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ACHS NEWSLETTER

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WORLD WAR I SYMPOSIUM ATTRACTS LARGE CROWD FROM THROUGHOUT SOUTH TEXAS

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ACHS Officers & Trustees
 (year term expires)

- Cheryl Livingston, President (2019)
- Marsha Hendrix, Vice Pres. (2020)
- Janie White, Treasurer (2019)
- David J. Murrah, Acting Sec. (2019)
- Ernest Camehl (2021)
- John Jackson (2020)
- Jo Ann Morgan (2019)
- Pam Stranahan (2021)
- Jeanie Schindler (2021)
- Joan Truelove (2020)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
 David J. Murrah

Aransas County's hosting of the spring meeting of the South Texas Historical Association (STHA) on April 7 brought a good turnout and lots of praise from STHA's president, Carroll Brincefield from Hallettsville.

"STHA is hoping to make Rockport a spring home," Carroll told us in an email after the meeting: "Everyone was so helpful and the love of history and preserving it in your community is so strong. I so appreciated everything everyone contributed."

STHA's program on the Centennial celebrating the end of World War I was sponsored locally by HEB and by nearly all of the county's historical organizations, including the Historical Commission, Friends of the History Center, the Aransas County Historical Society, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the Texas Maritime Museum, and the Fulton Mansion State Historic Site.

The day-long program was held at the Fulton Mansion Education & History Center. Over 50 participants enjoyed talks, vendors and food.

The sessions included both out-of-town and local presenters. Maritime Museum curator Phil Barnes told of Aransas



Dr. Mark Robbins, associate professor of history at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, delivered the wrap-up talk at the World War I Symposium on April 7, in a presentation entitled, "The War at Home." Photo courtesy Phil Albin.

County's involvement in WW I by showing a variety of photographs of the Heldenfels shipyard that operated in south Rockport from 1917-1920.

Hannah Hawes of the History Center spoke about a scrapbook created by Veronika Klaeser, a secretary of the Heldenfels. Hannah related the importance of preserving documents to enable researchers to access history first-hand.

—Pam Stranahan & David Murrah

FROM THE LAB: A message from the President

Laughter and some great memories were shared at the **Annual Meeting and Program** held on February 20th. The program was entitled, “Everything is True, Except the Parts I Made Up: Quirky Quotes from the Past,” and, as anticipated, became a light-hearted topic with classic nuggets of wisdom mixed in. Members arrived with some good stories and funny quips. Thanks to all who participated. Such a fun evening punctuated with lots of laughs seemed appropriate for the 2018 Annual Meeting.

Our home base at the Old Rockport School is still unavailable to us and planned renovations to the multiple buildings on the campus will keep us in a state of uncertainty for a while longer. Regular communication with school district continue. Two of the lessons of Hurricane Harvey are to be patient, and to get comfortable with a certain amount of uncertainty. As soon as we have answers we will pass them on.

On March 24th the **Stroll Through Rockport** brought out folks to walk and learn about historical buildings still standing and some that are no longer there but will be rebuilt. The numbers weren’t as high as last year but it was a good day to be outdoors and hear stories about significant landmarks in

Rockport. Thanks to Janie White for sharing information about the Old Rockport School and dispelling a few rumors about the future of the building.

By the time you read this the **South Texas Historical Association World War I Symposium** will have been held at The Fulton Mansion. ACHS was one of the sponsors of this day-long symposium to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the United States entering World War I. There has been strong interest in this topic and the important contributions of the military in Aransas County. According to Carroll Brincefield, president of STHA, the group was very pleased with Rockport and Fulton’s arrangements and hospitality.

Once again, I am providing a list of our current officers’ contact information, since we are still without our Lab. Thank you for your patience.

—Cheryl Livingston

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An August to Remember (But we are not talking about the storm!)

By Janie White

I hope everyone has been enjoying the 2018 calendar. I must confess that I made an error on the August calendar page. I put August 1, 2018 on Tuesday when it should have been on Wednesday, and therefore the whole month is off by one day. My face is red! I guess my Harvey brain was still at work. Please make adjustments for my error and accept my apologies.

