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ARANSASCOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



# ACHS NEWSLETTER

Volume 17 Issue 1

February 2021

## SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION BEGINS! Ceremony unveils memorial, new Historical Marker Guide

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The Aransas County Sesquicentennial officially began on Saturday, January 30 with the unveiling of the 150th Anniversary Memorial Stone in a ceremony staged at the History Center for Aransas County.

The Sesquicentennial monument eventually will be placed on the Celebration Plaza at the new courthouse adjacent to the 1971 Centennial marker. The inscription on the new memorial monument reads:

*September 18, 1871– September 18, 2021  
We the citizens of Aransas County do hereby dedicate this monument to mark our 150th year anniversary. Our Sesquicentennial Celebration includes the totality of our cultural heritage. Our hope is to foster a pride in local stories and to encourage studies which will result in a deeper appreciation of Aransas County and its place in Texas history.*

A good crowd was on hand for the unveiling and for the premiere of the new 2021 Historical Marker Guide, published by the Rockport Pilot. Several owners of the 56 listed historical sites were present to comment on the recognition.

The Sesquicentennial year has begun with some events planned for the spring. The major Sesquicentennial Celebration will be June 12-



Aransas County Judge C.H. "Burt" Mills takes a good look at the granite marker commemorating the County's Sesquicentennial anniversary, at its temporary home at the History Center. The monument is flanked by pieces of shellcrete and a large rock taken from the site of Rocky Point, which gave Rockport its name. Photo by David Murrah

20, 2021 with a Founders' Breakfast, a County Fair, a parade, vignettes at historic homes and cemeteries, and thematic exhibits at the History Center, Texas Maritime Museum, Fulton Mansion and the Rockport Center for the Arts.

For more information or to contribute to the celebration, you can visit the website [www.aransascounty150.org](http://www.aransascounty150.org). For a list of upcoming events related to the Sesquicentennial, see page 6 of this Newsletter.

### ACHS Officers & Trustees

(year term expires)

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#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

David J. Murrah

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

Hello members and friends. I hope this finds you feeling well and coping with our continued challenges. One result of these challenges is that your Board of Trustees voted to postpone the Annual Meeting that is normally held in February. Its primary concern is for the health and safety of our members. As soon as we have a new date we'll let you know. The trustees, whose terms were set to expire, have all agreed to stay on the Board until then.

The Board continues to meet monthly, thanks in large part to our friends at the Rockport Center for the Arts and the Fulton Mansion. They have generously allowed us to meet at their locations, providing us a large enough room to allow appropriately social distance within a disinfected, sanitized space. We deeply appreciate their hospitality.

If you haven't had a chance to purchase the **2021 Aransas County in Photographs Calendar** you'll want to get one soon. They are available through our website [ACHS1985.org](http://ACHS1985.org) for \$10 plus \$2 for mailing. Or, or you can buy them for \$10 at Rockport Printing or the Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center.

When will we have a home of our own again? This is the burning question. Repairs at the school continue and seem to be accelerating. The front parking lot has materials delivered almost daily. Workers are spotted inside and up on the roof too. We're still waiting for the school district to release location assignments and a time frame for moving back. Its safe to say we're closer than we've been since Harvey evicted us!

We have received significant gifts recently from the **family of Bob Bracht, Lisa Baer Frederick**, former owner of Estelle Stair Gallery, and the **Aransas County Historical Commission**. We'll share more information soon about them.

The Aransas County Sesquicentennial Committee, in conjunction with the *Rockport Pilot*, premiered the brand new **2021 Aransas County Historical Marker Guide** last month. It's full of information and photos of Aransas County's 56 historical markers. The last guide was published ten years ago and, since then, the Historical Commission has added

many new markers. Thanks to **Mike Probst**, the *Rockport Pilot*, and all the sponsors for this wonderful publication.

