ACHS Officers & Trustees  (year term expires)
Janie White, President (2014)
Marsha Hendrix, Vice President (2014)
Norinne Holman, Secretary (2016)
Patsy Parr, Treasurer (2016)
Joan Bounds (2015)
Dolly Close (2015)
Ray Mc Lester (2015)
David Murrah (2014)
Pam Stranahan (2015)
Janet Taylor (2014)

SAVE THE DATES FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13:
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND
R. K. Sawyer, author of A Hundred Years of Texas Water-fowl Hunting, returns to Rockport to give a program from his new book, Texas Market Hunting: Stories of Waterfowl, Game Laws, and Outlaws as a sequel to his popular talk last April. The program will be at the Women’s Club at 6:30 pm.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26:
CALENDAR PREMIERE PARTY
The new 2014 Historical Calendar, along with all the contestants and winners of the Photo Contest will be feted at a special gala and reception at the Estelle Stair Gallery.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21:
MURDER AND MAYHEM: THE CHOATE KILLINGS OF 1869
Author Chuck Parsons of Seguin will present the story of the killing of the Choate cousins in 1869. Their unique graves are in the Rockport Cemetery. This program will also be at the Women’s Club at 6:30 pm.
FROM THE LAB: A message from the President . . . .

Because of the support of our members and the wonderful response to our sales of books and calendars, last March we were able to give $5,000.00 to the Friends of the Fulton Mansion (for the Restoration of the Fulton Mansion) and $5,000.00 to the Friends of the History Center for Aransas County (for the preservation and renovation of the Bruhl-Paul-Johnson House as the History Center for Aransas County). We thank John Jackson (author of Taking the Tide), Dr. John Freeman (author of Rockport: A Childhood by the Sea), and Dolly Close and the volunteers who compiled the cookbook Queens in the Kitchen. Sales of these items provided some of the funds. We also thank all of you who have entered our photo contest and allowed us to use your photographs in our calendars of historic photographs and thanks to all of you who have encouraged us by buying these wonderful publications and joining and renewing your membership.

We have a new book in our research library. It is The Sutton-Taylor Feud: The Deadliest Feud in Texas. The author is Chuck Parsons, who will be the speaker at our November 21st program. Thanks to David Murrah for donating the book and for arranging to have Mr. Parsons visit us in November. Be sure to put November 21st on your calendar.

We are currently working on the 2014 calendar. The judging of the 2013 Calendar Contest took place July 9. Thanks to judges Ed Hegen, Bobby Jackson and Pam Fulcher who volunteered to take on the hard job of selecting from the 51 fantastic photos that were submitted for them to consider. The entries were identified by number so that the judges would not know the names of those had entered.

Thanks to all of the following (in alphabetical order) who entered the contest: Gloria Davis, Donna Dickinson, Joan Fisher, Sue Hastings, Francis Iles, Nan Jackson, Ray McLester, JoAnne Newton, Patsy Parr, Richard and Marian Robertson, Jon Shaw, Travis Smith, Sally Windrup, and Jonell Wright. Your photographs are spectacular!

Mark your calendars for the Calendar Premiere, which will be held at Estelle Stair Gallery on September 26. The winners of the calendar contest will be announced and all photographs entered will be there for you to see. Come and get some of your holiday shopping done early by buying our calendars.

We are starting to look for sponsors for the 2014 calendar. We will have 12 sponsors. If you would like to be a sponsor, contact Janie White at 361/729-2133. Thanks to Albin Exterminating, the Friends of the Fulton Mansion, the Fulton Mansion State Historic Site, Hemingway’s Bar & Grill, JCW Photo Restoration, Morgan Stanley, Rockport Center for the Arts, Seaworthy Marine Supply, Swanson & Shaw, the Texas Maritime Museum, Wells Fargo Bank and an anonymous sponsor, for making the 2013 calendar possible.

