

ARANSAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ACHS NEWSLETTER

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Final Spring program set for April 19

“John Fred ‘Doc’ McGregor, The Man Behind the Camera,” by Jesenia Guerra **. April 19, 6:30 PM at Beachfront Pavilion, Rockport Beach Park**

Inside this issue:

Poke Salad	2
From the Lab	2
Sparks Family	2
Cemetery Records	3
History Center News	4
Recent ACHS Programs	4

ACHS Officers & Trustees

Kam Wagert, President (2014)
Pam Stranahan, Vice-President (2015)
Sally Reynolds, Secretary (2015)
Janet Taylor, Treasurer (2014)
Jerry Brundrett (2013)
Leslie “Bubba Casterline (2015)
Carolyn Cauley (2015)
Dolly Close (2015)
Marsha Hendrix (2014)
Norinne Holman (2013)
Carol Keller (2013)
Jo Ann Morgan (2013)
David Murrah (2014)
Patsy Parr (2013)
Janie White (2014)

This program will provide a glimpse into one of the region’s most extensive photograph collections. It will introduce the audience to how photographers record important aspects of history – either as an art form or postcards for commercial purposes. The McGregor collection of 250,000 black and white photographs is a visual legacy of South Texas’s history donated by Dr. John Frederick McGregor. Taken from the 1930’s through the 1950’s, the photographs depict scenes, buildings, people, events, sports, and celebrations.

Jesenia Guerra currently serves as Librarian/Archivist for the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History. A native of San Diego, TX, she holds BA and MA degrees from TAMU-Kingsville.

The program is free and open to the public;



This rare aerial photo of Rockport is one of the more than 250,000 images in the McGregor collection at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History. Photo courtesy Corpus Christi Public Library Digital Archives Website.

refreshments will be served. Its coordinators are Sue Hastings and Kathryn Morrow. It is funded in part by a grant from Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ACHS adds three new trustees at its Annual Meeting in February

The ACHS Board of Trustees increased by three to 15 members. The new trustees are Sally Reynolds, Carolyn Cauley, and Bubba Casterline.

Sally Reynolds worked for the Legislative Reference Library in the Capitol for over 30 years, serving as Director for the last 12 years. She currently serves on the Texas State Library & Archives Commission; the Aransas County Historical Commission; the Board of Trustees of the Texas Maritime Museum, the Aransas County Genealogical Society; and Friends of the History Center for Aransas County. She has lived in Rockport continuously since 2005.

(continued on P. 2)

The President's Column: Poke is Where You Find It!

As a young girl, I spent several weeks of every summer at my grandmother's house in Muldoon, Texas. My Granny had a two acre garden which was plowed every spring with a mule by the hired hand. Granny grew okra, tomatoes, black-eyed peas, cucumbers, cantaloupes, cream peas, squash, onions and peppers. In the evenings, we would shell the peas on her front porch while watching the trains go by.

One ritual my Granny had every spring was the eating of wild poke salad. Poke is a native Southern green similar to spinach, but it is poisonous unless prepared properly. Granny believed that poke was a tonic and would give one added pep after the winter months. She said that poke must be boiled two times, the water poured off each time, and then the third time brought back to a boil after the seasonings (bacon drippings)

are added.

Last week, Pam Stranahan (who had never eaten poke salad) and I drove over to Goose Island and picked some poke in a place where it has grown for at least 40 years, as I used to pick it there in my high school days. We came back to Pam's house, cooked the poke, and agreed it was quite tasty.

Then we went outside and there in Pam's backyard, hidden behind some taller weeds under an oak tree, were several poke plants! We could have found our poke right there in Pam's yard and saved ourselves a trip out to Lamar! Often there are little treasures right in front of us if we will only take a few moments to look for them. You members of the ACHS are treasures, and as always, thank you for being a member.

—Kam Wagert

FROM THE LAB, by Guest Columnist Dolly Hart Close

As my friend, pal and President of the ACHS waved goodbye to me to go on a short trip, she informed me I need to send some news in for the newsletter.

First of all our yard sale on March 17 was a huge success. We all had a great time working, talking, and helping our customers. The money we made will go to the Friends of the History Center for Aransas County to help restore the Bruhl-Paul-Johnson home. Thanks to Jerry Brundrett for

furnishing the site.

