Whatever Happened to Rocky Point?
You are cordially invited to see and hear the answer in a program presented by two distinguished members of ACHS, Jerry Brundrett & John Jackson, at the ACHS ANNUAL MEETING Tuesday, February 26, 6:30 pm Woman’s Club Building

MEMBERS ONLY

You will not want to miss this year’s Annual Meeting on Tuesday, February 26, as two renowned experts on the history of the Rockport Harbor will present a fascinating program on the history of Rocky Point and the harbor.

The program will be at the Rockport’s Woman’s Club, located just a short distance from the original Rocky Point.

Both Jerry Brundrett and John Jackson are natives of Rockport whose families have been here for decades. Jerry serves as county surveyor and John is a financial advisor and is author of a book about his family’s long involvement in fishing, entitled, Taking the Tide: My Family’s Ebb and Flow in Rockport, Texas.

Please note that the program will be at the Woman’s Club Building at the Rockport Harbor. It is for members only, and memberships will be available at the door. There is no cost for members. Memberships may be renewed at the door.

The program will follow a short business meeting, as well as an announcement about an exciting event this summer.
FROM THE LAB: A message from the President . . . .

Happy 2019. The year has been one of big changes already.

Exciting news is scattered about in this newsletter so read it cover to cover! Hint, hint: Rockport has been home to a classic Texas character, Grammy award winning singer/songwriter, and a true artist. I’m talking about the one and only Guy Clark, who died on May 17, 2016. His music lives on and is only growing in popularity. Stay tuned, save the date August 1, and prepare for a truly special evening.

Estelle Stair Gallery studio space in downtown Rockport has become our temporary home for Wednesday gatherings and our monthly Board of Trustees meetings. Please join us on Wednesdays from 2:00-3:30 p.m. The space is lovely and attendance is growing every week. Use the entrance on Water Street.

For now, the ACHS Lab contents are safely housed in a storage unit that is temperature and humidity controlled. The school district was kind enough to keep our items safe for over a year and we now have them back under our control.

As usual I have a lot of people to thank for their contributions to our organization. We tell people we have a working Board and ours go above the call of duty and contribute in so many ways. Special thanks to Janie White, David Murrah, Ty Husak, Pam Stranahan and John Jackson. All of the above have been multi-tasking for many months! Thanks to JoAnn Morgan, Ernest Camehl and Jean Schindler. Although Norinne Holman is not on our Board, she continues to be a huge help with our program refreshments, proofreading the calendar, providing good advice and humor, a great supporter of all things historical!

Mark your calendars! We have two big program dates coming up in the near future. Tuesday, February 26th at 6:30 p.m. is our Annual Members only Meeting at Woman’s Club. A program about the history of Rockport Harbor will be presented by Jerry Brundrett, John Jackson, with assistance by Janie White. It will be a great time for you to buy a 2019 Historical Calendar and renew your ACHS membership.

Then, on Thursday March 28th the Historical Society and the History Center for Aransas County will co-sponsor a program titled: “Don Francisco Yturria: The Beginnings of a South Texas Entrepreneur – 1830-1870,” by Lilia Garcia. Yturria was her great-great-great grandfather as well that of her cousin Monica Burdette of Rockport who serves as a Commissioner on The Texas Historical Commission. Lilia Garcia teaches at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville and is also a Commissioner on THC. This program will be presented at 6:30 p.m. at the Fulton Mansion History & Education Center. This program is free and open to the public.

Be sure to check out our new improved web site, ACHS1885.org or AransasCountyHistoricalSociety.org.

The 2020 Historical Society Calendar photo contest kicks off at the Annual Meeting. Start thinking about those photos you’ve been stockpiling to submit. They can be dropped off at the Estelle Stair Gallery during Lab hours on Wednesday.

We want to hear your stories and enjoy a leisurely visit.
———Cheryl Livingston

WEB SITE IMPROVEMENTS

We have begun work on much needed updates to the Historical Society’s web site. We have added two new web addresses:

www.AransasCountyHistoricalSociety.org and AransasCountyHistorical.org in addition to the original, www.achs1985.org. The new web addresses, or “domain names” should be easier to remember and associate with the Historical Society. Any of the three of them will get you to the home page.