We’re enjoying everyone who comes to the lab on Wednesday. Norinne Holman and Patsy Parr are there with their vast knowledge of the cemeteries of Aransas County. Our vertical files and research library are also available for your use. We’re gathering information on the families of Aransas County and can use your help in adding that information to our vertical reference files. The lab is open every Wednesday, except holidays, from 2 to 4 PM. We will be closed the Wednesday before Thanksgiving (November 27), Christmas Day (December 25), and New Year’s Day (January 1, 2014). Hope you’ll join us!

---Janie Collier White

ACHS BEGINS PLANS FOR NEW COUNTY HISTORY

The Book Committee of ACHS hosted a book workshop on July 30 to review ideas for producing a new county/pictorial history. ACHS will soon announce guidelines for family, church, organizational, and business histories to be included in the new book. You will not want to miss the opportunity to put your family history in the new book. Watch for details in the Fall Newsletter.

---David Murrah
FEATURE: Rockport’s Darkest Sunday
by Rosa Nava Krinsky

[Editor’s note: Rosa Nava Krinsky, who as a young girl not only witnessed the drowning tragedy of three of her girl friends at the Rockport beach in 1958, came very close to being a victim herself. As you will see in her essay, it was a heart-wrenching experience that has haunted her ever since. Told from the sole perspective of an eight-year old girl, Rosa’s account is extracted from a longer chapter in her manuscript for a forthcoming book about her growing up in Rockport in the 1950s, tentatively titled, My Life in Rockport.

Rosa’s recollection of the tragedy was prompted by the 50th anniversary story of the event, written by Norma Martinez, in May 24, 2008, issue of The Rockport Pilot. According to the paper, a total of seven drowned after some children wandered into unmarked deep water created by sand dredging near the beach. Those who drowned were Susana Virginia Torres, 9; Margarita Torres, 11; Oralia Cruz Tamez, 10; Dave W. Curby, 6; Mary Bailey, and her daughter Janice, 9; and Father Leonard Berry, 40. The Pilot’s 1958 article can be found online at http://www.rockportpilot.com/news/article_8a3ea9f3-e46a-547e-ab32-6ab677658223.html.

ACHS member Jo Ann Morgan arranged for the inclusion of this essay in the Newsletter.]

I was to turn nine years old that July, when in late May of 1958, a devastating tragedy happened in Rockport that would impact me forever. It is difficult to recall the story, as I was very young. Over the years, when I would ask for details from my peers, parents, grandparents and young teens who witnessed the event, no one remembered or refused to remember. Surely, I thought, I wasn’t the only one there! I still remember!
The Rockport Pilot in May 1958 also remembered.

Granted, many may have just erased this tragedy from their minds as if it never happened. After all, it was so many years ago, but the memory keeps barging into my mind many times every day, as though it were only yesterday.

Many families were affected and many, many more were touched. My three best friends, classmates and neighbors were suddenly gone forever—a situation an innocent eight year old could not understand. It meant being alone as I was that summer, with not one friend in the world. They had gone to another life, another world, all together, to run play and be happy…without me. I kept asking myself, “What had I done wrong that I was not taken with them?” Or, “What had I done right that I was still here, breathing, living, and existing?” Now, 55 years later, I still remember the lives of my three best friends, Susana, Margarita and Oralia. I want you to remember them too.

After I attended Sacred Heart Catholic School, the first year of public school was a whole new world. I met kids my age that lived in my neighborhood down at the other end of Mathis Street past Spencer Park, where I usually played. These girls became my best buds, Susana Torres, her older cousin, Margarita Torres and a new girl to the neighborhood, Oralia Tamez. We did everything together from eating our tortilla taco lunches behind the school building to walking home in a group and playing at the park after school. By the end of the third grade, most of us were eight or almost nine years old, and, at that age, having close friends was very important. I had built my own circle of friends and so looked forward to spending our summer at the beach together.

It was the first Sunday after the last day of school, in May of 1958. It was to be a beautiful sunny day and we had all planned to meet at the beach. Most parents always went, parking their cars at the water line, from where they watched the children play in knee-deep water. That particular Sunday, Susana, Oralia and I were playing in the water on tire tubes, while another group was splashing and playing “Pop the Whip” and having a good time. In a distant distance, I could hear my name being called from ashore. It was Pat and Sue Clark, shouting “Rosie, Rosie, wait for us.” I turned and started to walk towards shore to meet them.

