ACHS NEWSLETTER
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ACHS AND MARITIME MUSEUM TO COMMEMORATE 1919 HURRICANE WITH JOINT PROGRAM ON 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF STORM

Bobby Jackson to Present Re-Enactment of Great-Grandfather’s Experience in the Storm

The anniversary of the 1919 storm will not go unnoticed as the Aransas County Historical Society is teaming with the Texas Maritime Museum to present a program on Saturday, September 14, the exact 100th anniversary of the storm.

The presentation, entitled “The Worst Hurricane in History,” will feature a historical re-enactment by historian Bobby Jackson, whose great-grandparents live through the storm and recorded their memories.

David Murrah and Janie White will provide background information and a photo presentation to accompany the narrative.

The program will be at 11:00 AM at the Texas Maritime Museum. It is free and open to the public.


The storm was one of the deadliest in South Texas history, claiming more than 300 lives in Texas, and perhaps as many as 600. It also destroyed much of downtown Rockport, including the famous beach hotels.

Coffee and donuts will be provided before and after the presentation.
Greetings from your ACHS President. It’s been a busy few months since our last newsletter. We’ve done a good job of remembering the past while preserving and celebrating the present.

Our memberships have increased by 23 in 2019, we’re working on putting together another photo-filled 2020 historical calendar, and we have some very interesting programs coming up.

We have also joined in a partnership with our fellow history organizations to plan a 2021 Sesquicentennial celebration for Rockport and Aransas County. And, we have an exciting addition to our website with links to 75 oral history interviews which were recorded between 1986 and 2012. See website chair Ty Husak’s article for more details.

I hope you were among the nearly 600 who attended the Guy Clark Tribute on August 1 and 2. We all enjoyed stories and songs by Nashville artists Verlon Thompson and Shawn Camp. These two were long-time friends with Guy and collaborated with him on songs and albums.

It was an honor to bring them to Rockport. The Tribute event helped to recognize the rich contributions of Guy Clark and his music to the cultural arts and history of Rockport/Fulton and Aransas County. Moreover, The Town of Fulton, the Aransas County Commissioners and the Rockport City Council issued proclamations declaring August 1st as Guy Clark Day.

The 2020 Historical Calendar photo contest is over and 31 outstanding photos were submitted for judging. Thanks to Jean Schindler, Patsy Parr and Elizabeth Brundrett for being judges and thoughtfully choosing the photos to be included. You’ll be pleased with what you see. We also want to thank the Rockport/Fulton Chamber of Commerce and Rockport Cultural Arts District staff in assisting us with helpful tips and information regarding promoting and marketing events using social media and reaching out to media partners to spread the word about exciting history happenings in Rockport and Fulton.

We hope to see you at our program on September 14 at the Maritime Museum that will remember the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Hurricane on the exact date. We appreciate the Museum’s co-sponsoring this program.

GUY CLARK DAY PROCLAIMED: Several ACHS board members were on hand to participate in the Aransas County Commissioners’ Court proclamation of August 1 as Guy Clark Day. Judge Bart Mills, holding proclamation, presented it to ACHS President Cheryl Livingston.

Participating from ACHS were (front row, L to R) David Murrah, Janie White, John Jackson, Pam Stranahan, Cheryl Livingston, and Ty Husak. County Commissioners on back row were (L to R) Jack Chaney, Bubba Castorline, Charles Smith, and Wendy Laubach. Photo by Jerel Murrah.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the Officers and Board of Trustees of the Historical Society. We are indeed fortunate to have a group of individuals who are generous with their time, impressive talents, consistently stepping up when help is needed, always good humored and ready to share a story or two. Please read their names and know that they have a keen interest in preserving the rich history of this area and sharing the same with all of you as well and as many others as possible.

Ty Husak, VP, Janie White – Treasurer, Debbie Machac – Secretary, and Trustees Brad Brundrett, Ernest Camehl, John Jackson, David Murrah, Pam Stranahan and Jeanie Schindler.