The web site format has also been updated to make the site more visually appealing. The site is designed to work equally well on computers, tablets or smart phones. The background image, best visible on computer screens, is a photograph of a shellcrete building wall which relates well to the ACHS Mission Statement (available on web site). On most computers and tablets, the site utilizes a “parallax scrolling” effect so that when scrolling on a page, the foreground moves over the background for a multi-dimensional look.

The content of the web site has been updated, as well. The events calendar in the site is updated frequently for upcoming ACHS events. We are putting the current “hot item” at the top of the homepage, such as our calendar sales. Newsletters are posted to the site in PDF format for viewing or download when we are ready to post them online. A PayPal button has been added to the homepage so that anyone may make donations using credit cards via PayPal’s secure online purchasing application.

In the future we will add PayPal payment processing for memberships and History Store items, so that they may be purchased securely online.

———Ty Husak
ACHS TO PRESENT TRIBUTE TO GUY CLARK:
MEMBERS CAN BUY PRIME RESERVED SEATS AT NO EXTRA COST!

Verlon Thompson and Shawn Camp are touring a special tribute show to the late songwriter, Guy Clark, who grew up in Rockport. This concert has been playing to sell-out crowds around the country.

ACHS is bringing their concert to Rockport on August 1 and is offering its members first opportunity to buy reserved seat tickets for this special event. Seating is limited to 280 in the intimate setting of the La Palma Event Center.

Here is your only opportunity to buy near-the-front reserved seats for the general admission price of $30, but **you must purchase your tickets by March 15**. After that, tickets will go on sale to the general public as general admission in open seating. Purchases are limited to 4 per member. You may purchase these special tickets at the Annual Meeting on February 26, or by mail when you complete the form below.

| Name__________________________________________________ |
| Address________________________________________________ |
| City, State ZIP___________________________________________ |
| Email__________________________________________________ |
| Phone number__ ___________________________________________ |

**COMPLETE AND RETURN TO ACHS, BOX 702, ROCKPORT, TX 78381 BY MARCH 1 TO GET RESERVED SEAT STATUS.**

**NUMBER OF TICKETS**

(LIMITED TO 4 PER MEMBER)

Enclose your check for $30 per ticket (payable to ACHS) and mail to address above by March 15. Tickets will be sent to you via return mail.
Prospects for Rockport and Aransas County looked good in early 1919. World War I had made it necessary for the United States to have ships to transport supplies to the troops overseas. According to the Corpus Christi Caller in February 1919, once Heldenfels Brothers signed a contract with the Emergency Fleet Corporation to establish a shipyard that would employ 660 men, the population of Rockport swelled from 600 to 3,000.

At one point over nine hundred men were employed at Heldenfels Brothers. But the construction soon came to an end. An armistice ending the “Great War” was signed on November 11, 1918, and the original contract was cancelled. Only the four hulls that were underway were completed. However, the Heldenfels were still advertising for workers in the Austin American as late as April 1919.

In early 1919, one of Rockport’s famous hotels met with a sad ending. The Del Mar Hotel was built in the late 1880s at a cost of $52,500 to satisfy an agreement that had been made when the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad was extended to Rockport. But, by 1916, the old wooden structure was standing empty, and, on April 15, 1919 at five in the morning, a fire began within it and burned for several days.

Some say that the fire burned for nine days. The Corpus Christi fire department was called to help fight the fire. They left Corpus at 5:30 in the morning, but reached Rockport at 8:30 because of poor roads. (A road from Rockport to Aransas Pass was supposedly being built at that time. The placing of the surfacing was “well underway.” One can’t help but wonder if this was the road that slowed the firemen’s progress from Corpus Christi.) There are reports that the fire started from a cigarette thrown on the floor by one of a group of men who were gambling in the building.

Later that April, Mayor Brice of Rockport was in Austin seeking $50,000 from the State Highway Commission to help build a causeway across Copano Bay. Previously, Aransas County voters had approved a bond issue for the causeway, which was to cost “not less than $400,000.” The State granted its help, and county leaders sought an additional $50,000 from the Federal government.

As the year progressed, other events attracted national attention. Plans for the launching of the first wooden hull being built at Heldenfels were well advanced. The President’s wife, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, had chosen the name Baychester for the name of the 3,500-ton ship. After the ship was launched, it was to be towed to Beaumont where it would be outfitted to cost $200,000.