As we returned to the other girls, I lost my direction and stopped to look around. The beach was really crowded since it was the first week-end of the summer break. I walked in several directions to find my friends with no avail. I assumed they had followed me to shore. We returned to shore to continue to look for them. When we didn’t see them, I found Oralia’s father, Mr. Tamez,

(Continued on following page)
(continued from p. 3)

“Where’s Oralia?” I asked. He replied, “Isn’t she with you!”

With some fright, I answered, “Oh yeah, but I came to get my friends and when I went back to join her and Susana, I couldn’t find her. Maybe she just drifted towards another direction.”

We went back to the water, yelling for Susana, Oralia and Margarita. Once in a while, we would forget about them and play. Suddenly, Mr. Tamez, appeared, still looking for Oralia. We told him we had not found her.

Apparently panicking, Mr. Tamez begins to yell for her. He rushed ashore to be sure she wasn’t sleeping in the car or collecting shells on the sea shore. He asked other parents if she were with their children. Alarmed, the parents began looking for their children.

Mr. Tamez returned to the water screaming “Oraliaaaaaa, Oraliaaaaaa,” but to no avail. Soon, other adults began the same routine, yelling and asking others close by if they had seen their children. Mothers suddenly started holding on to their children as they came after being called.

Suddenly, it was not a nice day any more. The sky became dark, as though a large blanket had been laid across the sky. Mr. Tamez was still in the water, still to find Oralia, when a boy from our neighborhood, Joe Martinez, saw him struggling to stay afloat, even though the water was not over his chest. He was a good swimmer, so I surmised that a big fish or shark must have caught him. I started praying, thinking that it could even be the end of the world.

Panic quickly set in among the parents. Joe ran into the water and had a difficult time from being towed under by a powerful undercurrent. Joe fell inside a deep hole, but was able to grab Mr. Tamez and managed to bring him ashore.

Mr. Tamez had swallowed quite a bit of water and was out of breath and exhausted. After he caught his breath, he knew the lost children had been caught in the same hole and current that almost took his life.

Very soon, all of the “compadres,” the men who had boats, brought them to the area. They formed a circle utilizing six big shrimp boats and began dredging with nets to see if they could somehow catch whatever was causing this mysterious panic.

The skies turned darker and a hush took over. No one seemed to be moving. Several families were huddled close and praying that their loved one would be found. We only knew of my three friends, Susana, age 9, Magalena, age 9 and Oralia, age 8, who were missing. As we watched the shrimp boats dredging the nets and occasionally picking up their anchors, we prayed we would not see the inevitable.

All of a sudden, the world seemed to stop. One boat pulled in its anchor, with something hooked to it. “What was it?” everyone wondered. We were in our car, and my mother pushed us down on the floor board to that we could not see.

I was determined to look, because it was my friends who were lost. As I stared at the object, I prayed it wasn’t Susana, Oralia nor Margarita. The other boats began to pull in their nets, and their catch was sickening. Screams and cries could be heard from the moms and dads that were watching from ashore.

It seemed an eternity before it was all over, with the dark haze still hovering over the beach area. There were a total of ten pulled from the deep water that afternoon, seven of whom had drowned. Among them were my missing three best friends as well as a visiting priest, and some tourists from out of town.

I began to sob uncontrollably. Was I being selfish? All I could think of was who my friends would be when school starts in September. Did I not deserve good friends? Why would God take these good people away from me and leave me all alone? Definitely, my priorities were definitely not in order. I would ponder these thoughts for many, many years.

In the 50’s, funeral homes were too expensive so bodies were viewed in homes. All the furniture was moved out of the tiny front room of the Tamez house to accommodate three little coffins. Oralia was in the middle and Susana and Margarita were on each side. They looked like angels sleeping. They were all dressed in their white Holy Communion dresses with their rosaries and bibles in their cupped hands. Every night, I would wear my Sunday best, walk down one block to the viewing, sit on the floor two feet from the coffins and say the rosary with the other “Sodality Girls” from our church. It was a week I shall never forget.

