

# ARANSAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## ACHS NEWSLETTER

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### BUSY SUMMER WITH PHOTO AND ESSAY CONTESTS

#### Winning Essay a Fitting Tribute to Guy Clark

In spite of restrictions by the historic pandemic, ACHS has stayed busy with activities that are producing lasting memories.

The Annual Photo Contest wrapped up in June with 35 submissions, from which the judges have chosen the winners and honorable mentions. These will be announced at the annual Calendar Premiere Party, currently scheduled for October 29.

Judges for the contest were Bobby Jackson, Ann Murrah, and Maria Nesbit.

Last year, the governing bodies of Rockport, Fulton, and Aransas County proclaimed August 1 as Guy Clark Day. To continue to honor that day (last year, we staged the Guy Clark Tribute Concert to packed houses), the ACHS Board voted to sponsor an "I Remember Guy Clark" Essay Contest, with the winners to be announced on August 1.

The contest called for the submission of a 150-word essay, and we received multiple entries from across the country. The winner of the contest was Andrew Pulliam of Chicago, Illinois. Second place went to Brad Brown of Huntsville, Alabama, and third, by Karen Brown, also of Huntsville.

All three winners received the handsome new movie poster promoting the Guy Clark movie, *Without Getting Killed or Caught*. The first-place winner also received Tamara Saviano's biography of Guy Clark, as well as a one-year membership in ACHS.

Judges for the Essay Contest were Bobby Jackson, David Murrah, and Guy Clark's sister, Caro Clark Dugan.



This 24 x 36-inch poster was awarded to all three winners of the first "I Remember Guy Clark" Essay Contest.

#### ACHS welcomes Bobby Jackson to Board



Long-time Rockport teacher Bobby Jackson joined the ACHS Board in July, replacing Jeanie Schindler, who retired. Photo courtesy ACISD.org

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

Hello and I hope this issue of the *Newsletter* finds you healthy and riding out the pandemic in a satisfactory way.

The Historical Society is proud to congratulate **John Jackson** for his recent honor being named 2020 Citizen of the Year at the recent Rockport Fulton Chamber of Commerce event. We are fortunate to have him on our Board, and to have him share his time and talents with us.

Our longtime ACHS member and trustee **Jean Schindler** resigned from the Board recently and is still helping us with the 2021 Historical Calendar. She has graciously accepted the position of Trustee Emeritus and continues her keen interest in the history of Rockport and Fulton. We'll miss her.

**Robert "Bobby" Jackson** has been elected by the Board of Trustees to fill the vacant position. We're excited to have him bring his passion for history and education to our organization. Welcome Bobby.

Our thanks go to the Rockport Center for the Arts, **Kim Ivey** and **Luis Purnon** for providing our board with a safe, disinfected, socially distanced space to hold our June meeting. We appreciate the hospitality.

We are in the process of preparing a calendar for 2021. It will be full of historic photos and information about our area. We've almost sold all of the 2020 calendars, so let us know if you need one. We still have issues from previous years. They are in storage until we can move into a permanent location.

The photo contest ended on July 1 with at least 35 photos entered! We are excited to have the judges make their selections for the next calendar. Judges for this year are **Ann Murrah, Bobby Jackson,** and **Maria Nesbit.** Thanks to **Phil Albin** for scanning the photos as they were submitted and **Janie White** for sharing her expertise and wise counsel as we forge ahead without her day to day involvement in the calendar. It now takes a village to put out a calendar!!

If circumstances allow, it is our plan to continue DQ Wednesday casual gatherings from 2:00-3:30 when it reopens its dining room. Wear your mask and the tables are distanced. Our record attendance was nine people on one Wednesday and we were divided among 3 tables.

### A Disruption in the Mail

In April, while staying home because of Covid-19, I submitted a temporary change of address for the ACHS from PO Box 702 to my home address. Unfortunately, that might not have worked very well as the pandemic had put a lot of extra work and stress on the USPS. Although mail was forwarded to my home address initially, later it was returned to the sender.

We are again receiving our mail at PO Box 702. If you mailed something to that address and it was returned to you, please accept my apology.

Our official address is ACHS, P. O. Box 702, Rockport, TX 78381. I check the mailbox several times a week. Thanks for your understanding.

—*Janie Collier White*

Planning ahead to future programs if you have photos or information that you want to share about the **History of Rockport Schools** and/or **The History of Fulton** we'd love to hear from you.

As some of you have noticed, ACHS celebrated Guy Clark Day on August 1 by sponsoring an essay contest. We were pleased to get several entries from across the nation, and I know you will find the winning essay to be an excellent tribute to the late Guy Clark. Our congratulations go to our first place winner, **Andrew Pulliam** of Chicago, who will receive a Guy Clark movie poster, along with a copy of Tamara Saviano's biography of Guy, and a year's membership in ACHS. Thanks to all those who took time to enter the contest. The second and third place essays will appear in our next newsletter.