Also, although not currently on the Board, JoAnn Morgan, Veronika Camehl, Norinne Holman and Elizabeth Brundrett are always pitching in to assist on a variety of projects.

———-Cheryl Livingston

ACHS WEBSITE UPDATE

A lot has happened with our ACHS online presence since the last newsletter. Among the highlights are new video presentations and oral history interviews.

There are, as of this update, 14 videos of historical presentations have been uploaded to the ACHS YouTube channel. Audio-only links for most of the videos are included for those who want to listen to and not watch the video. The remaining audio only files will be processed and uploaded as time allows.

Also, the audio files for 75 recorded interviews have been uploaded to the ACHS website and can be heard by clicking on the file name. These are the oldest of the interviews. More will be added to the online collection as they become available for upload.

ACHS now has its own Facebook Page! This allows us to promote our society and events to a very broad audience.

All of the above is available via the Society’s web site: www.AranzasCountyHistoricalSociety.org or www.ACHS1985.org. Check back routinely!

———-Ty Husak
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO: ARANSAS COUNTY IN 1919
Part Three of a Three-Part Series
by Janie White

[EDITOR’S NOTE: The year 1919 proved to be one of the most pivotal in Aransas County’s history, especially after the unnamed hurricane that hit on September 14 devastated Rockport and Fulton. This is the third and final part of a series on the events that played out a century ago.]

Citizens of Aransas County were still celebrating the launch of the wooden frigate Zuniga from the Heldenfel's Shipyard on September 10, 1919, and on the same day, a growing storm entered the Gulf of Mexico after crossing Florida. At the time, the Weather Bureau issued storm warnings ordered along the Gulf coast from Carrabelle, Fla., to New Orleans, La. Then, it gave alerts for inland points in extreme northwestern Florida, and the southern portions of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

And, on September 11, warnings were issued for the Texas Coast from Port Arthur to Velasco, which is more than a hundred miles northeast of Rockport.

By Saturday, September 13 weather observers began to indicate that the storm would not hit Louisiana. Northwest storm warnings that covered the coast of Texas were issued. Late that afternoon, a “dark line” on the eastern horizon was noticed by people on the roof of a hotel in Rockport.

On St. Joseph’s Island, residents there noticed that the water was rising and becoming choppy. They left and went to Rockport. The same conditions were reported at Port Aransas. The tide was at 5 feet above mean sea level by a little after sunset.

On the morning of the 14th, the hurricane flags were hoisted, and the following advisory was posted in the window of the Sorensen store by weather displayman John Sorensen:

Advisory, 8:20 a.m.: Gulf storm now near south coast of Texas. Continue all precautions Sunday and Sunday night against dangerous winds and high tides from the mouth of Sabine River to Brownsville.

By eleven that morning, the first strong gusts hit Rockport, and increased steadily all day, culminating with 125-mph winds that roared through about 11 pm that night. By the morning of the 15th, it was gone.

While Corpus Christi suffered the brunt of the storm, reporting 284 deaths, much of Rockport and Aransas Pass were also destroyed. A ten-foot tidal surge decimated downtown Rockport, wrecking hotels and other tourist attractions. In Rockport, at least eight people were lost, including five who drowned when their boat capsized on Austin Street.

After the storm, communication between Aransas County and inland cities was not very good. According to an article in the San Antonio Evening News on October 2nd, there were reports that Rockport was suffering from famine conditions. The San Antonio Chamber of Commerce was collecting food, supplies, and money with a goal of $40,000. By the time the article was written, they had collected $39, 116, 71, and sent several car loads of supplies to the area. However, they had not heard from Rockport.

On October 3 an article in the Austin American reported that Rockport had “ample food supplies.” Second-hand mattresses that were shipped from Houston had arrived earlier in the week. The Red Cross was in charge, and requested that people should let them coordinate what was needed. Further food and supplies could “be a mere waste.”

