

Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association

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PAPHA Newsletter

September 2008

Port A Museum Musings BY PAPHA PRESIDENT SHARON STRICKER

Thanks to Bruce and many other volunteers and contractors, work on our historic home continues.

The exterior has been scraped, primed and painted. The exterior is now 90% complete, and most of the work was done by volunteers.

All doors and windows are secured.

Work on the air conditioner, electrical service, plumbing, duct work, and remodeling the interior is underway and will be completed, as funds are available.

Thanks to the Port Aransas Garden Club, palm trees have been planted.

The engraved brick walkways are under construction. Thanks to all who have purchased bricks. If you have not bought yours, it is not too late. You can call Betty Bundy at 361-749-3406 to place an order.

Norris and I have been on vacation the last few weeks. As always, we are mixing a little business with our pleasure, visiting family and friends in the Midwest.

We attended several historic churches. One in Nebraska where we were members for several years celebrated their 125th anniversary. Another I attended as a child is 166 years old. In Nashville, we attended a church that is 159 years old.

We visited museums while in St. Joseph, MO, including the St. Joseph Black Archives, St. Joseph Indian, and St. Joseph Asylum Museums.

While in Kansas City, we visited the Jazz Museum, Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and the Rosa Parks Traveling Display. In Nashville, we toured the Tennessee State Museum. The museum's interpretive exhibits

begin 15,000 years ago with prehistoric humans and continues through the early 1900s, with special sections on Native American Indians, explorers, pioneers, the Antebellum age, the Civil War, and the beginning of the new century.

In New Orleans we visited the Louisiana State Museum and the WW II Museum. We visited historic sites such as the City Market, Westport, where the covered wagons were outfitted for their trip out West, and Country Club Plaza in Kansas City.

We learned a lot and plan to see and learn a lot more. We are taking photos and copious notes.

Preserving our history is important. Things should not be destroyed and/or replaced just because they are old. Indeed, this may be the best reason not to destroy them.

Better Safe Than Sorry ... Museum boarded for Ike

PAPHA Treasurer and Museum Project Manager Bruce Reynolds made sure the museum was boarded up ready

to survive another hurricane when Ike was headed toward Port Aransas. This island was spared the wrath of Ike. The

Galveston area was not as fortunate. This building has survived storms and hurricanes for almost a century.



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Future General and President Grant in Texas

By JOHN FUCIK

Only a few years after serving two terms as our president, U.S. Grant, was broke due to some bad investments involving his oldest son, Ulysses.

Although heretofore he'd doggedly resisted putting his life and especially, Civil War experiences, to pen, due to his strained financial condition in 1884, he agreed to write his memoirs for Samuel Clemens's (aka Mark Twain) new publishing firm.

Though suffering with cancer, Grant wrote his "Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant" in less than a year. He finished

the last proofs on July 14, 1885 and died July 23rd of that year. The extracts from these memoirs relative to his experiences in our area while serving with the 4th Infantry, U.S. Army during the Mexican-American War,

I thought might be of interest to our PAPHA Newsletter readers.

"Early in September [1845] the regiment left New Orleans for Corpus Christi, now in Texas. Ocean steamers were not common, and the passage was made in sailing vessels. At the time there was not more than three feet of water in the

channel at the outlet of Corpus Christi Bay; the debarkation, therefore, had to take place by small steamers, and at an island in the channel called Shell Island, the ships anchoring some miles out from the shore..... After I had gone ashore, and had been on guard several days at Shell Island, quite six miles from the ship, I had occasion for some reason or other to return on board.

"While on the Suviah - I think that was the name of our vessel - I heard a tremendous racket at the other end of the ship, and much excited sailor language, such as 'damn your eyes', etc. [Grant goes on to describe a "mutiny" on board which he doubted was all that serious an altercation with the captain] ... By the time I was ready to leave the ship again I thought I had learned enough of the working of the double and single pulley, by which passengers were let down from the upper deck of the ship to the steamer below, and determined to let myself down without assistance.

{He then describes how he very unceremoniously dumped himself into the brink, headfirst!]

"...After reaching shore, or Shell Island, the labor of getting to Corpus Christi was slow and tedious. There was, if my memory serves me, but one small steamer to transport troops and baggage when the infantry arrived. Others were procured later. The distance from Shell Island to Corpus Christi was some sixteen or eighteen miles. The channel to the bay was so shallow that the steamer, small as it was, had to dragged over the bottom when loaded Later this was remedied, by deepening the channel...".

Maybe this was the first of the dredgings to be dumped in Charlie's pasture????

Whose House Was It Anyway?

A "soft opening" for the new historical museum has tentatively been set for the end of November, with a grand opening in January.

The museum opening committee has chosen the "history of the house" as the first big exhibit.

With the title, "Whose house was it?", this committee is seeking input from everyone still living who has an opinion about the past of the museum building.