Please check the ACHS's website, [achs1985.org](http://achs1985.org), and the ACHS Facebook page to stay in touch. Please LIKE our Facebook page if you want to see our posts.

We are still homeless. The school district has promised us a room, but repairs have not begun. By the time you read this we'll be close to the three-year anniversary of Hurricane Harvey which is responsible for our nomadic existence. There's no estimate for when we can have a room at the school again. Patience is a virtue and what a happy day it will be when we can return to the school on Live Oak St.

As Guy Clark says, "Things change all the time, and they'll probably never be the same again. It's just the natural evolution of the human condition. Things change, and whatever it is, is what it is." We appreciate your stories, your photos and your memberships. Stay well, friends.

—*Cheryl Livingston*

### ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT by Ty Husak

Be sure check the Society website, [achs1985.org](http://achs1985.org), and click on the "Come June in Rockport" link that appears below. It will lead you to a wonderful article on Rockport and Fulton in the 1950s and 1960s. While there, you might want to see the new Guy Clark song video from last year's Tribute show, or listen to one of the oral history interviews about Aransas County history.

Thank you for your interest in ACHS!

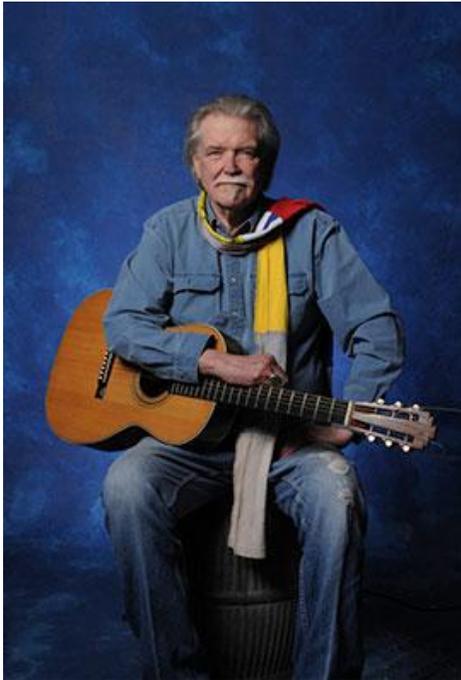
#### Come June in Rockport – Sherrill Pool Elizondo

This link to the Bullock Museum website will take you to a wonderful story about a family that vacationed in Rockport – Fulton every June in the 1950s and 1960s. It is a great description of the community during its pre-Key Allegro days: [Come June in Rockport – Sherrill Pool Elizondo](#)



**FIRST PLACE WINNER  
GUY CLARK ESSAY CONEST  
AUGUST 1, 2020**

# I Remember Guy Clark



Guy Clark (1941-2016)

Remembrance, the lasting kind at least, is like those desperados waiting on a train that Guy sang about.

I don't remember the first time I heard Guy's music. Maybe I did as a younger man, but it just didn't click then. Like the desperados, the songs coolly lie in wait. They wait for you to start longing for places you've been. They wait for you to mourn people and times that were once vibrant, but now start to

dim with age. They wait for you to hear the right stories and tell a few of your own.

And then, remembrance jumps the train of your mind and you find Guy there ready to be your companion, ready to sooth your weariness. And as long as there are freeways to escape and homegrown tomatoes to taste, Guy Clark's Texan wit and poetic truth will be remembered by those ready to hear.



Andrew Pulliam, First Place Winner.  
Courtesy Andrew Pulliam.

Submitted by  
Andrew Pulliam  
Chicago, Illinois

## EARLY ROCKPORT ARTISTS: THE FIRST ART EXHIBIT

by  
Phil Albin

*[Editor's Note: Phil Albin, long-time Rockport resident and a former president of ACHS, provided us with this account of the beginning of Rockport's art community.]*

After the 2017 overwhelming destruction of Hurricane Harvey, our art community, with the Rockport Center for the Arts in the vanguard, is rebuilding the downtown Austin street area into a cultural enrichment and art education center which will have few peers in the State of Texas.

But it wasn't always that way.

### THE TEACHER

Artist Simon Michael's arrival in Fulton in late 1948 was probably the beginning of the development of Rockport-Fulton's successful art community which we so deeply love and enjoy today. Before his arrival, out of town artists would visit the area, make sketches and comment on how artistically rich this coastal scene was, but, like most tourists, they returned to their homes elsewhere.

Simon Michael, the teacher, moved into the McDonald House on a Fulton Beach Road bluff and promptly set up shop. The home, gallery and classroom came to be known as Tortilla Flats where Simon Michael's Fulton School of Painting began. Soon, the "noted eastern artist" convened his first class of local artists. That class would lead to the founding of the Aransas County Art Guild and the first organized art colony in the Rockport-Fulton area. As a result, 1949 became a banner year for the local art community.