The train tracks between Aransas Pass and Rockport were washed away by the storm. The work to restore the tracks was nearing completion by October 3rd, and the first train to Rockport was scheduled to leave San Antonio by the evening of the 5th or early morning of the 6th. Once the repairs to the tracks were finished, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad could once again run passenger and freight trains.

Trains were scheduled to leave San Antonio daily at 8:20 a.m. and arrive at Rockport via Kenedy and Gregory. (No Rockport arrival time was mentioned.)

W. W. Wood, who owned St. Joseph’s Island with Cyrus B. Lucas, reported that the rumor that St. Joseph’s Island had been washed away was not true. He said the buildings on the ranch were not badly damaged. About 400 sheep and 1500 head of cattle survived the storm. He was also quoted as saying that Rockport was in need of money “to clean up the city, put in sidewalks and bring the city back generally to its usual appearance.”

Dr. Douglas Largen, Assistant State Health Officer, felt that health conditions in the area were “unusually good.” The sewers had been “opened.” Food that had been through the storm had been condemned, and people were boiling the water. Cellars and other flooded areas had been pumped out. He noted that mosquitoes were much worse than ever since the storm, and that it was hard for people to rest at night because of them. He stressed that mosquito bars, or nets that covered the head and shoulders, were particularly needed.

Governor Hobby was being kept up to date on what was needed for the area to recover. Although he estimated that $5,000,000 would be required to properly “rehabilitate” the area (Rockport, Aransas Pass, Corpus Christi, and “other hurricane damaged points) less than $300,000 had been raised.

Around October 18th, the area was in the “grip of a real wet norther.” Overcoats and wraps were in order. The article from The Austin American reported that everyone seemed to be “well supplied with clothing.” Ducks and geese came with the norther and hunters were able to bring a “welcome change in diet.” Life slowly returned to normal.

Be sure to attend the special program on the 1919 Hurricane on the 100th anniversary of the storm, Saturday, September 14, at 11 am at the Texas Maritime Museum. You will enjoy hearing first-hand accounts of those who lived through the storm. The program is co-sponsored by ACHS and the Maritime Museum.
MEMORIES FROM THE GUY CLARK TRIBUTE

Maps by Tom Watkins and photos by Veronika Camhe

ABOVE AND RIGHT: These maps were created by Tom Watkins with data collected through ticket sales for the Guy Clark Tribute. Both indicate a wide range of attendance from across the state and nation, including one visitor from the Virgin Islands.

BELOW: Fellow "Guysots," super Guy Clark fans, pose before the show: (L to R) Sara Sanchez Roe, ACHS President Cheryl Livingston, and father-and-son duo Wayne and Cliff May, drove all the way from Selma, Alabama.

BELOW: Very important attendees at the Tribute included (L) Guy Clark's sister Caro Clark Dugan, Sherri Russell, and Carla Krueger Rineohe, all of Rockport. Other members of the Clark family were in attendance at both shows, including Guy's sister Jan Clark of San Antonio.

Ann Murrah (L) and Sara Roe served as greeters and provided seat saver cards for concert attendees. They were two of more than 40 volunteers who assisted with the two- night event.

Donna Husak (L) and Elizabeth and Brad Brundrett provided great work in beverage hospitality.
"OLD FRIENDS" MAKE MANY NEW FRIENDS WITH STUNNING PERFORMANCES AT GUY CLARK TRIBUTE

The "best musical performance I have ever seen" was just one of the many positive responses expressed by attendees at ACHS’s Guy Clark Tribute shows on August 1-2.

Nearly 600 tickets were sold for the event, of which nearly half went to out-of-town visitors. Take a look at the maps on the opposite page, which show that people came from at least 12 states and 45 Texas cities. One came from the Virgin Islands, and others from as far away as Idaho and North Dakota.

Ten tickets were purchased by Nashville, Tennessee, residents. Corpus Christi led Texas out-of-town purchases with 22, followed closely by 20 from Austin and 16 from Houston.

This information is based primarily on on-line sales, and was compiled by Tom Watkins and Ty Husak.