We know it was a kit house; which company sold it is debatable. We know it

served as a Coast Guard Station after the Life Saving Station was destroyed.

But who actually built the house has not been proven. We know Mercer built a kit house like this one, but is this that house? Were there two or three kit houses built in Port Aransas in the early 1900s. One was moved to Aransas Pass and dismantled within the last few years.

Anyone with a theory, with or without fact to back it up is asked to contact committee chairman Rick Pratt at 361-749-3193 or camric@the-i.net.

Museum Docent Coordinator Chosen

Mary Hammond McKnight has been chosen as the Docent Coordinator for the Port Aransas Museum.

Mary will be in charge of scheduling, recruiting and helping train volunteers to man the museum.

Docent duties can include being the friendly face to greet visitors, providing information about the Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association and the island, taking admission money,

selling items from the gift shop and answering questions about exhibits.

"This volunteer job will not be hard...willingness to help out is the top requirement. Training will give the volunteers the tools needed to be able to do the job well," Mary said.

Anyone wanting to get involved and having a little time to spare may call her at 361-749-6995 to volunteer or get more information.

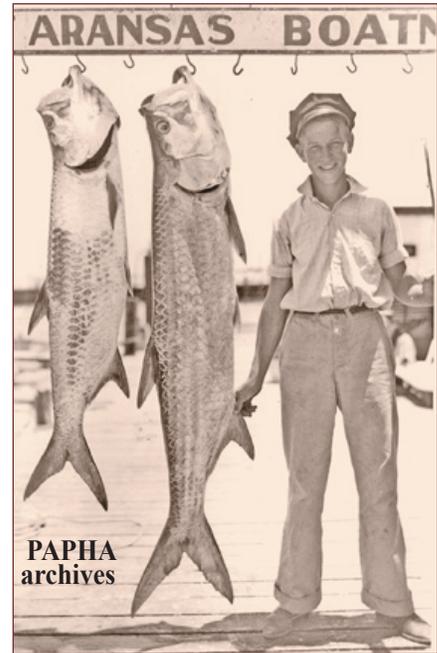
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Museum house stands proud in center of this diorama after the 1919 hurricane. It would 'live' through many other storms before becoming the first historical museum in Port Aransas.

PAPHA
Profit & Loss YTD Comparison
August 2008

	Aug 08	Jan - Aug 08
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Contribution		
Board	0.00	103.99
Campaign 2008		
Directors Campaign 2008	10,714.76	42,638.69
Non Directors Campaign 2008	3,000.00	5,477.00
Sandfest	0.00	2,500.00
Total Campaign 2008	13,714.76	50,615.69
Contribution - Other	0.00	112.82
Total Contribution	13,714.76	50,832.50
Fund Raising sales		
Bricks		
Board	125.00	6,440.00
Bricks non Board	45.00	4,805.00
Paver cost	0.00	-4,021.70
Total Bricks	170.00	7,223.30
Calendars	30.00	673.19
Miscellaneous product sales	4.00	248.00
Photos	0.00	43.14
Total Fund Raising sales	204.00	8,187.63
Membership		
Business	0.00	90.00
Century	0.00	400.00
Decade	0.00	50.00
Family	0.00	490.00
Individual	0.00	165.00
Lifetime	1,000.00	2,000.00
Total Membership	1,000.00	3,195.00
Total Income	14,918.76	62,215.13
Expense		
Audit Fee's	2,000.00	2,000.00
Bank fee	0.00	0.60
Books	34.95	131.40
Building Expense		
Contractor insurance	0.00	1,742.00
Foundation	0.00	5,748.22
Front Porch	0.00	4,621.14
Interior remodel	2,961.28	4,616.06
Move related	0.00	16,000.00
Prep, Primer, and Paint	584.74	906.69
Rebuild outside Walls	3,704.36	17,178.40
Rewire Electrical	3,000.00	3,000.00
Roofing	0.00	1,750.00
Total Building Expense	10,250.38	55,562.51
Building Expense Donated	0.00	3,923.00
Cmarket Web Auction	0.00	395.00
Conference	0.00	451.45
Consultants		
Museum Design	0.00	9,000.00
Total Consultants	0.00	9,000.00
Credit card Fee's	405.94	405.94
Facility Rental	0.00	100.00
Fund Raising Functions	1,544.42	1,544.42
Miscellaneous	0.00	-5.77
Office equipment		
Office computer equipment	10.72	3,240.50
Total Office equipment	10.72	3,240.50
Office Expenses		
Utilities		
Electricity	0.00	70.47
Telephone	25.76	205.65
Trash	0.00	20.21
Water	0.00	72.72
Total Utilities	25.76	369.05
Total Office Expenses	25.76	369.05
Office Supplies		
Bank Service Charge	50.65	50.65
Pest Control	0.00	125.00
Post office box	0.00	52.00
Postage	0.00	30.00
Shipping	0.00	31.81
Supplies	490.73	886.74
Total Office Supplies	541.38	1,176.20
Total Expense	14,813.55	78,294.30
Net Ordinary Income	105.21	-16,079.17
Other Income/Expense		
Other Income		
Donated Services	2,000.00	5,923.00
Interest	0.00	192.54
Total Other Income	2,000.00	6,115.54
Net Other Income	2,000.00	6,115.54
Net Income	2,105.21	-9,963.63



Tarpon was plentiful in years past.

www.portausa.com

Wanna share?