Then, on March 28 was the ground breaking for the Bruhl-Paul-Johnson cottage, which will become the History Center of Aransas County. The house will be moved to a site on Church and Cedar. We had a large turn out with many dignitaries, Aransas County Historical Society, Friends of the History Center and the Historical Commissioners.

This cottage has many lovely memories for me. As a child I would walk with my Grandmother (Mrs. Bissett) to see Mrs. Paul. We would sit on the porch, and the ladies would have tea or coffee. Mrs. Paul would always have homemade cookies for me.

At that time the house was on Wood and Laurel. We could see the bay and enjoy the fresh breeze. I really feel fortunate to be back in my hometown to help restore this lovely home.

Now, here is some news from the Lab where we have all been having fun on Wednesday afternoon.

JoAnn Morgan and I designed and created a bulletin board in the front hall. The title is "School Days"; when you enter the old school look for it on your right.

For the groundbreaking, Kam, Janet, Pam, Sally and Carolyn made "Tussie Mussies" (small cones filled with flowers, and greenery) to go with an invitation to the ground breaking for the History Center. Fifty of these were distributed in the neighborhood where the house is being moved.

At the Lab, you can always find Norinne and Joan Bounds working on cemetery records, they are two dedicated ladies and we all thank you.

A few weeks ago a professor from Nebraska visited the Lab who was researching shellcrete for a paper she was writing for her Ph.D. She was quite impressed with a picture of our old courthouse. There have been lots of interesting people visit us. We love seeing all of you. KEEP COMING!!!!



ACHS HOSTS SPARKS FAMILY AT ANNUAL MEETING

Descendants of Texas Revolutionary hero and Aransas County pioneer Stephen Franklin Sparks were guests of the Aransas County Historical Society for its annual meeting in February. The program featured Rockport teacher Bobby Jackson (seated center) who portrayed Sparks telling of his adventures during the battles of San Antonio and San Jacinto. Sparks Colony in Aransas County is named for him. Those pictured, except for Jackson, are all Sparks' descendants and include (standing, L to R) John Landers, Simone Garcia, Madeline Garcia, Kay Sparks Kubelka, Lisa Sparks Harrison, Kim Sparks Obsta, Joel Seawright, and Brandi Rouquette McMahon; (seated) Edna "Molly" Sparks Harwick, Bobby Jackson, and Carol Sparks Keller. Photo by David Murrah

WELCOME NEW ACHS MEMBERS!

New members for the past quarter are as follows:

Jim Anderson
Gail Bergan
Molly & Russell Johnson
Kay Kubelka
Ken & Lynne McGee
Ed Mixon;
Russ Mumaw
Steve Russell
Mr. & Mrs. Murray Tarkington

NEW TRUSTEES (continued from p. 1)

Carolyn Cauley is the current Chairman of the Aransas County Historical Commission and a member of the Friends of the History Center for Aransas County. While working for the City of Rockport, she planned the 140th Rockport Birthday Celebration.

Leslie "Bubba" Casterline is a graduate of Aransas County High School and currently serves as County Commissioner. He is a co-owner and operator of Casterline Fish Company in Fulton. He is a past member of Aransas County Historical Commission and was appointed by a former Texas governor to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. His hobbies are raising horses, hunting, and fishing.

148 Years of Cemetery Records by Norinne Holman



People have lived—and died—in Aransas County for thousands of years. In the earliest days of the area there were Indian burials, drownings, deaths by yellow fever, cholera outbreaks, storms, accidents and war injuries. Early settlements and ranches had to bury their dead immediately without leaving a permanent markers. Hurricanes and vandals have destroyed many gravesites, and the constant wind blowing sand over several of the sites has covered many other stones. How many more burials and cemeteries there must be in the county! We will never know the true number of burials. But, thanks to Patsy Parr and a group of volunteers, we have a permanent record of most of the county gravesites.

For nearly 30 years, ACHS Trustee Patsy Parr has led in the compilation of Aransas County cemetery records. In the 1980s, Patsy began researching cemetery records in the 1980s and perhaps even earlier. Virginia Shivers initiated the work and as Patsy worked with her and became more engrossed in the topic, Soon, she began to put the information on 8x5 index cards and file them for future purposes.

