On Sunday, May 22, 2016, the Art Museum of South Texas (AMST) will open its newest permanent collection gallery funded by a contribution from the J.A. “Tony” Canales Family. A reception will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with a ribbon cutting at 5:45 p.m. AMST Direct Joe Schenk recently asked Barbara Canales a few questions about her grandmother, the Canales family gift, and the importance of this Spanish Colonial Gallery to Corpus Christi:

Why is it important for the community to have access to Spanish Colonial art at our Museum?

It is important to have access to Spanish Colonial Art because it is our History. The Art of the Americas is a representation of the period in time where the Spanish Empire colonized most of Central and South America as well as the Southwest region of the United States.  To be able to view this art is not only the obvious lesson in art history, but also a richer lesson in religion, culture, politics and philosophy.   We are so highly influenced by the period of Spanish conquest that our cities, towns, rivers, bays, geographical, and geological landmarks all bear names and influence of Spanish origin. The Spanish language, literature, music , dance and architecture along with the Catholic religion not only have survived, but dominated the centuries amidst other foreign and Native American influences throughout Central and South America. The Spanish Colonial Art provides a rare glimpse to the past and tells a story of the importance of religious dominance during the timeline from the 1500's to the early 1800's.

Can you tell us about the Canales family’s commitment to the Museum and vision for this new gallery?

The Canales Family is committed to bring you a world class gallery where paintings, textiles and objects of the Spanish Colonial Period is represented. Over time, objects such as furniture and silver will join the collection. Complementing the incredible oil paintings will be textiles and objects used for religious purposes. It was important to the Canales Family to provide an overall ambience for this art that had that right feel for a first time or repeat visitor. Particular care has been given to the concept of a warm jewel toned wall, arched cased openings, a wood floor and, in the future, featured Iron Gate entrance. Of course, of equal importance, is the specialty framed lighting highlighting the art, and the curated descriptions of each art piece.  This gallery is the result of many wonderful donors and visionaries; however it is filled with love and respect for the past and dedicated to Dr. Clotilde P. Garcia, loving mother and grandmother of the Canales Family.

Dr. Cleo was an extraordinary woman –what can you tell us about her interests in art, history and museums?

Dr. Cleo dedicated much of her time outside her medical career as an author, historian and archaeologist. She devoted herself to researching the History of South Texas, and her work in the arena of Spanish Genealogy is widely recognized today as pioneering for those South Texas families with a Spanish surname. Her home was a reflection of all she loved. Art was in abundance, from oil paintings to works in bonze and stone.  There were Spanish books of antiquity, old Colonial keys, Indian clay pottery, and arrowheads, Spanish maps, and lots of Mexican birth and death certificates.  At all hours there was the clicking of the typewriter and mounds of paper at her side. You could open most any drawer in her room and find old Spanish and Mexican currency and stamps.

She loved all mediums of art and painted herself in acrylic preferring the palette knife as her instrument of choice.

She was a walking history professor and loved to frequent museums. The highlight of her life she said was being able to travel to Madrid with her grandchildren.