*P. A. MUSEUM SEEKING
TREASURES ON LOAN*

Got artifacts and memorabilia you might be willing to loan out? The Port Aransas Museum is looking for them for exhibits.

PAPHA Board Member and Museum Opening Chairman Rick Pratt is inviting the public to be involved by temporarily sharing their treasures.

Rick will be taking inventory of items from everyone who contacts him and will use the list to feature in and supplement exhibits. The items will not be asked for until they tie into an exhibit theme.

“Since we will just be starting out, we would rather ‘borrow’ than acquire at this time,” Rick said. “So look around, see what you have to share with us, let me know and we will get it on the list.”

Call Rick at 361-749-3193 or e-mail to camric@the-i.net and get your items listed.

PAPHA
361-749-3800
www.portausa.com

Mustang Island as a Pioneering Place BY JOHN G. FORD

Indians, adventurers, and pirates had trod the Mustang sand for centuries, but not until 1855 did people come to the Island with the express intent to settle it. These hardy pioneers were members of the Robert Ainsworth Mercer family.

At first glance, treeless Mustang Island appeared an inhospitable frontier, but in fact it gave the Mercers an accessible water table, abundant grass for livestock, and plentiful driftwood for food fires

and some construction. Robert and his family built a homestead they named El Mar Rancho (sea ranch). Beef and dairy cattle provided meat and butter, greens sprouted in a garden, and of course there were abundant oysters and waterfowl. (Fish were not a staple for early settlers because they did not know how to catch or net them.) So successful were the Mercers in carving out an existence that soon a dozen houses dotted the sand hills

on the head of Mustang Island.

Did the Pioneer Period include a dollar-and-cents economy? With the following exception, the only bucks the Mustang settlers sought were those whose venison added to the food stores. Money was acquired by the bar pilot enterprise. Living next to the Aransas Pass, some men became expert in navigating this dangerous waterway, and for a fee a Mustang pilot would guide a ship through the pass.

A healthy and happy settlement was rolling right along, and even the news of war in Spring 1861 did little to change life; after all, what were the odds that this Eastern based conflict would ever reach an obscure little Texas island. Reality appeared on the horizon about a year later in the form of a U.S. Navy vessel taking station off Mustang to blockade the Aransas Pass. Federal sailors were soon commandeering livestock and water and eventually torching people's homes, one of which was El Mar Rancho. The Island was abandoned to the Yankees, and Mustang Island's Pioneer Period came to a traumatic and abrupt end.



PAPHA archives

September Board Meeting Long but Productive

The PAPHa Board met on Monday, Sept. 8. Before business they listened to presentations by Wade Grout of the Donning Co., and J. Guthrie Ford.

Grout spoke on the process of publishing a commemorative type historical book. Ford of the Nueces County Historical Commission spoke on the process for obtaining state historical markers.

Bruce Reynolds reported August income was \$14,918.76; expenses - \$ 14,813.55. Money paid by PAPHa for museum as of July 28, 2008 is \$ 116,003; value of other contributions is \$511,075. Estimated cost for completion is \$878,526. Estimated balance needed to complete museum is \$219,218. If done by volunteers, insulation and dry wall installation could save \$5-6000.

Nancy Phillips reported Mary

Hammond McKnight would be named as Museum Docent Coordinator. She has several names for volunteer docent, but more were needed. A training session for docents would be scheduled for late October. Gift shop discussion included possible contest for logo for t-shirts. Nancy would coordinate with Bruce on soliciting "housewarming" gift suggestions for museum open house.

On fund-raising and grants, Jane Gnazzo said a fundraiser in San Antonio has been scheduled for October 23, hosted at his house by Boo Hauser who works for the Texas Historical Commission and also owns a house in Port Aransas.

Jane will meet with Sharon Stricker about policy on "naming" rights for museum rooms, items, etc. and other PAPHa properties.

Brick pavers and blocks remain at \$300 for 16x16 size and \$50 for 4x8 size.

Potential grants in process include Summerlee, Rachal, Trull and Lowe's (for material or money) and a federal one in November. Betty Bundy explained on-line auction process which would be scheduled for January 2009.

PAPHa will host Texas Tropical Trails meeting in May, 2009, and the Texas Historical Commission workshop on oral histories in 2009.

Rick Pratt distributed a summary of report of Museum Start Up committee.

Discussion on programs, a book for listing all contributors to museum and PAPHa projects, and coordinating with PAISD on historically oriented educational projects concluded the meeting.