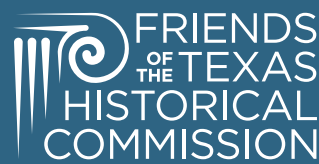
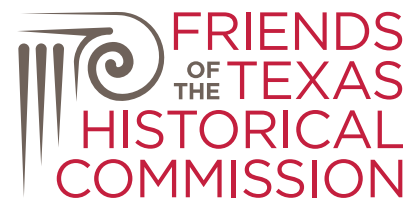


CRISIS AND TRAUMA  
RESPONSE TOOLKIT  
FOR CULTURAL WORKERS  
2023



# WE'RE STILL STANDING

*Words from Survivors of Hurricane Harvey  
in Rockport*



Five years ago on August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey slammed into Rockport, Texas with Category 4 sustained winds of 130 miles per hour and gusts reaching much higher. Harvey destroyed homes, ruined businesses, and uprooted lives across the Coastal Bend of Texas. Watching the news of the storm farther South from McAllen (where I lived at the time), I worried for my parents up the coast in the community of Victoria that also lay in the path of the storm. I also could not help but worry for Rockport. It was surreal to think that this quirky coastal community with the nice beach that we'd take weekend trips to if we needed clear our heads, was now the epicenter of a terrible hurricane. Little did I know in 2017 that I'd be moving to Rockport three years later when I accepted an education position at the Fulton Mansion, an 1877 Second French Imperial home built by the cattle baron George Fulton, that stood right in eye of Hurricane Harvey.

As a historical landmark built by a founder of Aransas County, the Mansion came to be seen as synonymous in the community with Rockport's recovery after Harvey. The hurricane peeled off the slate roof of the Fulton Mansion and drenched the interior. The day following the storm a driver passing by the Mansion took a picture and posted it on Facebook with the caption, "It's still standing." Though pictures told parts of the story, it was in talking with staff and members of the community that I realized grasped a greater sense of the tragedy and struggle that people lived through amidst Harvey. While serving as an educator at the Fulton Mansion for two years, I had the privilege of reaching out and talking to residents, staff, and Mansion volunteers who lived through Harvey about their experiences. By conducting oral histories with Aransans or even in casual conversation, I noticed that most people had a storm story to tell and are eager to share if you're willing to listen. Many of their stories point back even

deeper than five years ago to the storms of the past like Celia, Beulah, Carla, and of course, the 1919 Storm that flooded the entire town. Hurricanes are not new but a part of life in the Coastal Bend and the ways communities have rebuilt and recovered, as well as the harrowing stories of survival, are a part of the region's heritage.

The Fulton Mansion partnered with the Rockport Chamber of Commerce and the History Center for Aransas County in exploring this relationship between past storm stories and Hurricane Harvey in an exhibit that opened on the five-year anniversary of Harvey, August 25th, 2022. Entitled "It's Still Standing: A Hurricane History of the Fulton Mansion", we shared stories of each of the eight storms from the Fulton Mansion's history as well as the Mansion's road to recovery following Hurricane Harvey. As visitors walked through the exhibit panels, QR codes gave chronological accounts from the storms of the oral histories collected from Rockport residents on their experiences during and after Harvey. Though a recent trauma that still has not fully healed, "It's Still Standing" was well received because it connected visitors' experiences in real terms to that of the Aransans who survived the storms of the past. By reframing the story of Harvey in the context of community heritage and hurricane history, we were able to help bring healing as well as foster a greater sense of community. After all, Harvey will surely not be the last storm to hit Rockport and Aransans in the future will need to know how their community came together in 2017. The slogan of the recovery "Rockport Strong" is not an empty boast, but a way of life.

Below left: Restoration work after Hurricane Harvey at Fulton Mansion State Historic Site in Rockport, Texas. Below: Re-opening event at Fulton Mansion State Historic Site after restoration work following Hurricane Harvey was completed.



# IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I’m sitting at the center island in my kitchen looking at my computer and I had my phone there looking at different weather apps and I remember seeing “60, 70, and then 80” and then gust up into the nineties as it slowly— You know, thirteen hours! It’s just agonizing watching this storm move so slow... It’s [the wind] just a roar. Just a constant roar... The eye was weird because I had just about 45 minutes of eye... I’m sitting there [on his porch] and looking out the Bay to the East... and every time the lightening would strike, I would see funnels. So, I’m sitting there thinking the back side of this storm is going to be so much worse than the front side...”

“About one o’clock was the eye and about forty-five minutes later was when that tornado touched down and I could hear the sound of it because it’s like they always say, It’s like the sound of a train. And I could look out the back window and it was pitch dark, but I could almost see debris flying around out there. And what it did, it came across and it took out our barn first. And then it came

across and it skimmed the house and shook the house so violently that it felt like it just picked us off the ground and slammed us right back down...”

“So now, we were compromised because we weren’t on the hurricane straps no more. I looked out and the deck was pushed over, and we were sitting right on the ground... I knew at that point that, “Well, we’re compromised but if there’s just wind, we’re going to be okay”... Right when I said that, we heard this big thump on the back of our house and that kitchen window blew out. The water came in so violently that it hit her [his wife]. She was holding on to a flashlight... it hit her pinned her against the center island and it hit me in the chest, and I did a backflip over the couch and landed on a glass table...”

— Aransas County resident Robert Mitchell on riding out Hurricane Harvey.

