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The Texas Historical Commission (THC) has recognized two more historical landmarks in Rockport, the Cedars cottages on South Water Street, and the Baldwin-Brundrett House at 1028 N. Live Oak. The Cedars marker was unveiled on October 20.

The Baldwin-Brundrett plaque ceremony will be Saturday, November 10, at 2:00 p.m. at 1028 N. Live Oak. The Aransas County Historical Commission welcomes the public to share in this exciting event.

The Baldwin-Brundrett House was built in 1881 and was the home of several important Rockport families. Judge W. H. Baldwin (1849-1940) served as County Judge four times between 1893 and 1932. He promoted a deep water port and helped the town recover from financial downturns. His family moved into the house in 1891 when they came to Rockport.

George A. Brundrett, Jr. (1836-1920) was a Civil War veteran who was a cattle rancher on 15,000 acres on Matagorda Island. He was the father of five children born to his first wife, Mary Court Hope, who died in childbirth. His second wife, Flavilla Madden, gave birth to ten more children. The Brundrett family lived on the Blackjack Peninsula, and then on the Lamar Peninsula. In 1917 they moved to the house at 1028 N. Live Oak. Flavilla was the daughter of a pioneer doctor who taught her medical skills. The parlor of the house was often a makeshift hospital as she cared for patients when a doctor (continued on page 4)
FROM THE LAB: A Hundred Years Ago in Aransas County———

Step back in time with me to a century ago in Aransas County. In 1912, Rockport had several large hotels. The La Playa stood proudly on the Rocky Point, the Bayside Inn was on Water Street, and the three-story Del Mar hotel took up the whole block of Merchant’s Square. The steamer Pilot Boy was making trips from the end of Sorenson’s Wharf to Tarpon (now Port Aransas). Bailey’s Pavilion offered minstrels, theatricals, and medicine shows on its stage. During the day, folks would change from street clothes into bathing attire in its small rental rooms and then lounge in the warm water of Aransas Bay.

The cupola of the Moorish-style courthouse could be seen for miles. The Rockport school, with its large bell tower, called students from all grades to class. The First National Bank building was obvious with its triangular rooftop. The Fulton Mansion belonged to the Gulf Coast Immigration Company. The Port Bay Club was open, offering fishing and hunting excursions.

S.F. Jackson was operating Jackson Brothers seafood company, while nearby, Ernest Camehl had his fish house as well. Rockport’s fire department had motorized in 1912 with a 1911 model T Ford which held the chemical tank. The Rockport White Sox, an amateur baseball team, defeated teams as far away as San Antonio.

Churches in 1912 included Sacred Heart Catholic, First Baptist, First Methodist, First Presbyterian, St. Peter’s Episcopal, and the Fulton Missionary Baptist Church. The latter, organized in May, held services in the old Fulton school house.

Come visit the ACHS Lab on any Wednesday from 2 – 4 and look at photos of all the scenes I described above. We have an extensive collection of photographs of “old” Aransas County, along with many scrapbooks and articles. As always, thank you for being a member of ACHS.

—Kam Wagert

FROM THE LAB: A Different Viewpoint———

The ACHS Lab has seen lots of visitors in the month of October. They always add lots of interesting oral history and we have a great time listening. On a recent Wednesday we had John "Possum" Barber and Claude Roberts, both of Houston, along with Alva Freeman of Tennessee, all 1944 graduates of Rockport High School. They told lots of stories, gave us plenty of laughs, looked at many pictures, and gave us lots of fun. Susie Freeman, Alva’s daughter was also a visitor.

Dr John Freeman was also came by with his lovely wife, Nancy. John is the author of the new book, A Childhood by the Sea, and is a 1951 graduate of Rockport High School. If you haven’t bought his book yet we have them for sale at the Lab.

The biggest event of the day was Jo Ann Morgan's birthday. Cake was enjoyed by all.