### THE STUDENTS

The art students filling the classroom relished the instructive words and heart-felt encouragements of their master artist. Soon, they were producing works of art which made their way into the homes of the community. Everyone in town was learning of the accomplishments of the art students.

The first art class included my mother Helen Albin and I feel fairly sure Bonnie Hinton, Neva Jackson, Ilana Cochran and Mrs. Travis Johnson.



Helen Albin submitted this painting, "Just Boots," and 19 others for the 1949 Art Exhibit. Photo courtesy Phil Albin.



Artist and teacher Simon Michael.  
Photo courtesy Phil Albin.

Others in the community during that remarkable 1949, who took instruction from Simon Michael, included Mary Bailey, Carolyne Hooper, Charlene Hunt, Shirley Johnson, Iris Sorsenson, Judy Collier, Bonnie Townsend, Bobby Chittendon, Verna Ann Haseman, Doris Jean Huffman, Jane Collier,

Mary Lucille Jackson, Mary Lou Johnson, Mike Johnson, Dale Barnard, Mitchel Ammons, Robert Shivers, James Fox and Paul Cochran. Simon also offered classes to art guild members from Victoria, Port Lavaca, Bay City, Palacios, Goliad and Yoakum, Texas.

### THE FIRST EXHIBIT

In January 1949 a Ladies Luncheon, held at the Country Club, hosted master artist Simon Michael as guest speaker. With the program, some of his students from Yoakum, Victoria, Port Lavaca and Rockport, exhibited their own work. My mother's contributions, two charcoal pieces, "Old Silver" and "Just Boots", were voted "outstanding works of art".

The first public exhibit of the newly formed Aransas County Art Guild was held in December 1949 on Austin Street in downtown Rockport. The Texas Laundry, located next door to Ballard's Drug Store, provided a room for the exhibit. Works on exhibit were from the Tuesday evening class, Wednesday's morning class and a special children's class. Aransas County Art Guild members provided information about the artist's work and many, but not all, art pieces were offered for sale.

The exhibit included fifty framed works and several other unframed canvases. Of the 50 framed works, my mother contributed 20 paintings; Carolyn Hooper, 12; Neva Jackson, 5; Bonnie Hinton 4; Mrs. Travis Johnson, 3; Shirley Johnson, 3; Charlene Hunt, 2; and Mary Bailey, 1. The Rockport Pilot reported that framed works by Ruth Lipscomb, Dorthy Jarboe and Ilana Cochran were not listed, as the artists were out of town and their painting's titles could not be obtained.

By all accounts the exhibit, which ran several days, was a resounding success.

### THE LETTER

During the exhibit, my mother learned of a much-guarded national secret. General Dwight Eisenhower was to be on St. Joseph Island across the bay from Rockport. Texas oilman Sid Richardson, who owned the island and used it as his private retreat, was hosting the general for a rest and relaxation vacation. At the time, Eisenhower was serving as president of Columbia University in New York City. Mother knew of the general's interest in art and had heard he would be doing some painting on Sid's island.

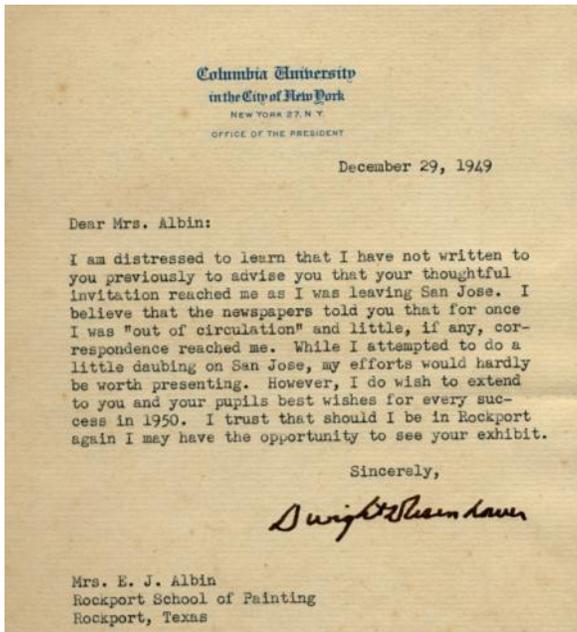
She dashed off a personal letter inviting the general to attend the downtown art exhibit and if he was concerned about privacy, she would arrange for a private showing. But by the time she received a reply from the General in January 1950, the exhibit had closed and Eisenhower had returned to New York City. He apologized for the tardiness of [*Continued on p. 5*]

[Continued from p. 4]

his response adding “While I attempted to do a little daubing on San Jose, my efforts would hardly be worth presenting” and that he had received mother’s letter late as he was leaving St. Joseph Island to return to his post at Columbia University.

