ACHS has extended its deadline for submissions for its forthcoming county history until February 1, 2015.

“We have had a large number of submittals for the family history section,” said Marsha Hendrix, chair of the ACHS Book Committee. “But, we want to make sure that every family has a chance to be included.”

The Society is also seeking historical entries for past and current business, and for churches, schools, governmental entities, and non-profit organizations. “We want the book to be comprehensive and inclusive, and we need everyone’s help,” Hendrix said. “This book will give every family, business and organization the chance to become a part of the permanent history of Aransas County.”

The new history will include an overview narrative of the county’s history, as well as sections for families, businesses, churches, schools and organizations. It also provides the opportunity for families to honor individuals on a special memorial page. Sponsoring businesses will also be recognized in chronological order.

There is no charge for any of the entries, except for memorials and sponsoring businesses, which are $200 each. Guidelines are available on request for each section and may be obtained by contacting Marsha Hendrix at (361) 729-0386 x 26, or by email at Marsha.Hendrix@thc.state.tx.us.
FROM THE LAB: A message from the President . . . . .

On behalf of the Board of ACHS, I would like to extend to all our members Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Wonderful New Year greetings! This time of year can be joyful for some and sad for many, because there are so many memories tied to the holidays. We hope you have a very special and joyful holiday this year.

This is a special time for ACHS as we are in the middle of gathering stories for the forthcoming new history of Aransas County. Even though the county is nearly 150 years old, it has only had one full-length history written about it. In 1997, Sue Hastings’ and William Allen’s fine book, *Aransas: The Life of a Texas Coastal Community*, was published under the sponsorship of ACHS and dozens of other patrons and donors. It provides a timeless and extensive historical narrative about the county.

There is also a shorter, and very rare, history that was written for the 1970 county Centennial celebration, entitled *A Glimpse of our Past*. This little book, apparently written by multiple unnamed authors, does a nice job of summarizing the county’s history to 1970 and includes several church histories. ACHS plans to reprint it in the near future.

What is missing from our literature are the many stories of individuals, families, businesses and institutions that collectively are the history of Aransas County. Now, during the Society’s 30th Anniversary Year of 2015, ACHS hopes to fill that gap with its new history. Preparations are well underway, but there is much to be written and collected, especially from non-profit organizations. We will be sending out a letter very soon. Meanwhile, if you have a story you want to include, please get in touch with Marsha Hendrix at 463-9894 or by email at Marsha.Hendrix@thc.state.tx.us.

I must admit that I was somewhat disappointed at the turnout for the presentation on November 13 by the official Texas State Historian Bill O’Neal, but the crowd that was there seemed to thoroughly enjoy his talk on Texas musical traditions. He successfully made all of us recall great memories as he gave an excellent overview of Texas music and musicians. Having grown up near the likes of Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly, Buddy Knox, and Jimmy Dean, I was proud to hear Bill single them out in his presentation.

And, those of you who were not there really missed out on the after-program singing when Bill and I cut loose on the Stamps-Baxter Quartet radio theme song, “Give the World a Smile Each Day.” If you don’t know that song, you haven’t lived in Texas as long as I have!

------David Murrah
Sharing Memories of Mary Herring Patrick
Growing Up in Rockport from 1910 to 1921
by Janie White

In the early 1970s, Emory M. Spencer of Rockport attempted to help Texas historian A. Ray Stephens collect information for a history of Aransas County, and sent letters to residents who had lived the history. Mary Patrick responded with a letter recording her memories from the period 1910 to 1921, a letter that is now preserved in the ACHS archives.

She was born Mary Pearl Herring in 1902. She and my mother (Judy Sorenson Collier, born in 1910) and aunt (Iris Sorenson, in 1900) were first cousins. When they would get together, they would sometimes reminisce. As a little girl, I would listen and imagine what things must have been like during that time.

Mary especially recalled the old Rockport School, which was located north of Laurel Street directly behind where the historic Rockport School is located today. In her letter, she wrote the following:

Students and their teachers walked to school, no matter the distance, and all carried their lunches. The old school house was two stories. The lower grades were downstairs and higher grades upstairs. When the school bell rang we had to form a line and march to our respective rooms. Athletics consisted of tennis and both boys and girls basket ball teams.

Our drinking water at school was on a bench out under the trees. Each bucket had a dipper in it. When one wanted a drink one might have to take the dipper and first push the wooly worms aside, before getting a drink; but we didn’t seem to mind and never heard of the wooly worms causing any ill effects from sharing our drinking water.