Speaking of the Sesquicentennial, be sure to mark your calendars for the week-long Aransas County Sesquicentennial celebration this summer. The fun starts on June 12 and continues until June 20. Take a look at the Committee's website for updates leading up to June at [www.aransascounty.org](http://www.aransascounty.org)

Some of you have noticed all the activity around the move of Kline's Café in downtown Rockport from Austin Street to its new home at St. Mary's and Magnolia. **Ty Husak**, our multi-talented Vice President, has been continuously documenting this huge undertaking. Check out his photos, video and explanations of the process on our website [ACHS1985.org](http://ACHS1985.org). He also posts regularly on the Aransas County Historical Society Facebook page as well.

We all know that we are collectively sharing a unique, significant, and life-changing time in our history. Someday, we all will have quite a story to tell.

—Cheryl Livingston



### ALL THAT'S LEFT: REBAR FROM THE FISHING PIER

At the kickoff of the Sesquicentennial celebration in January, committee co-chair Betty Stiles presented to ACHS two pieces of rebar salvaged from the recently demolished Copano Bay fishing pier. These pieces were a part of what was originally the "Hug the Coast Highway" bridge constructed in 1931 to connect Rockport/Fulton with the Houston area.

After a new causeway was completed in 1966, the old bridge became two of the longest fishing piers in the country, extending from nearly a mile each from the north and south. With the addition of lights for night fishing, the piers attracted fishermen from throughout the nation for sixty years.

The pieces will become a part of ACHS's permanent collection. Photos by Cheryl Livingston.

ACHS WELCOMES OUR NEWEST  
MEMBER,  
Kay Sparks Kubelka

# Remembering Sue Hastings

by John Jackson

[EDITOR'S NOTE: One of Aransas County's most noted historians, Sue Hastings, passed away December 20, 2020, at her home in Corpus Christi. A lifetime creative writer, Sue was the author (with William Allen) of the extensive historical study, *Aransas: The Life of a Texas Coastal County*, published in 1997. She also worked closely with ACHS Trustee John Jackson on his family/community history, *Taking the Tide: My Family's Ebb and Flow in Rockport, Texas* (2011). We asked John to share his memories of working with Sue.]

I had the pleasure of working closely with Sue Hastings twice during her literary career. The first time was back in the 1990s when the Rockport Art Association developed a Request for Proposal to select an author to write the history of Aransas County. Sue responded by teaming up with renowned author Bill Allen, who was then a professor emeritus at Ohio State University. Though Bill's credentials and experience may have influenced the committee's choice, the book was clearly the work of Sue Hastings. I was on that committee who selected the chosen team and we worked with both of them during the entire project.

Because their book won many accolades, Sue Hastings became well known and respected in the historical and literary fields after its publication.

Fifteen years later, after I had started my second career as a financial advisor,

I would share my Aransas County family history with clients, and they would invariably respond, "You should write a book!"

Because I was focused on my new career, I knew I would probably never take the time to write a book, so in 2009, I decided to ask Sue to help me as a co-writer. I was so pleased when she agreed to take on the challenge and remember vividly our

Sunday afternoon meetings stretched over an eighteen-month period where she recorded my story.

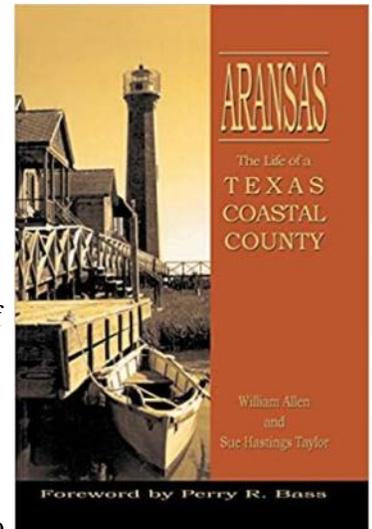
After completing a chapter, she would have me critique and edit it. I wrote about one fourth of the book because it was just too personal for anyone else to write, but of

course Sue had the opportunity to add her advice as well.

Finally, *Taking the Tide* was published in 2011 and most of the proceeds from its sale were donated to the Aransas County Historical Society. Sue came up with the title because it chronicled the ebb and flow of my family over the past 125 years in Rockport.