At that time she had access to only the first book of county burial records, which began with 1894. There are no known written records of burials in the Rockport Cemetery prior to 1894. Moreover, there are no records of Bayview, the first cemetery, located on Water Street. Its original occupants were moved to the Rockport Cemetery because high tides would flood most of the graves.

At the Rockport Cemetery, the first person to have a headstone was Cora C. Mathis who died in 1869. In some cases markers are the only record to identify a grave.

Soon, others joined in the effort to locate and publish cemetery information. As the years rolled by, Sammy Tise compiled and published a cemetery book in 1990, and that work helped Patsy to increase her own collection of records by two-thirds and even more by interviewing families. But, her work was “piecemeal,” she said, and was confined mostly to the Rockport Cemetery. However, other ACHS volunteers stepped up to help. Four years ago Norinne Holman volunteered to assist Patsy record her findings and two years later, Joan Bounds joined the endeavor. Soon, the crew had all the Tise book information written on the cards.

Patsy and her volunteer crew then determined that the next step would be to survey six of the ten cemeteries of Aransas County--Rockport, Lamar, Fulton, Aransas Memorial Park, Schoenstatt, and San Antonio. Norinne walked up and down the rows to compare the already accumulated information with the tombstone data and to record any new

THE HOUSE THAT LOVE BUILT: A TRIBUTE

Once upon a time, about 1937, there was a Father who began a little house to make it a home for loving Wife and four children. The Father had been an unemployed carpenter but this was the Great Depression and everyone had to do whatever they could to get by. No one went hungry or lacked clothes to wear, because the loving extended family helped everyone else in any way needed to survive. Money was almost non-existent.

Finally the Father got a job working on a ranch on Matagorda Island for some wealthy businessmen who lived in Dallas or Ft. Worth, Clint Murchison and Toddie Lee Wynne. They were very fine people to work for. These men also owned a lumberyard in Avinger, and, soon after the Father went to work for them, they furnished lumber on faith and credit and hauled it to Rockport to build a home for the Father and his family. The Grandfather and Father (both carpenters by trade) built the little house. It took a while to build as the Father was also working on the Island, but soon it was finished and the Family moved in with great rejoicing.



The Family lived in the House for the rest of their “together life.” In 1941 another child joined the happy Family. Meanwhile, the Father continued working for Murchison and Wynne until he paid them back for the lumber supplied for the house.

To this day this Little House still stands in Rockport, conceived in Friendship. Faith and Love.

---Patsy Parr

discoveries. The well-documented and inactive family cemeteries of the McLesters, Smiths, Barbers, and Powell-Youngs were not surveyed.

The oldest marker in the Fulton Cemetery is that of Louis Greenough's who died on November 7, 1869 and the oldest marker for the Lamar Cemetery is for Patrick T. O'Conner who died August 10, 1854. The earliest recorded burial at the Aransas Memory Park Cemetery was that of Dee Carr Ellis in 1952. At the San Antonio Cemetery, it was that of Manuela Navarro in 1928, and in the Schoenstatt Cemetery, Sister Mary Helen Bormacher, who was buried in 1982.

The next step was to compare the information with the various cemetery associations, the library's collection, the Genealogy Society, and the funeral home. As a result, over eight hundred names have been added from these sources. Yet, it is unfortunate that there are years of missing records, but every effort is being made to find and make a permanent record of them.

During the past several months the collected data has been entered into a computer. In the near future, the first comprehensive and alphabetized list of the almost eight thousand names of the people interred in Aransas County will be placed on the Historical Society's website to benefit families, genealogists and other interested parties so they can experience a community's history and connect with its cultural landscape. ACHS also has future plans concerning the cemeteries and they are being developed at present. Those undertakings will be described in a forthcoming article.

---Norinne Holman

GROUND BREAKING FOR RELOCATION OF HISTORIC HOUSE

On Wednesday, March The Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce conducted a ground breaking ceremony for the location of the new History Center for Aransas County at 801 East Cedar.

