One of the largest crowds in recent years attended the 2019 Annual Meeting of ACHS in February.

The membership was treated to a multi-media presentation by Jerry Brundrett and John Jackson on the topic, “Whatever Happened to Rocky Point?” Included were exhibits of historical maps of the Rockport area.

The program also included a short business meeting at which the ACHS re-elected Janie White, Cheryl Livingston and David Murrah to new three-year terms on the Board of Trustees, and elected Debbie Machac to a three-year term in place of Jo Ann Morgan, who retired from the Board.

Attendees also took the opportunity to purchase advanced tickets for the upcoming Guy Clark tribute on August 1 and to enjoy refreshments provided by members of the Board of Trustees.
May has arrived and as usual the months are passing quickly. Our “Lab sessions” are being held each Wednesday at the Estelle Stair Gallery studio space (enter at the back on Water St.). It’s a great place to gather, visit and have folks drop in.

Until May 29th this is the drop-off location for the 2019 Photo Contest. Please enter photos for a chance to be included in the 2020 Historic Calendar. There are more details to follow in the newsletter. Board of Trustees meetings are held in this history rich location too.

For the months of June and July only, our Wednesday Lab meetings will be at Dairy Queen from 2 to 4 pm.

For its regular monthly meetings, the ACHS Board of Trustees will meet on Thursday June 13 and July 11 at 4:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse of Country Club Square on Traylor Street. Members are always welcome to attend the board meetings.

At our March Board meeting, we officially welcomed new Board members Debbie Machac and Brad Brundrett, along with Elizabeth Brundrett, who will sit in for Brad when he is absent. Also, as required by the By-laws, new officers were elected after the February Annual Meeting, and the Board selected the following: Cheryl Livingston, President; Ty Husak, Vice President; Janie White, Treasurer; and Debbie Machac, Secretary.

In our last Newsletter we shared information and ticket buying instructions for the August 1 Guy Clark Tribute event featuring Nashville artists Verlon Thompson and Shawn Camp, Tamara Saviano will be in attendance too. She wrote Guy Clark’s biography titled, Without Getting Killed or Caught, and has a documentary film in production.

We are excited and happy to report that tickets for the August 1 show sold out within a week! It was exciting. For those who caught it, buying instructions for the August 1 Guy Clark Tribute event with Board members Debbie Machac and Brad Brundrett, along with Elizabeth Brundrett, who will sit in for Brad when he is absent. Also, as required by the By-laws, new officers were elected after the February Annual Meeting, and the Board selected the following: Cheryl Livingston, President; Ty Husak, Vice President; Janie White, Treasurer; and Debbie Machac, Secretary.

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We are excited and happy to report that tickets for the August 1 show sold out within a week! It was exciting. For those who were thinking about attending we have GREAT NEWS! The Board has scheduled a second show for Friday, August 2nd. Tickets go on sale June 1st so mark your calendar! More details can be found in this issue.

WELCOME NEW FIRST-TIME ACHS TRUSTEES!

With new Board member Brad Brundrett, ACHS gains a “tag team!” Because of his duties as a firefighter in Missouri City, Brad’s wife Elizabeth will fill in for him when he is not available. Brad is a 6th generation Rockportian; he moved back in 2013 to raise his children where he grew up. He has worked for 15 years as a Lieutenant/Firefighter in Missouri City Fire Department and now commutes from Rockport to finish out his firefighting career, a career that started 20 years ago in the Rockport Volunteer Fire Department. On his days off from firefighting, he works at Griffith & Brundrett Surveying & Engineering, Inc., under his father, Jerry Brundrett, the Aransas County Surveyor.

Elizabeth Brundrett grew up in Alice and started coming to Rockport at the age of 11. Rockport eventually became a second home to her when she started dating Brad 15 years ago. Elizabeth comes from a family with a passion and love of history and a long history in Texas. She is currently rebuilding Brad’s grandparents’ house, damaged by Hurricane Harvey, on property that has been in the family for over 100 years.