Preparation for the concerts began in January after ACHS President Cheryl Livingston brought the idea to the Board of Trustees, which agreed to sponsor a one-night performance. In March, ticket sales were announced and the show sold out in five days, prompting the Board to add a second show.

The venue, the LaPalma Event Center, created the perfect setting for the concert, with intimate seating and high-quality sound provided by Rockport acoustical technician Grady Cartwright. George Sherman of the Rockport Little Theater created effective lighting.

We are very grateful for the hard work and suggestions provided to us by Donnie and Amy Garcia, owners and managers of LaPalma Event Center.

We also appreciate the help with publicity provided by Sandy Jumper at the R-P Chamber of Commerce, and Jennifer Day of the Cultural Arts District. Thanks also to the Chamber for helping us sell tickets.

We also want to express our appreciation to our major sponsors, LaQuinta Inn & Suites, The Inn at Fulton Harbor, Karen Mella, Realtor, the Rockport Center for the Arts, John & Debbie Jackson, and L&F Distributors.

This event was a great team effort as evidenced by the more than forty other volunteers who helped with ushering, seating, ticket and product sales, and concessions. This work made this event one of the most successful projects and we are so grateful to all those who participated.

----David Murrah
ARANSAS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION (ACHC)

The Texas Historical Commission has once again awarded the Aransas County Historical Commission with its Distinguished Service Award for work completed in 2018.

The award was presented to the Commission at the Aransas County Commissioners’ Court on July 8.

The Award honors county historical commissions that go above and beyond to protect and promote local historic and cultural resources.

ACHC Officers for 2019 are Betty Stiles (chair), Mike Geer (vice chair), Barbara Gurtner (secretary) and Sandra Bridges (treasurer). Snady Garrison chairs the committee that nominates properties for historical markers. Contact her if you are interested in getting a historical marker at rgarrison34@yahoo.com.

TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES

The Rockport-Fulton Tour of Historic Homes will be December 7-8 this year, and from 11-3 each day. The homes already selected for the tour include: Brad & Elizabeth Brundrett at 1053 Allen, built in 1953; Barbara Wagon at 205 Cactus in Fulton, built in 1950; Linda Collins at 918 N. Austin, built in 1915 (this was the boyhood home of author John Freeman); and the Whooping Crane Manor at 505 S. Church, built in 1910.

One more is under consideration. If you would like to be a docent on our tour, please contact Barbara Gurtner at (361) 463-1606 or gurtnerbarbara@gmail.com.

SOUTH TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The South Texas Historical Association will hold its Fall Conference November 1-2 in Alamo. It will feature two full days of programs and information related to railroads, military history, genealogy, and the Alamo Museum.

If you are interested in participating or have questions, you may contact want to present a paper or if you have questions please contact Carroll Scogin-Brinfield, President of STHA, at brinfieldbrinfield@gmail.com or by phone at 361-798-4280 (home) 361-798-6588 (cell).

STHA has held its spring meeting in Rockport for the past two years and is planning to return next year.

A membership 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

FRIENDS OF HISTORY CENTER HOSTS EXHIBIT ON KEY ALLEGRO

The Friends of the History Center for Aransas County opened its new exhibit, “Key Allegro: A Vision for Growth,” on August 10th, and will be featured at the History Center until November 17.

From a Karankawa settlement to the resort community it is today, Key Allegro’s history is colorful and storied. The exhibit portrays the early history of the coast to the present day, capturing all aspects of the growth of Key Allegro and how it impacts Aransas County and the surrounding areas. Artifacts, maps, photographs, and videos illustrate the long-term vision.

Keynote speaker for the opening was Carla Riche, daughter of Carl Krueger, Jr. who purchased Key Allegro in 1961. Carla and her friends shared stories of her father’s vision and often unique marketing events to increase public interest in developing the property.

The Center will open a new exhibit, "Celebrate a Vintage Holiday," on November 23. Its hours have expanded to Fri. 10-2 Sat. 10-4 Sun. 1-4 and Mon. 10-2.