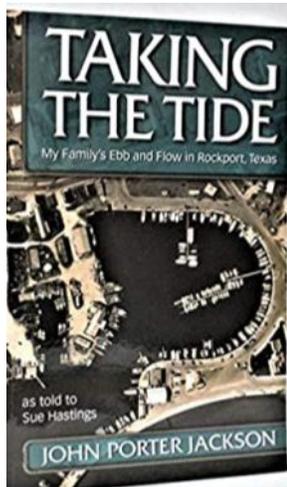
Sue Hastings was indeed a pleasure to work with. Those who knew her well were aware of that sparkle in her eye when she was pleased with something. She also had a great sense of humor and a pleasing personality. Her *Aransas* book work will likely be what she will be most remembered for, and I was

fortunate to work very closely with her during two of her literary achievements and feel blessed for having done so.



Kathryn Sue Hastings (1937-2020)

Photo courtesy  
<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/caller/obituary.aspx?n=kathryn-sue-hastings&pid=197280444>

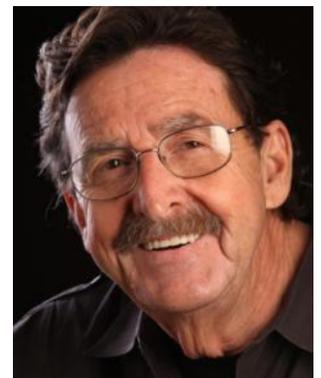


## ANOTHER HISTORIAN LOST: MURPHY GIVENS

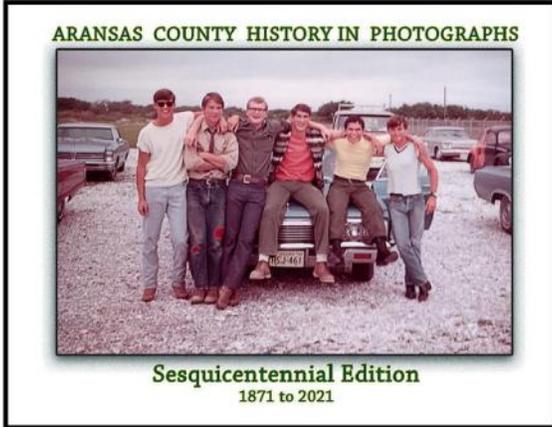
Long-time columnist and historian for the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, Murphy Givens died December 27, 2020. He was 76.

Givens was the author or editor of 17 books on Texas history, including the classic *Corpus Christi: A History*. His weekly newspaper columns also reported on local history in the Coastal Bend, and recorded a radio series as well for public radio stations.

KEDT-FM, 90.3 in Corpus Christi and KVRT-FM 90.7 in Victoria continue to air his radio show as "The Best of Murphy Givens" on Fridays as 7:45 AM and 5:44 PM.



# 2021 ACHS Sesquicentennial Historical Calendar!!



With lots of new information, this calendar is very special. The story behind the cover photo is worth the price!

Still only  
**\$10**

Available in Rockport at  
**ROCKPORT PRINTING**  
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The Meriam Meat Packery was one of several that lined the shores of Aransas and Copano Bays during the late 1860s and '70s. Located on Fulton Beach in Fulton, the Meriam was a major operation, which may account for the production of this rare image of a working packery in Aransas County. Photo courtesy Kam Wagert.

## THE MEAT PACKING ERA IN ARANSAS COUNTY

by Bobby Jackson

*[Editor's note: This article by award-winning history teacher and ACHS Trustee Bobby Jackson originally appeared in the Rockport Pilot as a History Mystery.]*

After the Civil War, the cattle industry in South Texas thrived. Herds of cattle were driven to the coast, and boarded on ships in Rockport and Fulton. The industry did too well, as the herds far exceeded the market. Ironically, cattle thieves came up with a solution: kill and skin the cattle on the open range and take the hides to Mexico where there was a ready cash market.

The meat packers (packeries) and slaughter houses sprang up here almost overnight. There were about twenty in Aransas County. The first packery was built by William S. Hall in Fulton. John Brundrett had a packery in Lamar. The Cushman Packery was on Frandolig Island (now Key Allegro). The Caruthers-Fulton Packing Company dealt almost exclusively in hides. The Meriam Packing Company was on Fulton Beach. A painting of this packery now hangs in our Texas Maritime Museum.