Our other new Trustee, Debbie White Machac, also brings a rich family history to our Board. Her great-grandfather, Paul P. Court, served as Aransas County Sheriff from 1889-1889 and had become County Judge when the beautiful Moorish-style courthouse was completed in 1889.

And, like our other new Trustee, Brad Brundrett, Debbie has ancestral ties to the Brundrett family through her great-great-grandmother Hannah Hollingsworth, who was married to George Brundrett, Sr. Hannah produced 98 grandchildren and is an ancestor of many Aransas County residents.

Debbie grew up in the Houston area and worked for Compaq Computer Corporation/HP and later for the Salem Archives and Historical Research Center in Tomball, Texas. Debbie said that her passion for history led to her holding several positions in local historical societies in the Tomball and Magnolia areas.

Like many who now live here, Debbie spent most of her summers and holidays in Rockport visiting family and enjoying the coast. As a result, she and her husband Terry decided to retire to Rockport.

The ACHS Board of Trustees is enriched through the addition of Brad Brundrett and Debbie Machac. If you have opportunity, please take time to thank them for their voluntary service to our community and history.

FROM THE LAB: A message from the President . . . .

We have had a busy spring. Programs held since our last Newsletter included, “Whatever Happened to Rocky Point?” presented on February 26 by Jerry Brundrett and John Jackson, and joint program on March 28 sponsored by ACHS and the History Center resulted in standing room only at the Fulton Mansion Education Center. Lilia Garcia made a presentation about her ancestor, Don Francisco Yturria, a prominent South Texas entrepreneur.

Then, on April 6, ACHS was a sponsoring host partner for the South Texas Historical Association Spring Conference held in Rockport, which featured talks on South Texas railroads. ACHS Board member Pam Stranahan presented a session, “The San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad in Rockport.” She discussed how and when the railroad came to Rockport and the significant impact it had on our area.

If you missed them, all of these presentations are available to watch through our website, aransascountyhistoricalsociety.org, or on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/ and then search for Aransas County Historical Society.

Aransas County and Rockport are approaching the Sesquicentennial anniversaries of their founding in 2020-2021. By the time 2020 arrives I hope to be able to spell sesquicentennial.

Stay tuned for more details on this exciting milestone for our area.

The 2019 Calendars still available. Make an inquiry through our website, which you can find online at ACHS1985.org or AransasCountyHistoricalSociety.org. Or, you can stop by on Wednesday and buy one for only $5.00!

—Cheryl Livingston
SECOND PERFORMANCE OF GUY CLARK TRIBUTE SCHEDULED FOR AUG. 2

Due to the rapid sellout of tickets for the Guy Clark tribute concert on August 1, the ACHS Board voted to produce a second show on August 2. Tickets for that show will go on sale June 1 at the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce or online through the ACHS website, aransascountyhistoricalsociety.org. Tickets are priced at $35 each and all seats are general admission. Both performances on August 1 and 2 will be at 7 pm (doors open at 6 pm) at the La Palma Event Center, 2955 Highway 35 N in Rockport.

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 22: Wednesday at Estelle Stair Gallery downtown Rockport, 2-4 pm

May 29: Wednesday at Estelle Stair; last day to submit photos for contest.

June 1: Tickets go on sale for Aug. 2 Guy Clark Tribute at Chamber and online.

June 5, 12, 19, 26: Wednesdays at Dairy Queen, 2-4 pm.

June 13: ACHS Board Meeting, Country Club Square Clubhouse, 4 pm.

July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31: Wednesday at Dairy Queen, 2-4 pm.

July 11: ACHS Board Meeting, Country Club Square Clubhouse, 4 pm.

August 1-2: Guy Clark Tribute Concert, La Palma Event Center, 7 pm.

Thank you very much to the sponsors who are helping us to underwrite the cost of our upcoming Tribute to Guy Clark Concert on August 1-2.

Karen Mella, Realtor
John & Debbie Jackson
The Inn at Fulton Harbor
Rockport Center for the Arts
La Quinta Inn & Suites
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO: ARANSAS COUNTY IN 1919
Part two 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 devastated Rockport and Fulton. This is the second of a three-part series on the events that played out a century ago.]

