

# Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association

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PAPHA Newsletter

July 2011

## They bite every day

These signs represent a very interesting and short period in our town's history during the late 1940's and early 1950's, when Nueces County owned the Ferry system.

They were built in Port Aransas and distributed around the United States by County personnel, financed with funds from Ferry tolls. Quasi legal at best, it nonetheless was very effective in bringing people to our island.



If you remember seeing one of these signs, please write us and tell us when and where. We are still researching this fascinating story, and your input would be very helpful.

## Farley Boat Works Video Online

A video by kiiitv.com on the effort to bring back farley boats in Port Aransas is available for viewing online. The video can be seen by clicking on the photo to start the video at <http://www.kiiitv.com/story/15078942/effort-to-bring-back-farley-boats-in-port-aransas>.

According to the site, "A unique and special effort is underway in Port Aransas to preserve that community's history and at the same time, bring back a special boat-building skill. As an extension of the Port Aransas Museum, community members are

bringing back what are called, Farley Boats, small wooden vessels that many say helped make Port Aransas and sport fishing along the Texas Coast what it is today. The people behind this project say this is about more than just learning how to build a

boat; it's about preserving a legacy."

Take the time to view the video which stars Port Aransas Museum Director Rick Pratt and PAPHA board member/leader of the Farley Boat Works restoration Herb Lancaster.

## Annual Auction Set

The Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association has announced the setting of the date for its Fourth Annual Dinner and Auction.

Mark your calendar now for Saturday, March 3, so you don't book another less important event. More details will

be reported as they are decided.

This fun and fundraising event is sure to entertain for the great cause of raising money for the Port Aransas Museum, exhibits for the Museum and the Farley Boat Works and any number of other PAPHA projects.

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## Heeeelp PLEASE!

After a very busy weekend in the gift shop on the weekend of the Deep Sea Roundup, we all realize that more vol-

unteer help is needed. There is always a need for people to welcome visitors and

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# Museum Director's Report

## Continuing on ...

### July 2011

We are having some interesting times at the Museum lately. Folks are dropping by seeking information about their ancestors who lived on the island.

They spend lots of time browsing the data bank of photos and we hear lots of laughs and joyous noises when they find one they have never seen.

Often, in fact usually, they are able to identify people in the photos for us.

The Gaulding family dropped in and spent three days chatting with us about life in the kit house that became our museum. (The Gauldings bought the house and the grocery and mercantile store, from the Loomis family. We think the Loomis family bought it from the Coast Guard).

We video interviewed Mrs. Bob Gaulding, (daughter-in-law of the folks who owned the store and the house) and her daughter and came away with a much better understanding of that era in our little town and some great stories about the family that lived in the house that now is our museum.

They presented us with a crockery urn that always stood beside the front porch while the Gauldings lived here. We will decide where and how to display it.

The interview was filmed by a new museo volunteer, Tuco Morgan, a graduate Videographer. Welcome aboard Tuco and thanks.

A few days later, a three generation contingent of the Farley/Dreyer clan dropped in and spent two full afternoons searching our photo collection.

On the same Saturday, a Curry/Farley descendant dropped in looking for any information about her island kin.

We were able to put her in touch with one relative and together with another who came to the Museum so they could meet and exchange contact information. The visitor left feeling connected to her family and to our island.

Watching our museum work like this is wonderful.

Our photo archive is a valuable thing. Thanks again to Mark Creighton and the founders of PAPHA for having the vision to establish and maintain this marvelous collection. The archive has served us well in seeking and recording the history of our unique island town.

### New story of our little house

Georgia Neblett, who lived in the house and raised her family there, told me a new story today as I was finishing this newsletter piece.

Bob and Mary Gaulding hosted a Kentucky Derby Party every year for their friends here on the island.

They ran a long antenna from the well house to the peak of the roof to better receive the radio signal from afar and invited folks over to

listen to the Derby and drink Mint Juleps.

It became a major event in the social calendar of the town.

Thanks, Georgia, for passing on this neat new story, which was given to her by Teddy and Verda Mathews and Sam and Bee Allen.

### Farley Boat Works Project

If all goes well, restoration of the Farley boat shop will start in two weeks.