Our family moved from Rockport in the early 1950s, Mother continued to paint throughout her life and many of her works are in the homes of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

As for Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower? Well, perhaps you know, as Paul Harvey used to say, “the rest of the story!”



Letter from former general and future president Dwight D. Eisenhower to Helen Albin, December 29, 1949. Courtesy Phil Albin.



**HISTORY NEWS YOU CAN USE**

— Pam Stranahan, Contributor



Ken Stavinoha, station agent from Eagle Lake, spoke at the opening of the “Sails, Rails and Wings” exhibit on June 13 on the history of the SAAP Railway. Photo courtesy Pam Stranahan.

**History Center for Aransas County**

The History Center is continuing its popular exhibit, "Sails, Trails, Rails and Wings," and is open for limited visitation on weekends, 10-2 on Fridays and Mondays, and 1-4 on Saturdays and Sundays.

Its Sunday lecture series is open to a limited number and is also available for live viewing on Zoom. Access through the web may be found at [www.hcfriends.net](http://www.hcfriends.net). At that site, select "events" then click on "register" which will send the zoom link to your email.

Upcoming programs include one on August 16, “Staging Hurricane Recovery at the Airport,” by Mike Geer, and on September 13, “El Camino Real de la Tejas,” by Stephen Gonzales. Both programs are at 2 pm.

Also, children’s activity packets, “By Land and By Sea - Activities for Me,” related to the current exhibit are available for pick-up during open hours.



Elizabeth and Madeline Janek found plenty to do with the activity packet, “By Land and By Sea—Activities for Me,” at the History Center. Photo courtesy Pam Stranahan.

**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**

# Remembering the Aransas Bay Sailboat Regattas

by Janie Collier White



The Sorenson Wharf taken on July 12, 1906 during the Rockport Grand Water Carnival. Some spectators have a grand view from the roof of the office at the end of the wharf. Photo from Gordon Stanley Collection, ACHS Photo Collection.

[Editor's Note: Janie White serves as Trustee and Treasurer for ACHS.]

In the 1940s, I remember sitting with a group of friends and family on the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Reeses's home (now known as the Baylor-Norvell House) to watch the sailboat races on the 4th of July. My mother (Judy Sorenson Collier), my aunt (Iris Sorenson), Mrs. Reese and other observers knew the contestants. I was under 10 years old and more interested in playing with my sister and cousins than watching the race. However, I do remember the air of excitement as the grownups cheered their favorites on to victory.

Sailing regattas on Aransas Bay were a big part of life in Rockport as far back as 1889. On July 12<sup>th</sup> of that year, an article in the *Fort Worth Daily Gazette* described a regatta that "was sailed" the previous day on Aransas

Bay. Thirteen entries sailed the twenty-one-mile course. This was the year the Aransas Hotel (later Del Mar Hotel) opened, and a large party was held in the grand ballroom in the evening. An article in the same newspaper on July 7 described the mood of the town: "The yachts for the international regatta are strung out all along Rockport beach and the fishermen and boats are in holiday attire."

On September 1, 1894, the race to determine the winner of the Texas State Challenge Cup was sailed "over" the Rockport Yacht Club's course. The *Wasp* challenged the *Novice*. The *Novice* kept the cup. Sadly, four years later, a wind storm on April 8, 1900, sent the *Novice* into the Sorenson Wharf. She was damaged and "sunk in about ten feet of water."

In July 1897, the annual regatta and carnival of sport was held in Rockport. The 12-mile race had yachts from Rockport, Corpus Christi, Port Lavaca and St. Mary's competing. It took the judges days to decide on the winner. A regatta in June 1902 had "600 or 700" spectators gathered near the wharf. Other spectators watched from the galleries of the Hotel Delmar.

Just a month before the 1919 hurricane, a three-day regatta was held by the Rockport Yacht Club. An article in the *Houston Post* predicted a large crowd would enjoy the "fleet of white yachts racing over the dancing waves." After the hurricane, in 1922, regattas were being held again, and spectators enjoyed a moonlight sail on the schooner *Box* as part of the festivities.

Eighty years ago, on July 4, 1940, Rockport's new harbor was dedicated. A "million-dollar boat parade" celebrated the new seawall. There was also a sailboat regatta held July 4, 6, and 7. The harbor was nicknamed "Rockport's fish bowl" because so many fish were caught there.

The July 4, 1946 regatta ended on July 7 with a twelve-mile race. I can't help but wonder if this was one that I watched from Water Street as a child. There are still sailboat regattas today. Some happen in October, and are a part of Seafair. Sailing and sailboat racing have been a part of Aransas Bay history for a very long time.

And the *Houston Post* is right. There is nothing quite as pretty as sailboats with their white sails and colorful spinnakers "racing over the dancing waves."