On any Wednesday, Ray McLester is always busy on the computer and helping those of us who need help. Thanks, Ray. Carolyn Cauley has been busy finding clothes for the docents who will be dressing for the upcoming Christmas Tour of Historic Homes.

Come and visit us anytime. You will enjoy the fun and we would love having you there.

—Dolly Hart Close
ACHS NEWSLETTER

PROGRAM TO PROVIDE RARE LOOK AT THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE
Tuesday, November 13—7 PM at the Woman’s Club

One of the oldest agencies in Texas history, the General Land Office has a storied past, and an even more fascinating collection of historical documents. On Tuesday, November 13, its director of public service, James Harkins, will give a presentation, entitled, “Historical Resources of the Texas General Land Office Archives … and how to access them.”

A 2005 graduate of Texas State University, Harkins has worked for the Texas General Land Office since May of 2005. His presentation will cover the historical resources of the Texas General Land Office Archives, along with a step-by-step guide on how to access those resources.

The program is the second of ACHS’s fall series and is free and open to the public.

Carolyn Cauley and Pat Rousseau are facilitators for the program.

SAVE THE DATES
CHRISTMAS TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES
Friday, Nov. 30, 4-8 PM and Saturday, Dec. 1, 10 - 4

It’s a great opportunity to get the "insider tour" of many historic homes in the Rockport-Fulton area. You will see the spectacular interior created by Joan and Bill Fisher at the Hynes house (1874); the unique architecture at the Bracht house (1881) owned by Jennifer and Rusty Day; the traditional 1940s at the Rouquette home; the 1950s at the home of the Crusius in Fulton; and the fantastic restoration of the Fulton-Bruhl house by Anne and Jeff Hunt. Also included are the Fulton Schoolhouse Museum (DRT) and the History Center at 801 E. Cedar Street where a Christmas sleigh will be a backdrop for your photos. Docents in vintage costumes will greet you and relate interesting details about the homes and families of Rockport and Fulton.

TROPICAL TRAILS—JANUARY 15, 2013
10 am at the Bay Education Center, 12:45 pm at Fulton Mansion Education & History Center

Tropical Trail (THC) will host a partners event in Rockport-Fulton. The morning will begin at the Bay Education Center for the Science on a Sphere program then move to the Fulton Schoolhouse. Lunch will be at Charlotte Plumber’s. At 12:45 a Round Table of authors who have written about the region will be held at the Fulton Mansion Education and History Center. Reservations for lunch are required. Contact Nancy Deviney nancydeviney@yahoo.com to make reservations.

ACHS ANNUAL MEETING—FEB. 7, 2013
"Pathways to History - Historical Signage And Photographs in Aransas County," a presentation by Kam Wagert, Pam Stranahan, Sara Walvoord and David Murrah.

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ACHS ACQUIRES NEW ORAL HISTORIES

The Oral History Collection at the ACHS Lab has been updated to include new resources. Pam Stranahan interviewed Trudy Cary, the last owner of the Bruhl-Paul-Johnson house. She and her husband used historic photographs to restore the house to its Queen Anne style to correct modifications made by a day-care center. John Freeman, former resident and author of Rockport: A Childhood by the Sea, recorded his motivation to write the book and what he remembered about his hometown. Kam Wagert interviewed Charlie Smith to learn about his work in the shrimping business. Other interviews have been completed by Dolly Close.

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—Pam Stranahan

ARANSAS PATHWAYS/ HISTORY CENTER UPDATE

The Steering Committee of the Aransas Pathways project meets twice a month to consider action items brought by the technical committees. The focus in mid-October was to prepare a Transportation Enhancement grant proposal for the connecting trail system. Numerous MOUs have been developed with governmental entities to permit site development. In addition, a birding site to be known as the Castro Nature Sanctuary has been purchased off Highway 35 North.

Stabilization of the History Center continues as connection of utilities and other work mandated by the city permit is completed. A work plan for the Center, located at 801 E. Cedar Street, is being developed by Richard Dias in consultation with the Friends of the History Center.