The Bruhl-Paul-Johnson house is currently located at 910 E. Concho and owned by the County. Land has been donated by Dr. Gary and Rita Gilbert at the corner of East Cedar and North Church where the house will be moved for use as a History Center. Neighbors were invited to the groundbreaking event by way of a Victorian style "tussie mussie" hung on their door knobs. The house move will occur this spring as part of Aransas Pathways, a venue tax project. The house will then be renovated to become the History Center for Aransas County in 2013.

Local history enthusiasts have formed the Friends of the History Center for Aransas County in order to promote this historic venue of Aransas County and have applied for a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The board of directors for the Friends includes: Linda Valdez, president, Pam Stranahan, vice-president, Jennifer Day, secretary, Jackie Shaw, treasurer, and members Jerry Brundrett, Carolyn Cauley, Kathy David, Rusty Day, Sandy Garrison, Blake Mc David, David Reid, Sally Reynolds, Janet Taylor, and Kam Wagert. To promote heritage and tourism, indoor and outdoor exhibits will be presented at the future History Center. Aransas County Judge C.H. "Burt" Mills, Jr. said, "We can be proud to establish a venue where our unique and diverse history can be shared."

The future History Center will be open to the public. Contact Friends President, Linda Valdez, at (361) 463-1985, e-mail: lindavaldez66@yahoo.com or write to Friends of the History Center, P.O. Box 106, Fulton, TX 78358 for more information.

—Carolyn Cauley



Many city, county, and history officials participated in the groundbreaking for the re-location of the Bruhl-Paul Johnson house, which will be located at 801 East Cedar. Photo courtesy Carolyn Cauley

Report on Refugio-Goliad Day Trip



Among the 14 who went on the Day Trip were (L to R) Anne Mourtaja, Lynn Blumenfeld, Tom Rowe, Joyce Patzer, Sally Rowe, and Kalvin Patzer. Photo courtesy Pam Stranahan.

Another successful day trip is behind us. On Tuesday, March 20th, fourteen ACHS members and their guests journeyed to Refugio's Braman Winery Tasting Room. We were treated to mimosas and samplings of the winery's offerings along with delicious fruits and treats.

Our group joined up with the Texas Tropical Trail tour bus in Refugio. From there, we were driven to the Presidio La Bahia, just south of Goliad. The director, Newton Warzecha, gave an informative presentation of the rich history of the fort. The Presidio is considered to be

the world's finest example of a Spanish frontier fort and is the site of the massacre of Col. James Fannin and 344 of his men on March 27, 1836. The Our Lady of Loreto Chapel at the Presidio was the site where the first Declaration of Texas was signed on the altar, December 20, 1836.

From there, we continued into the town of Goliad. The highway into town was laden with beautiful Texas wildflowers. We lunched at the Hanging Tree Restaurant located directly across from the Goliad County Courthouse on the town square. The food and service were well presented. Following the meal, a presentation on Goliad's history was given by Darlene Montague from the Goliad Chamber of Commerce.

A surprise was added to our agenda with the tour of the loft residence at Soho Goliad, home of the Warzecha family. It is a lovely home full of historical art, artifacts, and eclectic furnishings. The home tour was an unexpected delight, and was appreciated by all.

We headed back to the bus for a short ride back to Refugio where we regrouped and headed back to Rockport. Definitely a day well spent!

—Anne Mourtaja



Air Station veterans Dallas Ford (L) and Coy Kirkpatrick attended the March lecture featuring Kathryn Morrow (center). Photo courtesy Pam Stranahan.

ROCKPORT AIR FORCE STATION HAD LASTING IMPACT

At ACHS's March program, Kathryn Morrow presented an interesting view of the Rockport Air Force Station that operated at the airport from 1959 to 1963. The mission of the unit was to use the radar to monitor all the air traffic along the coast to detect any unidentified or unauthorized aircraft.

For her presentation, Ms. Morrow gathered information from official records and numerous interviews with airmen who had been stationed in Rockport, including Frank Wix, Charles Dennis, Dallas Ford, Gordon Stanley, Mike Paul, Coy Kirkpatrick, Rhonda Falk, and Phil Tedder. In the audience were station veterans, Dallas Ford from Tivoli and Coy Kirkpatrick from Victoria, and both told additional stories about their work and fun in Rockport.

If you missed the program, Morrow's paper is available on the ACHS web site, www.aransashistory.org. The March program was funded in part by a grant from Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

---Pam Stranahan