This year we are going to change the way we do the 2018 Calendar Contest. We have many wonderful photographs that have been entered in previous contests. We are going to re-enter those for the 2018 contest. It will be great fun to see all the photographs again. We will review photographs entered by different individuals in previous years and select 35 for the judges to choose from. (The average number of photos entered per year is about 35.) The judges will select the winning photographs in late May. Photographs that have been in earlier calendars will not be eligible to be in the 2019 calendar. We decided to do it this

way because the logistics of scanning your photographs when our lab is not accessible are just too difficult. We think it will be fun to use contest entries from past years and hope you will understand.

The schedule for the release of the 2019 calendar will be sometime in mid-September. We’ll announce the date in a summer newsletter. We believe that doing the calendar in this fashion will highlight all of the wonderful photographs you have entered in our contest in past years. We are confident that future contests will be done the same way it was in the past. Start looking for your photographs to enter in 2019 for the 2020 calendar.

Thanks for accepting my apologies on the August 2018 calendar page. I know we will have our wonderful proofreaders back at work for the 2019 calendar. If you would like to help us work on the 2019 calendar please contact me at JC-white@SWBell.net. I hope to see you soon!

THE GREAT WAR AND ITS IMPACT ON TEXAS AND ARANSAS COUNTY: PART 2

by Pam Stranahan

[EDITORS NOTE: On April 7, the South Texas Historical Association met in Rockport to help us commemorate the centennial of the end of World War I.

In March, the ACHS Newsletter carried Part One of this article, which provided background information on the war and how it affected Texas and Aransas County. Part Two below finishes the series.]

An outbreak of Spanish influenza in 1918 weakened the military personnel around San Antonio. At Camp Wise the epidemic sickened 1,000 with 23 deaths reported, while overseas only one member of the balloon corps was killed in action. The first soldier known to have the flu was in Kansas on March 4. Within two weeks 1,100 soldiers were admitted to that base hospital. The pandemic lasted just 15 months but was the deadliest disease outbreak in human history, killing between 50 and 100 million people worldwide. An exact number is unlikely to be determined due to poor record keeping. But it's clear the pandemic killed more people in a year than AIDS has killed in 40 years, more than the bubonic plague killed in a century (Barry, John M., "Journal of the Plague Year," *Smithsonian*, November 2017, pp. 34-43).

The U.S. declared war on Germany after the Zimmerman letter was released. In this telegram Germany promised Mexico the return of lost territories – Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California – if Mexico would support the German war effort. This sent additional alarm throughout the Lone Star state.



Every public school was required to display an American flag and to spend at least ten minutes a day in teaching patriotism. "Give Till It Hurts," "Do Your Bit," and "Buy More Bonds," were familiar slogans. Texans bought Liberty and Victory Bonds and War Savings Stamps and contributed to the Red Cross and Salvation Army. They also cooperated in the food-conservation program known as "Hooverizing," which included wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, meatless Tuesdays, and porkless Thursdays and Saturdays; fat and

sugar were to be conserved every day. War gardens were planted, and Texas farmers devoted new space to food crops. (Handbook of Texas online, "World War I")

In Aransas County many of the same war-time trends were present. When Germany declared war on France the U.S. proclaimed neutrality. But there was some persecution of families with Germanic names. The Brachts in Rockport found themselves in an uncomfortable position. Lola Bracht Woellert remembered that "during the war, we didn't want to be known as German; people said they had a spy on Klaeser because of how he



spoke." That family changed their name to Glass (Allen, William and Sue Hastings Taylor. *Aransas: The Life of a Texas Coastal County*, p.229).

Lola's brother, Fred Bracht, signed up for active duty – one of forty men from Aransas County who volunteered; forty-seven were drafted. After delivering horses to the army in San Antonio, Fred and Oliver Brundrett were surprised to be drafted. Marvin Davis was a local doughboy. And Travis Bailey flew his Curtiss "Jenny" airplane to Rockport on the weekend of September 28, 1918. A group of citizens gathered and gave him a silver cup to recognize him as the "first

Rockport boy to visit us in an aeroplane." Archie Arthur McLester posed in front of his tent at Camp Wilson in San Antonio (*Calendar of Historical Photographs* from the Aransas County Historical Society, May 2018).