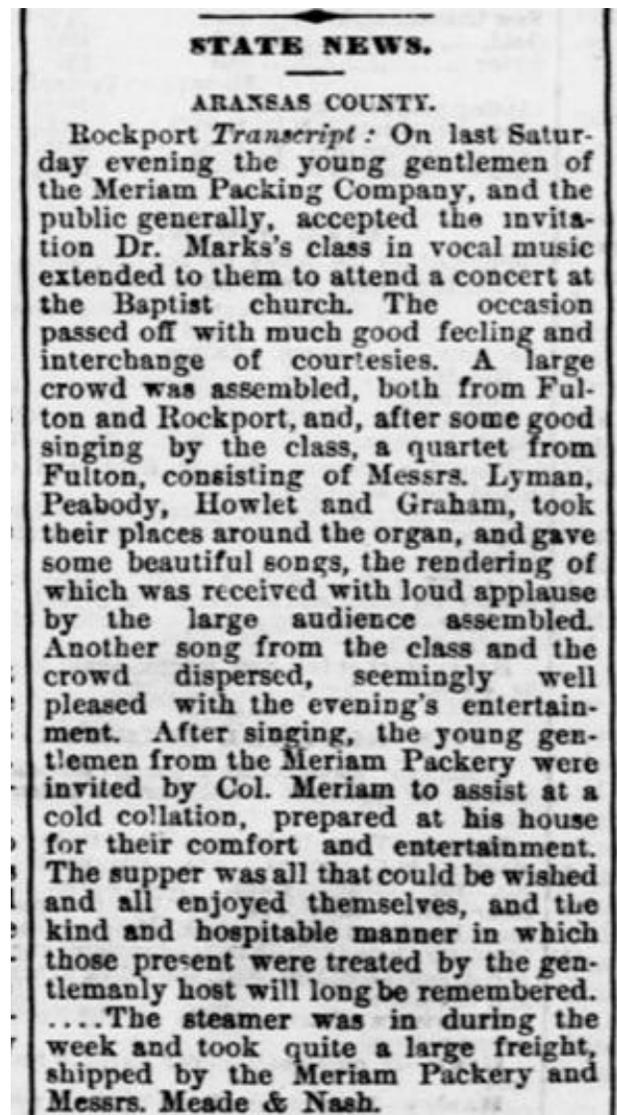
The packeries began to utilize cattle parts and by-products. Beef was pickled. Tallow was shipped to be made into soap and candles. The hides were used for clothing and shoes. Buttons, combs, and tool handles were made from the horns. Glue was made from the cattle's hooves. Any residual meat left after

the tallow was rendered was used as fertilizer.

In one year in the late 1870s, one million pounds of tallow were shipped from this area. A typical schooner's cargo would contain 1,982 dry hides, 20 tons of bones, 3,958 horns, and over 30 tons of tallow and pickled meat.

These packeries flourished for only ten years, from 1867 – 1877. The end was brought about by the great cattle drives to the north. This was cheaper and more productive than killing the cattle and shipping their parts and by-products by schooners. The coming of the railroad, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass, to Rockport in 1888 also drove another nail in the coffin of the meat packing industry.

### THE NEWS OF ARANSAS COUNTY: from *The Galveston News*, March 2, 1877



## ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED UNTIL LATER DATE

At its January meeting, the ACHS Board of Trustees voted to postpone the Society's Annual Meeting because of the ongoing pandemic.

Historically, the Annual Meeting has been held every February and many members renew their membership at the meeting. Normally, new trustees are elected as a part of the annual business meeting, but those whose terms were set to expire (Ernest Camehl, Bobby Jackson, and Pam Stranahan all graciously agreed to the indefinite extension until an annual meeting can be held.

Membership dues notices will be mailed to members later this month, and renewals can be made by return mail or through the ACHS website, [ACHS1985.org](http://ACHS1985.org).