—Pam Stranahan
was not available. In the 1919 hurricane it is said that two hundred people took shelter in the house because it was sturdy and on high ground.

In 1942 the family of Captain Jack Davis moved into the house from which his wife Pearl operated a two-way radio to Matagorda Island where there were no telephones. Jack Davis was operating a tug boat for Todd Lee Wynne pulling barges from Rockport to the island. There were four Davis children, and two of the daughters married grandsons of Flavilla and George Brundrett, Jr. The family remained in the house until 1990.

The current owners, Bud and Jerry Hanson, retired and moved into the house in 1990. They have restored the ceilings to their 12-foot height, rewired and re-plumbed, refinished the wood floors and retained much of the interior. While gardening, they dug up the wind vane to the old windmill.

The house is Queen Anne style adapted to the Texas coast and has its original windows and doors, including examples of stained glass. It is surrounded by huge old live oaks that are eyewitnesses to much of Rockport’s history.

**CEDARS COTTAGES MARKER DEDICATED OCTOBER 20**

A Texas state historical marker for one of Rockport’s oldest tourist courts, The Cedars at 1203 S. Water Street, was dedicated on October 20th. Now known as the Rockport Cedars Association, this group of cottages is an outstanding example of early tourism in Rockport where traditional family vacations on the coast were enjoyed by multi-generations of family and friends.

These “resort houses” were built in 1928 by Dr. Joe and Mabel Brant and then sold in 1929 to H.M. Daggett. Originally, there were eight structures on the property including a story and a half six room house. In 1930, H.M. Daggett sold them to his son Stanley Daggett and wife Flossie who added two cottages. The Daggetts then sold the property in 1946 to Miss Ethel Jones who lived in San Antonio. She had an on-site manager. Miss Jones retired to the property in 1964 and then sold it to her nephew Charles Stevens in 1971.

A guest registers for The Cedars for April – December, 1971 reveals the popularity of Rockport, and includes families came from the towns of San Antonio (59), Austin (24), Temple (6), Dallas (5), Marion (3), Houston (3), San Angelo (3), Fort Worth (2), Refugio, Lytle (2), Taylor, Georgetown, Millsap, Kerrville, Pasadena, Pandora (2), Muleshoe, Pleasanton, Ennis, Devine, Floresville (2), Corpus Christi, Welch, Beaumont, George West, Kenedy, Atascosa (2), Converse, Zapata, Irving, McAllen, College Station, and the states of Mississippi (2), Oklahoma (2), Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois.

Much earlier, beginning in 1933 the McCurdy clan, now led by John Anderson McCurdy, annually vacationed at The Cedars, beginning a yearly tradition in which a group of five or more families shared a three-week vacation there. Annual gatherings of fishing or birding clubs and groups of families and friends was common.

After Marian McCurdy married Richard Robertson in 1951, they continued the annual trek to the Cedars during the first week of August, gradually inviting other families to form their own traditional group vacation. The group of families, principally from Austin, had a routine in which the men would rise early to fish, returning mid-morning to clean the fish and drink coffee. The women did chores and children played in the homemade row boat and around the bay until lunch time. Following lunch, the children were required to nap or stay on their bunks until around 3 PM when they all went swimming. Dinner of the fresh-caught fish was followed by games and singing.

In the 1960s the Robertsons, McCurdays and friends began to rent the entire tourist court, but in 1973, organized a group of eight families to buy all of the cottages from Charles Stevens. Now formally known as The Rockport Cedars Association (RCA), the original group included the Balls, Howards, Nichols and Robertsons from Austin and Hendricks from Houston. Each family got a house and the center space became common. This group continues to vacation together regularly during most holidays including the first week of August, Labor Day, October for SeaFair, and other holidays.

The Aransas County Historical Commission oversees state historical markers in the county. If anyone would like to suggest a possible marker site, contact current Marker Chair for the ACHC, Sandy Garrison at 361-729-3945.

—Carolyn Cauley and Sandy Garrison