Fred and Carl Heldenfels wanted to support the war effort. They owned a lumber yard in Beeville and Fred had an architecture degree. They decided that they could build ships but needed a site with water access. After several locations turned them down, they found that Rockport was interested. Rockport donated 13 acres provided they stayed five years. The Emergency Fleet Corporation contracted for four wooden ships to be delivered to Port Aransas by December 1, 1918. The shipyard was constructed in October 1917 and the first keel was laid in January 1918. In order to launch the ships the channel had to be dredged deeper. At the peak of construction, over 900 men worked at Heldenfels Shipyard. The First National Bank converted its top floor to lodging and citizens were urged to board workers. Some workers took lunch with Lucille Lathrop on South Church Street. With the Armistice (November 11, 1918), the ships were no longer needed but Emergency Fleet Corporation agreed for two ships to be completed and two were made into barges. The *Baychester* was launched on July 31, 1919 with many dignitaries attending. The *Zuniga* was launched September 9, 1919.

Legion posts were organized by veterans who returned from World War I. The Refugio post was chartered as the Martin McDonald Post (misspelled McDonnell – the first Refugio soldier to die in battle in 1918). The American Legion became the U.S. wartime veterans organization. It was formed in Paris on March 15, 1919, by three officers of the American Expeditionary Forces and chartered by the U.S. Congress on September 16, 1919. In addition to organizing commemorative events, the Legion supports activities and provides assistance at VA hospitals and clinics. The last American World War I veteran, Frank Buckles, died in 2011.

For more information about the World War I
Centennial in Texas, go to this website:
<https://www.texasworldwar1centennial.org/>



Members of the ACHS Board of Trustees the photographer was able to catch after the Annual Meeting include (seated L to R) Janie White, Marsha Hendrix, Pam Stranahan, (back L to R) Ernest Camehl, David Murrah, Cheryl Livingston, and Jo Ann Morgan. Not pictured are John Jackson, Jeanie Schindler, and Joan Truelove.

Photos courtesy Veronika Camehl

SCENES FROM THE FEBRUARY ACHS ANNUAL MEETING

Long-time member David Herring catches up with fellow ACHS members Polly Bracht (center) and Sue Weir while waiting for the ACHS Annual Meeting to begin. The program was held at the Fulton Mansion Education & History Center.



Mary Clare Kane (L) and Elaine Albin seem happy to pay their yearly dues at the ACHS Annual Meeting. After all, membership is a bargain and starts at only \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families. They also enjoyed the light-hearted program on Quirky Quotes from the Past.

UPCOMING HISTORICAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

at the History Center, 801 E. Cedar St.

April 22 2:00 pm - Program - "The History of the Texas Guard" by Joe Riekers

May 6 2:00 pm - Program - "The War Horses" by Howard Jones

at the Texas Maritime Museum

April 25, 10:00 am - Grand Re-opening

at Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary, South First St. at Church St.

April 21, 8:30 -11:30 am work day in garden

May 26, 9:30 - 11:30 am Connie Hagar Day

at Daughters of the Republic of Texas

May 5, 11:30 am Luncheon featuring Holly Heinsohn on "The Runaway Scrape"

at AC Historical Commission

May 9, 5:15 pm Business meeting at Fulton Schoolhouse

at Bayside Historical Society

May 12, 2:00 pm Talk by Amy Borgens, Texas State Marine Archeologist

Father of ACHS Member Lola Smith Inducted into Sports Fishing Hall of Fame at Maritime Museum

The 2018 inductee into the Texas Maritime Museum's Perry R. Bass Memorial Sports Fishing Wall of Fame was the late pioneer local fishing and hunting guide Henry Ballou (1909-1962).

Ballou was a Rockport native born February 4, 1909 and lived his entire life in Rockport. He was one of the first fishing guides in the area and sometimes made two trips per day, bringing in hundreds of fish. In the winter, he would take duck hunters to his blinds in Allyn's Bight. Ballou was a mentor to several guides over the years, including former Wall of Fame Inductee, James Fox.

Ballou was nominated and selected by his peers who were previously inducted into the Wall of Fame. The Wall of Fame is located in the Robert J. Hewitt/ O'Connor & Hewitt Foundation Collections & Education Center.

The exhibit opened in 2007. The noted artist, the late Herb Booth, was inducted last year.

—adapted from *The Rockport Pilot* (online), March 22, 2018



Museum curator Phil Barnes presents a commemorative plaque to Lola Smith, daughter of Wall of Fame inductee Henry Ballou. Photo by Stephen Smith, courtesy *Rockport Pilot*.