In early May 1919, Mayor Brice of Rockport invited Texas Governor William P. Hobby to address the crowd at the launching of the first of four ships being built at Heldenfels Brothers Shipyard. He also requested that the Governor submit a special act that would allow Rockport to issue bonds for the construction of a municipal wharf and other waterfront improvements to the Texas Legislature when they met in special session in June.

On June 30, Governor Hobby submitted to the Texas Legislature: a bill that was to be “An act granting to the city of Rockport, Tex., all right, title and interest of the state of Texas to certain land lying and being situated under the waters of Aransas Bay; declaring such granted area to be the Rockport shipping district, and defining the purpose for which same is to be used; granting to said city of Rockport the right power and authority to locate, construct, own and maintain within said granted territory such seawalls or breakwaters as may be necessary or desirable to fill in the space between same and the mainland, and declaring all area formed by such filling in be the property of the city of Rockport . . . .”

The act was approved on July 2. The cost of the municipal wharf was to be $100,000. Once it was built, “vessels drawing sixteen to eighteen feet” would be able to “land and discharge cargo at Rockport.”

Other matters of economic importance were also happening. Oil was becoming important, and seven thousand acres on St. Joseph’s Island had been leased for oil production. The lessee was obligated to drill a well within the next sixty days.

On June 29 a state charter was granted to the Rockport Electric Company. Capital stock was $15,000, and the incorporators were Charles G. Johnson, D. R. Scrivener, and Ed Peets.

Tourism was also thriving. The SAAP railroad was offering low rates to Rockport, and the hotels were crowded with tourists who came to fish for tarpon. The La Playa Hotel was advertising “rooms ensuite” with hot and cold water in every room.

On July 31, 1919, the Heldenfels Shipyard in Rockport launched the first of two cargo ships, the Baychester (at left) with a reported crowd of seven thousand in attendance. The other ship, the Zuniga, was launched six weeks later on the eve of a disastrous hurricane. Photo from Sorenson/Herring File, ACHS Photo Collection.

Although the winds were “stiff,” tourists were still enjoying nightly sails to the Aransas Pass and back. In early June a group from Beeville came to Rockport to present a “comedy drama” at Bailey’s Pavilion.

Restaurants in Rockport were advertising in the Corpus Christi Caller. The Rockport Café advertised that it had the best service in town with homemade pastries, fresh meats, and oysters.

Other events were not so positive and seemed to herald foreboding things to come. On July 6, a severe storm struck at 3 in the morning and pounded the area with high winds and torrential rain until 10 am, uprooting trees and washing small craft ashore. Then, on July 29th, a boiler exploded at the Heldenfels Brothers shipyard, killing four men.

Despite the death of the workers, the planned launching of the Baychester still took place two days later, on July 31. The San Antonio Evening News reported that a crowd of seven thousand watched as Mrs. F. W. Heldenfels christened the ship.

On September 10 the second ship, the Zuniga was launched with Mrs. C. A. Heldenfels as sponsor. The San Antonio paper reported that the “big ship glided down the ways as graceful as a swan.”

On Sunday, September 14, the Houston Post also reported the launch of the Zuniga, not realizing that the biggest story of the year—and perhaps the century—was about to take place.

[To be continued in the Fall Newsletter]
Welcome New Members!

A record 22 new members joined during the first quarter of 2019, and we are excited to welcome them to ACHS. They include Michael Bolin, J. B. Brakin, Brad & Elizabeth Brundrett, Logan Burton, William & Betsy Burton, Jan Clark, Sarah Cywin, Robert & Julie Dayton, Caro Clark Dugan, Betty Elrod, Edwin Thomson Greiner, Katherine Hubbard, Ruth Ann McIver, Stan O’Keefe, Sara Roe, Richard Schendel, Robert Simons, and Marjorie Tydlacka.

Thank you for your support of the Aransas County Historical Society!