Contractor Frank Massey has agreed to tackle the job. He will coordinate the efforts of all the various sub contractors necessary to bring

the old building back to life.

Best guess at the moment is that construction will take about 65 days. This whole project has moved swiftly and efficiently through all the necessary steps and will soon be a reality.

We are hoping to start training the initial class of boat builders in early August. The class will meet in the evening, three days per week for two weeks. At the end of the sessions, we will have the first boat ready to float.

Sessions will be taught in Herb Lancaster's shop in Aransas Pass.

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PAPHA files

### Lady catches big

From left in back are Edwin Wolner, Jeane Singleton, Helen Wolner and Bill Singleton. In front are Pam Singleton and Bill Singleton. Pam is now Pam Singleton Wallace. She and her husband Bill and their children and grandchildren still come to Port Aransas. The photo was taken in February 1954, at Felton Cottages, which were managed by Mr. and Mrs. Rathburn. The two largest Black Drum weighed 60 pounds each, and were caught by Mrs. Jeane Singleton. Of the 11 fish, she caught six to her husband Bill's five.

# Docent Doings

By Docent Coordinator Karen Larsen

## Monthly updates

Hi Everyone!! I hope your summer is going great. I went to the board meeting this month, and here are the numbers for the month of June. We put in 116 hours at the museum, and we had 269 guests. 249 were from Texas; I guess we are in the Texas season. We took in \$232.65 in donations. That is almost a dollar a person. The PAPHA board still chooses to solicit donations instead of charging admission.

Since some board members have a goal of \$2 per person, we still must continue to "invite" our guests to donate as they walk through the door.

The gift shop did really well in June. We made \$494.01 in sales. Great job. Really proud of our salespeople!

The board decided to have what you might call a "docent raiser".

After Labor Day, they are planning on having a "historical" boat ride up and down the channels in the evening. It will either be on the Kahootz or the Dolphin Watch. A box lunch will be served. The price of admission is bringing a someone interested in becoming a docent. This will give prospective workers a chance to meet current docents and see

if they would be interested in joining.

Museum Director Rick Pratt is very excited about the Farley Boat Works and expects it up and running by the Fall. They will be offering boat building lessons and if any of you are interested, contact him.

I was left a note about needing more of the beige and white t-shirts. These were an early fundraiser for the museum. Nancy Phillips and Betty Bundy sold them from the back of Nancy's car every chance they got before we had a museum. So there will not be any more of them made. What we have is what we have.

We still have a lot of people on vacation. I will be going on vacation myself on Sept. 3rd and not sure when we will be back. I will notify all docents who will be in charge while I'm gone.

That seems to be all for now. If anyone has anything to add or any questions, just let me know. Karen

Thanks to all of you for your great efforts. We have some exciting projects in the works that we'll all enjoy. Remember the Old Town Festival is Oct 15, and we will have lots to do, plus lots of fun. Maybe even having a surfing contest this year!

'DIRECTOR' \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cont. from page 2

If you want to be a boat builder/teacher, contact me at [rnickpratt45@gmail.com](mailto:rnickpratt45@gmail.com), or call the museum at 361-749-3800.

Charley Fisher, Port A Harbormaster and Museum volunteer, is compiling a list of the existing Port A skiffs. The count is seven so far, all but one still operational. Call Charlie at 749-5429 if you have or know of a Port A skiff.

*Rick Pratt*

## Wanted: Docents!!!

Got some free time? We invite you to be a docent for the Port Aransas Museum. A docent can do a variety of things: give tours, work in the gift shop, help with the computer/bookkeeping, work on displays, work on the internet, help transcribe the Mercer logs, help with Little Chapel tours, clean, and more. Contact Museum Docent Coordinator Karen Larsen at [docentspapha@yahoo.com](mailto:docentspapha@yahoo.com)

## Lectures Scheduled

Another great year in the Lecture Series of the Port Aransas Museum is being scheduled. You will want to mark these dates on your calendars so that you can be at the Community Center for each one. They will begin at 7 p.m. at the Museum with wine and cheese, then we'll move over to the Community Center at 7:30 for the lectures. A variety of subject matter will be discussed including The Mercer Logs, The Museum's archives, the Intracoastal Waterway, Assault on Mustang Island, Antique Postcards of the Area, and more. All speakers are not firmed up, but the dates are firm.

