAHM), that is a great position to be in because more photos would continuously get closer to a comprehensive local history. But can this lead to the decision of limiting the events/ time periods from which archives will be accepted, or will any and all archives be able to be contributed? These are the issues myself and the board need to discuss.

One example of a project that limits the scope of the archives it collects is the Bracero History Archive that seeks to build a history of the Bracero Program from 1942-1964. This project provides important information for the archive drive such as: video tutorials on how to collect archives and a teaching guide equipped with activities using the archives. The video tutorials can be paired with the Mass. Memories Road Show guide as a way to prepare volunteers for collecting, scanning, etc. The examples of teaching guides can serve as an example of how the RAHM can translate the archives into useful teaching tools for local schools; therefore, accomplishing one of its original goals.

All three examples explained above are digital projects that allow for communities to access the archives online. Because the Robstown Area Historical Museum does not yet have an online archival database, it was the use of collecting and scanning why I chose the three projects. Many people do not want to part with their documents because they have a lot of sentimental value. I believe it is less threatening to scan the documents at the event and hand them directly back to the owner; people may be more inclined to contribute. The museum then can decide to print and curate as they see fit. Also, all three projects are very well funded by large institutions, universities, or corporations. Finding funding and support in the Robstown area might be challenging, but I believe if the museum and I get creative, we can fully fund the event.

Without knowing the already existing partnerships of the Robstown Historical Museum, I believe there are many possibilities. For example, the Nueces Country Keach Family Library may allow us to use computers and scanners. The City of Robstown, the Coastal Bend Community Foundation, the Nueces County Historical Society, and possibly local universities can help fund the event for anything we might need (e.g., publication material, food, office supplies, newspaper ads, etc.). Furthermore, places such as the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), restaurants, schools, etc., can help publicize the event by allowing speakers at their meetings, putting up promotional material, etc. I believe the most useful will be newspaper advertisements in the *Corpus Christi Caller Times* and the *Nueces County Record Star*.

The Robstown Area Historical Museum Community Archive Drive has potential to be a critical event for both the Robstown Area Historical Museum and the larger Robstown community in the production of local history.