“We didn’t have enough time to pack up on Thursday so we went home... and packed up and I was worried all night and I was looking outside to see what would happen. We left early on Friday morning and then the Hurricane hit late Friday night... We were living in a small house and were expecting a storm surge so we were expecting that our house might not be there when we got back.”

—Fulton Mansion volunteer Anne Mourtaja on the rapid intensification and approach of Harvey

“Mary and I were in the Parlor [of the Fulton Mansion] and there were some things that were too big to move you know, because they came down with trailers... We took some stuff over there [storage area on I-35] and for the historical stuff they came down from Austin with trailers... but, there were things that were too big to load up like the piano... So Mary and I put plastic on the piano and wrapped it with duct tape and the bookcase in the library. That was too big and too heavy. I mean we took everything out but then we had to wrap that too.”

— Friends of the Fulton Mansion Board Member Pam Black on the Harvey prepat the Fulton Mansion with Bookkeeper Mary Alvarez.

“As I traveled closer, when you start seeing the damage... what stood out to me was the power lines how they were all laid down. As you got closer to Fulton, everything was the other way. You could see how the spinning action— One way was going one way, and one way was going the other way. Lots of damage, even if you took pictures you can’t explain it until you saw it yourself. How everything got wiped out...”

“Went into the Mansion and it was closed up. It was hot and nasty in there. The door was barricaded... Opened that to try to get some breeze in there. It was very nice out. You know, we had no rain... we had a nice general breeze like you normally get on the Coast... The Storm was gone and it left beautiful weather behind it but also massive destruction.”

—Glenn Nuyttens from the Castroville on the Fulton Mansion after Hurricane Harvey

“Maybe three days after, we knew how bad it was. A guy took a drone and posted that on Facebook so I could see on Facebook what had happened to the chimney because that’s where our main damage came from over there. The chimney, the roof collapsed in, all the water came in through the vents and through the heat registers and through the rooms. So, George Fulton had a great idea. You know, the heat coming through the basement and coming up through these vents and it keeps the house nice and warm. When you chop off the chimney on the top and damage the roof, it comes down through and out the heat registers and into those rooms. And that’s where all the water damage came from.”

—Pam Black on the damage to the Fulton Mansion after Hurricane Harvey.



“We drove to Dallas and watched Harvey on our phones. We were just kind of resigned, “Okay, we know it’s just going to be a pile of sticks.” You know, this is going to be bad. And tried to make phone calls to neighbors and friends. Some, we were successful... and some we weren’t. Everyone was just hunkered down...”

“By the time we were getting close—There was a curfew we had heard, via the grapevine and it was 7 p.m. so we thought, well we won’t try to drive in tonight but wait until morning. And so we stayed at our friends’ cabin in Yorktown and then got up really, really early and came into town... We knew we needed to drive in daylight and not drive at night when we got close. And then, when we started getting close it was just like harbinger of doom as there was cattle in the road with their legs up in the air. Dead livestock—The whole telephone system was listing to the ground, and it just got worse and worse as we drove into town...”

“When we finally got across the bridge and turn left to go to the beach road and drove down the beach road, it was pretty rough looking! But not as bad as we really thought except there was tons and tons of brush and tons and tons of downed trees but the first people we saw. And this brings tears to my eyes, was from the Forester Service from Bastrop. And you remember the horrible fire that they had? So when we saw them, we jumped out of the car and said “Well, what are all doing!?” They said, “We’re clearing driveways.” They had brought all their material down and they were clearing driveways so people could get into their homes... And I just thought that they were amazing.”

—Museum volunteer Cecilia Shannon on returning home after Hurricane Harvey

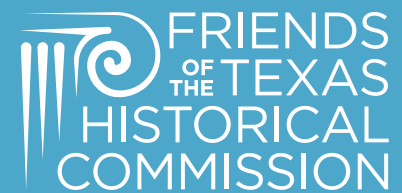


Welcoming visitors back after completing restoration at Fulton Mansion State Historic Site following Hurricane Harvey.

“When I came back, the Live Oak trees had buds for leaves. In that two weeks’ time—They didn’t have leaves yet, it would be another two weeks before they had leaves but they had buds. They were fighting back and that was a real—[pause] Um, realization that we would make it through all this devastation because it was horrific.”

“In Lamar you know every third person. You’d know we’d been there for so long... and people’s homes were just leveled or wiped out or the garage door would just be pushed in from the wind... I just wanted to drive by our old house. Some nice people had bought it... They were wonderful people and they loved it. They right away put a new roof on it and new windows. So, that made that old house make it through and she was so sweet. The lady was there, and she invited me in for a tour and she was so precious and kind. When they were boarding up the house, they had found a Valentine that my husband had painted me some years ago. He had painted me a Valentine on one of the big plywood pieces and so when they were boarding up the house, they found this—It was a heart with our initials on it...”

— Fulton Mansion volunteer Cheryl Wilson on her return to Aransas County after Hurricane Harvey



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The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this “Crisis and Trauma Response Toolkit” do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

As stated in the introduction, this toolkit is offered as “permanently incomplete” product and will be continually updated as new information and resources become available. The views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations shared in the video presentations are those of the presenting experts and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

While some of the video presentations are provided by licensed therapists, the training and programming recommendations, which came out of the “lab” sessions, are presented as suggested practices to be used by cultural workers at their discretion and NOT as therapy.