Mrs. Norvell’s little music room was on the school grounds, and all young girls and many of the boys took music lessons from her at one time or the other during our school years. She was also the art teacher.

Mary remembered that the first picture shows were shown in the “old ‘Airdome,’ an open air theatre without a roof.” One movie she recalled was “The Black Box,” a serial produced by Universal Studio in 1915. She also remembered “Dante’s Inferno”, released in 1911 as the first full-length Italian film. She also related how traveling tent shows would come to Rockport for short stays.

Mary said that the “center of social activities was the Pavilion.” This unique structure was on a pier that extended into Aransas Bay about where Main Street intersects with Water Street and is often referred to as the Bailey Pavilion. “Music recitals, band concerts, and Chautauquas were held in the Pavilion,” Mary recalled. “Also, [we had] bathing parties where one could dress and undress in the little rooms surrounding the Pavilion. To pay 15 cents and get to use one of these little rooms to don a bathing suit was a special treat when a child was allowed the money for this extravagance.”

Mary fondly recalled dances at the Pavilion. They must have been beautiful with the “moonlight on the water, the gentle breeze,” and the “dance music.” The hairstyle of the day was to wear Maline bows, which were made from a kind of net used by milliners. The bows made them feel “like a princess at the ball.”

Sadly, the Pavilion was destroyed by the 1919 Hurricane, and dances were then held upstairs in the R. P. Bracht building. The town still liked to have fun. Mary described “a group of girls who would go to dances together:”

We were chaperoned by Mr. Charlie Johnson, who with his two pretty daughters, would walk to each of our homes to take us to the dance, then walk us home afterwards. You may know that we all loved Mr. Charlie, for he was responsible for our getting to attend many a dance and party.

Now you know why I loved hearing these stories, and enjoy reading them. I truly would have loved to experience those romantic days.
Friends of the History Center (FHC)

The History Center has had a full slate of exhibits and activities recently. On November 1, it featured opening of the exhibit, Newseum of Aransas County: the 145th Anniversary of the Rockport Pilot, as well as hosting a signing by Pilot editor Mike Probst of his new book, Thirty Years Through the News/Lens: A History of Aransas County in News Highlights & Photos. A large turnout enjoyed the presentations from local dignitaries and comments by Probst. The exhibit features artifacts and posters related to publishing, printing and the news industry and continues through mid-January.

The previous exhibit, Connie Hagar: First Lady of Texas Birders, was enjoyed by record number of people during the Hummer Bird Celebration in mid-September.

On December 6-7, the Center sponsored the seventh annual Christmas Tour of Historic Homes, which featured homes on Key Allegro, in Live Oak Heights (Old Rockport), and in Futon. Nearly 400 people visited the six locations. Each year different homes are selected and docents dress in attire that fits with the eras of the homes.

On January 16 at 4 pm, in co-sponsorship with ACHS, the Center will premiere ACHS’s exhibit, Rokport-Fulton Schools and Sports: Great Scenes from the ACHS Photo Files. The exhibit will be featured through March 14.

The History Center at 801 E. Cedar St. is open Fridays and Saturdays, 10 AM - 2 PM. Its website may be found at www.aransashistorycenter.org.

County Historical Commission (ACHC)

During the fall months, the ACHC unveiled two historical markers. On October 18, the Joe A. and Bertha Harper House at 811 N. Live Oak received the prestigious designation by the Texas Historical Commission as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark—it’s highest recognition. The new marker tells the story of Judge Harper and his wife Bertha, who was an adored teacher for many generations at Rockport School. In the 1920s, Judge Harper led the fight to build the “Hug the Coast” Highway and the construction of the first Copano Bay bridge. The home is currently owned by Sue Travis.

The second marker event was the rededication on November 15 of the one at the Lamar Cemetery which replaced one that had been damaged. Attendees recalled the recovery of the site in the 1940s. Collin Jackson serves as chairman of the Historical Commission and Kitty Angel is markers chair. The Commission’s website is www.aransascounty.org.

Aransas Pathways

Cold wet weather did not dampen the grand opening of the Pathways Center on November 12 at the Tule Creek location on Business Highway 35. Local officials dedicated the new pavilion and bridge, and unveiled new interpretive kiosks on History, Birding, Kayaking and Hiking/cycling. Each kiosk provides information about attractions where one can experience each topic. Historical markers, heritage signage and institutions are featured on the History segment. For more information, go to www.AransasPathways.com or download the TourRockport-Fulton app for smart phones.