PHOTO CONTEST
DEADLINE IS MAY 29!

The winner of the 2018 Photo Contest was this classy shot of the McHugh sisters and friends enjoying Aransas Bay in the late 1920s. Donna Dickinson submitted this photo.

Time is running out for submission of photos for the 2019 historical photo contest. The easiest way to submit is to bring your photos to our temporary home at the rear of the Estelle Stair Gallery in downtown Rockport on Wednesday, May 22, from 2-4 pm, or on May 29 from 2-3:30 pm. We will scan them for you.

For details, see the poster to the left.

Application forms are also available online at aransascountyhistoricalsociety.org or at the Estelle Gallery location.

Entry to the gallery is at the rear on Water Street.

At the ACHS Annual Meeting in February, Jerry Brundrett (left) explains features of an item from his map and photo collection to Martha and Todd Pearson and Phil Albin. They were a part of a near-record crowd that attended the meeting, held at the Woman’s Club.

Photo courtesy Veronika Camhel.
Aransas County Oral Histories
Archived at TAMU Kingsville

Hurricane Harvey served as a reminder that we need to protect our historical resources. As a result, ACHS and the Aransas County Historical Commission (ACHC) have made arrangements with the South Texas Archives located on the campus of TAMU-Kingsville to house the Commission’s and the Society’s valuable oral history collections.

Beginning in the 1980s, the ACHC recorded interviews with county residents. The early work was done by Kathryn Winkelman and Genieve Hunt. Later, others carried the project forward. The ACHS added to the tapes and the interviews were a joint project of the historical groups. Some interviews were transcribed; others remained only on cassette tapes.

Seventy cassette tapes along with accompanying documents were taken to Kingsville by Pam Stranahan and Sherri Collins (ACHC) and Cheryl Livingston (ACHS). The Society and the Commission have digital copies of the interviews for researchers to use locally and both groups continue to record interviews in order to preserve the history of Aransas County.

South Texas Historical Association Spring Meeting

The South Texas Historical Association (STHA) returned to Rockport for a second straight year for its spring meeting, which was jointly hosted by ACHS, ACHC, and Friends of the History Center on April 6.

More than sixty were in attendance at the Aquarium Education Center to hear presentations about railroads of South Texas. Lunch was catered by the Chew-chew BBQ. ACHS Board member Pam Stranahan presented a talk on the San Antonio Aransas Pass Railroad.

History Center Opens Barrier Island Exhibit and Schedules Lectures and Trips

The History Center opened its new exhibit “Barrier Islands,” on April 27 with a large crowd to hear Rick Pratt from Port Aransas relate his experiences as restorer and keeper of the Aransas Pass Lighthouse.

Other talks related to the exhibit will follow this schedule:

- May 19, Sunday 2:00 PM San Jose Cattle Company
- June 2, Sunday 2:00 PM Steve Russell – Island Tales
- June 16, Sunday 2:00 PM Jackie Shaw – Early Settlers on San Jose Island
- July 14, Sunday 2:00 PM Hawes Family of Matagorda Island
- July 28, Sunday 2:00 PM John Jackson

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

The Center is also offering Historical Cruises on the Skimmer out of Fulton Harbor at a cost of $50 per person.

For more information about the cruise, call Becky 361 727-9214 or online at “gift shop” www.thehistorycenterforaransascounty.org

The cruises will be offered on Saturday, June 1, at 1 pm and again on Saturday June 15 at 1 pm.

Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary

The Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary, located at 1491 S. Church at First St., will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony for its new pavilion dedication on Friday, May 17, at 11:30 am.

Then, on Saturday, May 18, from 9:30 to 11:30 am, the site will host Coffee with Connie to celebrate Connie Hagar’s impact on Rockport, with refreshments and rescued bird release.

Fulton Schoolhouse Museum

Located at 205 N. Seventh St. in Fulton, the Fulton Schoolhouse Museum is free and open to visitors on every Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 pm. Admission is free. It is maintained by the Stenson-Simpson Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.