It was a lonely summer, and when September came around, I was lost. My memories of my friends were still so vivid I could not function. I would have nightmares during the night and wake up screaming. I would see images of nets or anchors with bodies in them. Mom would take me to spiritualists also prayed over me. Nothing helped. I could no longer go in the water at the beach any deeper than my ankles. I never learned to swim for this reason.

Occasionally now in my retirement years, I will go into the cemetery where all three of my childhood friends are buried side by side. It reminds me that, had Pat and Sue Clark not called to me to come to them on shore, I too would have met my fate.
ACHS1985.org

ACHS LAUNCHES EXPANDED WEBSITE

The Historical Society proudly announces the launch of our new website. It may be found at ACHS1985.org. We are very excited about it and hope you will enjoy it. The new site is designed to be interactive and informative. Thanks to board member Ray McLester, webmaster, for his hard work in getting the site up and running. We hope you will use it to look at photographs, ask for information, and share your history and comments with us.

The new site is still a work in progress, but it already offers a way to post comments, review photographs and newsletters, and participate in historical discussions. More is on the way.

For the time being, if you “google” the words, “Aransas County Historical Society,” you may get linked to the old website, aransashistory.org, which we do not own and do not maintain. We are negotiating to try to have the old link redirect inquiries to the new site.

Thanks again to Ray McLester for his hard work

—Janie White

SCREENSHOTS FROM THE NEW WEBSITE: The opening page (above, top) features a gallery of rotating photographs from recent ACHS Historical Calendars. Other screens offer visitors interactive opportunities to discuss items of historical interest, purchase books of local interest via the internet, and to read essays and articles pertaining to Aransas County history. If you have suggestions for content or improvement, log onto the website and leave your information.
Friends of the History Center

CENTER RECEIVES GAZEBO, CONTINUES FUND RAISING

A lovely gazebo was donated to the History Center by the Leadership Aransas County Class XVII. It was dedicated on June 27 with a crowd of over sixty participating.

A fund-raising campaign for the renovation of the Bruhl-Paul-Johnson house was begun by mail in June. Our goal is $65,000. On July 1, we have ca. $43,000. We are receiving contributions every day and hope to reach our goal by early fall.

We expect to begin work on the building this summer with Richard Dias as general contractor. A committee has worked to create a budget within reach of the funding provided by the Friends and the County through Aransas Pathways.

The Friends also are leasing a small office space at 2734 North Hwy 35 where we can hold meetings in the conference room, house a computer, and store items that have been donated for future exhibits and research.

---Pam Stranahan

Aransas Pathways

BRIDGE, KAYAKING, BIRDING SITES PLANNED

The Steering Committee continues to work out logistics to complete projects that will create the vision of multiple venues connected by trails.

Besides renovation of the History Center, the committee is recommending construction of a kiosk and bridge at Shellcrete Square/Tule Creek West. The bridge will connect the existing parking with a kiosk that will feature descriptive signs about the venues and opportunities for recreation in the Rockport-Fulton area.

Several birding sites have been improved, including Ivy Lane, Tule East and the Castro Nature Sanctuary. Numerous kayaking sites have been identified with improvements beginning at Airport Road and Fowler Lake.

---Pam Stranahan

Aransas County Historical Commission

THC PRESENTS AWARD

The Aransas County Historical Commission (ACHC) for the third year has received the Texas Historical Commission’s 2012 Distinguished Service Award for its members’ contribution of over 2,000 hours devoted to history and preservation. The certificate was presented at a commissioners court meeting on July 8th.

Earlier in the year the ACHC hosted the Dedication Program for Texas Parks and Wildlife Marine Laboratory’s Historical Marker. In the fall there will be the dedication of the Historical Marker for the Wood-Jackson House and the McLester Cemetery.

---Carolyn Cauley

WELCOME NEW ACHS MEMBERS!

Steve Aiken, Lee & Frank Elder, Ed Hegen, Howard & Robin Jones, Letha Keiffer, Jean Schindler, Joan Truelove, and Sally Windrup