They are: November 28, December 12, January 16 and 30, February 13 and 27.

Guthrie Ford has been chairman of the committee to transcribe the Mercer Logs and he will be making a presentation on what marvelous things he has discovered. Mark Creighton will bring a great presentation on the archives of the museum, which are growing daily. As lecture topics are firmed up, we'll fill you in, but they all promise to be great fun.



Old Postcard

PAPHA files

# Semper Paratus: The Saving of Life and Property on Mustang Island

John Guthrie Ford

A State historical marker was commemorated in June 2009 to recognize the United States Coast Guard on Mustang Island; when in Port A, go by Roberts Point Park and check out this informative marker. In this article, I use a handful of station log entries to provide a sense of the “Always Ready” motto of the Coast Guard.

The southern reach of the Texas barrier island chain can claim five quite historic shipwrecks: three Spanish galleons off Padre Island in 1554; steamship *Mary* at the Aransas Pass in 1876, a determining factor in the Government establishing a Coast Guard station on Mustang Island,♦ and the Mexican freighter *Nicaragua*, driven hard

aground on Padre by a 1912 gale. Ten of the *Nicaragua* crew were rescued by personnel from the Port Aransas Station when the crewmen were spotted off Mustang in a small yawl. A motor launch was dispatched to the stricken freighter to remove two sick men. ♦♦

## Here are three additional log entries.

Station alarm sounded for a smoke plume observed to south southwest (about where the IGA now is). The fire-fighting cart was moved post haste to a fiery chicken house, which, unlike the 100 feathery occupants, was saved.

Motorboat *Flashlike* exploded and blazed near the Humble petroleum depot on Harbor Island. Coastguardsmen,

aided by Humble workers, controlled this perilous situation before fire spread to the tanker docks and storage tanks. \_

A few days before Christmas 1930, the town ferryboat *Mitzi* nudged aground in the lee of Turtle Cove. The Station launch worked the old girl free and towed her back into the ship channel.

What about really unusual lifesaving instances? The strangest I know of had, surprisingly, nothing to do with the water, beach, or storms; in fact, the rescue took place right on the grounds of the station itself. I will let a yeoman’s words tell this stranger-than-fiction story that unfolded in 1883. “At about 10 a.m., Keeper [man in charge] Cranston, while picking up wood in the Yard was bitten twice by a ‘Rattlesnake;’ every remedy known was applied by those residing near the Station. His hand and arm began to be swollen and black. He was put under the influence of stimulants using two quarts of liquor before it took effect, when he became insensible and remained so eighteen hours.”

The patient remained delirious several days before beginning to improve; the arm, however, was useless for weeks, rendering Keeper Cranston incapable of performing many of his duties. (It is not logged whether Cranston suffered more from the snakebite or the hangover.)

♦ The Coast Guard name was not used until 1915; prior to that it was the Life Saving Service.

♦♦ The *Nicaragua* story is spiced-up by the possibility that she was purposely wrecked in the warring context of the Mexican Revolution. The ship’s rusting hulk, visible in the surf line for many decades, added to that delicious mystery.

[J. Guthrie Ford, Ph.D., is a recognized local history scholar and award winning writer of heritage literature. His book on Mustang Island history, *A Texas Island*, is offered at the Port Aransas Museum.]



'HELP'

Cont. from page 1

start them on their tour. But there also is a rule that the gift shop can never be left alone with way to secure the area.

This all means that we work best when we have at least two in the museum at all times while open. This is an appeal to anyone who would like to see what it’s like to be a docent or trained volunteer at the Port Aransas Museum.

Come try us out and see where you fit into the program. We’d love to have you and have a spot for you, whether you have a lot or little time to volunteer.

For more information, call PAPHA president Nancy Phillips at 749-0321 or Docent Coordinator Karen Larsen at 749-6283 or email: [docentspaha@yahoo.com](mailto:docentspaha@yahoo.com).