In the first half of 1919, Aransas County citizens were optimistic about the future. Hotels were preparing for tourists to fill their rooms with people who came to Rockport to enjoy the sea breeze, especially after this first summer after the end of World War I. But the future proved to be life changing.

Look for a continuation of the history of that fateful year in the next issue of the Aransas County Historical Society Newsletter.
WE HAVE A NEW TEMPORARY HOME!

Like many others, ACHS is still displaced by Harvey but we have rented a place to meet for our weekly gathering. Come visit us at the back of the Estelle Stair Gallery in downtown Rockport. Entrance is at the back from Water Street.

2:00-3:30 pm
Wednesdays

SAVE THE DATE!
MARCH 28, 2019
6:30 pm at the Fulton Mansion History & Education Center

Don Francisco Yturria: The Beginnings of a South Texas Entrepreneur, 1830-1870 by Lilia Garcia.
Jointly sponsored by The Aransas County Historical Society and the Friends of the History Center
SOUTH TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION TO MEET IN ROCKPORT APRIL 6

Program features Railroads of South Texas

The South Texas Historical Association (STHA) returns to Rockport April 6 for its spring conference.

The meeting, open to the general public, will be at the Aquarium Education Center, 706 Navigation Circle, on Saturday, April 6, from 9 am to 3 pm.

Speakers for the session include the following:

George Cooper (professor of History Lone Star College) – Railroads of South Texas

Lisa Neely (Archivist at the King Ranch) - The History of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Narrow Gauge Railway

Ken Stavinoha (chair of Colorado County Historical Commission, president of Eagle Lake Depot, Inc) – The United States Railroads and the Great War.

Information will also be given on Rockport’s former rail line, the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railway.

Vendor tables are open for anyone. A $10.00 donation is requested for lunch and refreshments.

The event is being hosted by the Aransas County Historical Commission and the ACHS.

For reservations for lunch, contact Carroll Brincefield at brincefieldc@gmail.com.

ACHS AND ACHC PLACE ORAL HISTORY TAPES AT THE SOUTH TEXAS ARCHIVES

Over the years the Aransas County Historical Commission (ACHC) and the ACHS have recorded oral interviews with local folks. The project was especially active in the 1990s when Kathryn Winkelman, Geneive Hunt, Raulie Irwin and Sue Hastings were gathering stories. These interviews, which were originally recorded on cassette tapes became fragile, so they were transferred to CDs by Jim Reynolds, Scott Wagert and Phil Stranahan. Recently, they were transferred to a digital flash drive as technology in recording is ever changing.

In 2018 the ACHC and ACHS approved a proposal to give the original cassette tapes (70) and transcripts (24) to TAMU Kingsville, South Texas Archives, in the James C. Jernigan Library, as recommended by the Texas State Archives and Library system. There they will be in a safe environment and available to future generations.

These same interviews were also deposited with the Aransas County Historical Commission, the Aransas County Historical Society and the History Center where both the digital recordings on a flash drive and the hard copy transcripts are available. Lists of the 70 interviews and 24 transcripts may be viewed at those organizations.

Some of the last names of people whose interviews have been transcribed include Bissett, Bowles, Covarrubi, Dickey, Domingues, Pina, Frandolig, Kleyapas, Mitchell, Gibson, Goff, Irwin, Harrell, Heinsohn, Johnson, Rouquette, Silberisen, Sorenson, Guynes, and Wendell.

Carol Sparks Keller
(1937-2019)

We regret to note the passing of our friend and long-time ACHS member and former trustee Carol Sparks Keller. She died February 1, 2019 in Rockport. She was 81.

Carol was born on November 14, 1937 in Refugio to Milton and Gracie Sparks. She had a passion for teaching and was a distinguished speech pathologist and educator. She was a member of The Daughters of the Republic of Texas and also served as secretary for the ACHS.

She is survived by her husband Max Keller; one daughter, Gail (John W.) Kring; seven grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.

A memberships in the Aransas County Historical Society makes a great gift!

Only $20 for individual or $30 for family. Send recipient’s name and address to us along with a check, payable to ACHS, and we will do the rest.

ACHS, BOX 702
ROCKPORT, TX 78381