John Jackson of Rockport, whose family is memorialized by three historical markers in Aransas County, was one of several who spoke about their property history at the Sesquicentennial kick-off at the History Center in late January. The information, including photos and text of all 56 of the current Aransas County historical markers, is included in the new 2021 Historical Marker Guide, published by the Rockport Pilot. Copies can be obtained for free from various venues in Rockport, including the Chamber of Commerce and at the Rockport Pilot office. Photos by David Murrah

## 2021 SESQUICENTENNIAL CALENDAR

[www.aransascounty150.org](http://www.aransascounty150.org)



**May 15**, 10:00 AM opening exhibit, *Voices from the Past: The Making of Aransas County*, History Center for Ar. Co., 801 E. Cedar St., Rockport

**May 22**, opening exhibit *Live Oak Legacy:*

*Portraits of Places in Aransas County since 1871*, Fulton Mansion, 317 S. Fulton Beach Rd. at Henderson St., Rockport

**June 12**, 9:00 – 10:30 AM Founders Day Breakfast, Rockport Rotary Club and A.C. Historical Society, High School Commons, 1802 Omohundro St., Rockport

**June 12**, 12-3 PM County Fair, AgriLife, Lions Club, A. C. Children's Coalition, C. Hagar Sanctuary, High School Commons, 1802 Omohundro St., Rockport

**June 13** Church histories from the pulpits

**June 13**, 2:00 – 4:00 PM Tour of Rockport Cemetery, Rockport Cemetery Association, Tule Park Road, Rockport

**June 13** 4:00 – 6:00 PM Historic Homes - 1868, (Mathis) 621 S. Church St., (Wood) 203 N. Magnolia, (Fulton-Bruhl) 409 N. Broadway, (Baylor-Norvell) 617 S. Water St., Rockport

**June 16** Preview (sneak peak), *Rockport Art Festival Poster Artists Show*, Rockport Center for the Arts, Baker Law Bldg., 401 S. Austin St., Rockport

**June 18-20**, 8 AM – 6 PM, Rockin' Rockport Sesquicentennial Regatta, Rockport Yacht Club, 722 Navigation Circle, Rockport

**June 19** Parade, Market St. at Ann St. (start) to Austin St. at Concho (end)

**June 19** Market Days, Festival grounds, A.C. Navigation District

**June 19** Event at the Rockport SAAP Railroad Depot and History of the Art Colony Mural, 105 S. Magnolia St., Rockport

**June 19**, 5:00 – 7:00 PM opening *Rockport Art Festival Poster Artists Show*, Rockport Center for the Arts, Baker Law Bldg., 401 S. Austin St., Rockport

**June 20**, 4:00 – 6:00 PM Historic Homes -1868, (Mathis) 621 S. Church St., (Wood) 203 N. Magnolia, (Fulton-Bruhl) 409 N. Broadway, (Baylor-Norvell) 617 S. Water St., Rockport

**July 4** special display "150" within 4<sup>th</sup> of July-Wendell fireworks

## ALMOST READY: THE KLINE'S CAFÉ REPORT

In recent months, ACHS has actively supported the activities necessary to save the historical Kline's Café building in the Rockport Historical District. The building could have been destroyed to make way for the new Center for the Arts, but through the efforts and support of state and local historical preservation organizations, the Rockport Center for the Arts and generous benefactors, the building will be saved.

Its move is projected to be completed in February. As part of its continuing effort to support the move, ACHS is documenting the event and informing the public by providing periodic updates via its site on Facebook and on its website, [ACHS1985.org](http://ACHS1985.org).

As the move progresses, ACHS will continue to document it with photographs, video footage, time-lapse, aerial images and aerial video. Part of the documentation plan is to create a time-lapse video of the building moving slowly through the streets of Rockport to its new location.

After the move, ACHS will archive the photos and video and provide some for a display for the Rockport Center for the Arts.



**READY TO ROLL:** Ram House Movers has spent weeks raising the historic building for the move. Photo by David Murrah

To follow the move, visit the ACHS Facebook page and web site for continuing updates.

—Ty Husak