

# Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association

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PAPHA Newsletter

October 2008



The Port Aransas Garden Club has been working hard to finish the landscaping in front of the Community Center and the Port Aransas Museum.

Torch lights were added in front of both structures and look wonderful along with the grass and trees. Planting days have been scheduled with members and volunteers. To help, call Kathy Reynolds at 749-0215.

At the October meeting club members voted to pay for extending the porch toward the end of the Community Center near the Computer Center and the work is already in progress with Mayor Claude Brown installing the pilings at no cost.

## Boo and Meta Hausser Offer Home in San Antonio for Cocktail Party Fundraiser

Albert Ford “Boo” Hausser and his wife Meta are furthering the mission of the Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association (PAPHA) by using their San Antonio home for a Cocktail Party and Fundraiser for the organization.

The party, set for October 23, has a guest list composed of folks whose families have had second homes in Port A., and have been an important part of our town for many years.

Boo has been a commissioner with the Texas Historical Commission since 2003; is a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Texas, and Texas Historical Foundation, and he and Meta are members of PAPHA.

The Hausser have been successfully involved with the restoration of Castroville, Texas, where their efforts

have been quite effective. PAPHA is most fortunate to have them join its drive to foster “Old Town” Port Aransas.

They, like so many other San Antonio folks, have enjoyed Port Aransas all their lives and welcomed this opportunity to give something back to our island community.

The Hausser graciously offered their home to host the event sponsored by PAPHA San Antonio Trustees, Edith McAllister, Aimee and Stacy Locke, and Dennert and Suzanne Ware.

For nearly a century, San Antonio people have considered Port Aransas their favorite spot on the coast, and our history is closely shared with them.

Since so many San Antonio Port Aransans love to brag about the many years they and their ancestors have been coming to the island, Meta proposed a clever competition idea of attendees



bringing an early photograph of one’s family while in Port A which will then become part of the museum’s permanent collection.

Lisabella’s Bistro restaurant (one of the best in town!) has offered a prize of dinner for two for the earliest photograph. This competition will certainly spur some serious bragging rights!

RSVP to your invitation promptly for a fun evening of Port Aransas stories.

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## ‘Whose House’ needs more input

**STORIES, PHOTOS, MORE, ABOUT MERCER HOUSE ARE NEEDED**

With the museum’s informal opening still tentatively been set for the end of November, more “stories” about the building are being sought.

Anyone with memories and or memorabilia of any of the families who lived in the house are asked to contact

**See ‘Input’ on Page 3**

# Museum Research - How Others Do It

BY PAPHA PRESIDENT SHARON STRICKER

I'm back in town with a new outlook on the museum situation for Port Aransas.

My husband Norris and I recently completed a 4600 mile tour that took us into ten states. We visited 12 museums, five historic churches, and numerous historic sites.

Most museums require several hours to view and understand the displays and story lines. We did not visit a bad museum, though some were better than others.

The purpose or theme of a museum

dictates the information and artifacts on display. Some required massive amounts of material to be displayed.

At the WWII museum in New Orleans, they collect and display restored airplanes, small weapons, tanks, jeeps, photos, narratives, and video clips in a massive three story building.

We viewed a Rosa Parks/Martin Luther King exhibit in Kansas City, MO, where this moving historic story is told exclusively with story boards, photos, and copies of historic documents. It took several hours to view, read, and absorb the drama, tragedy, and historic significance of this seemingly insignificant act by one person. This is a travelling display and is provided by the Smithsonian and was on display in an area not unlike the Port Aransas Museum.

Among the standout lessons we learned deal with lighting, audio, video, storage, user friendliness, and the utilization of the available space. In many instances, the glare caused by ill conceived lighting made it uncomfortable to read the material in the display cases. At one point, we realized we had not made any wiring provisions for speakers in the Mercer House. A quick call to Bruce remedied this oversight. We observed that vertical displays allow for greater

utilization of floor space. These are displays as tall as seven feet and four feet wide and the story line reads from top to bottom. Everything PAPHA has been presented with so far suggests horizontal displays where everything is at eye level or below and presented left to right. This severely limits our display area.

I have thoroughly discussed all of this and a great deal more with your Board of Directors. If you have visited a museum that incorporates ideas or features that may benefit Port Aransas Museum, please give us a call.

Our tour was very timely because we have begun the process of meeting with four museum design companies. On our return trip, we were able to stop in Houston (before Ike) and visit a museum that was recently completed by a design company that we have interviewed. Our plan is to complete these evaluation interviews in October. We will then select one design firm to work with us to design, fabricate, and install the displays in our museum.

I want to commend Bruce Reynolds for doing such a tremendous job of overseeing the renovation of our Museum. He has done an excellent job in securing bids, making sure the job is completed in a timely fashion, supervising the contractors and more.

## PAPHA and PAEF partner

PAPHA donated a gift basket and paintings to the Port Aransas Education Foundation for a silent auction item at its Mardi Gras in October, raising \$1,500 for PAEF to use for our kids.



## Input Continued from Page 1

PAPHA as soon as possible.

With "Whose house was it?", the history of the house, chosen as the first exhibit, museum opening committee is seeking input from everyone still living who has an opinion about the past of the museum building.

Anyone with a memory or 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](mailto:camric@the-i.net).

The exhibit will begin with the arrival of Robert Ainsworth Mercer to the island in 1863, and continue to the present which sees this early 1900s kit house saved from the wrecking ball. Lastly it was moved down the street to its new home complementing the newly restored (courtesy of the City of Port Aransas, Port Aransas Boatmen Inc. and the public) Community Center, to provide a "Gateway to Old Town," the new crown jewel of Alister Street.



## PAM Building Status Report

BY BRUCE REYNOLDS, BUILDING RENOVATION CHAIRMAN

The building progress is moving along quite nicely. We have finished all work on the inside to enable us to have the rough-in inspection. That means the framing, hurricane strapping, electrical,

A/C ducts, and plumbing was ready for inspection. The building passed the inspection by the building inspector.

AEP installed the electrical wires from

See 'Status' on Page 3



# The Coming (and Going?) of Mustang Island BY JOHN G. FORD

If you scour Mustang's beach and probe a dune or two, you will sample remnants of some far flung places. The sand, sediment, and little rocks are the outpourings of major Gulf interfacing rivers, to include the Rio Grande and big muddy himself, the mighty Mississippi. How did such far away river scree become the gleaming Mustang Island?

Soil and sediment were washed out of estuaries and then swept along the coastline by littoral currents, which flow close and parallel to the mainland. The river materials swept into and became deposited on submerged seabed elevations, called shoals, lying just offshore. The littoral deposit enhanced the height of the shoals, some of which eventually broke the surface, eventually to become Texas' seven barrier islands.

The prevailing wind blew sand and sediment up from the Mustang beach to form the impressive ridge of foredunes. Powerful tidal surges of hurricanes swept the stuff of the Island into the waters behind it, where, like giant fans, the washover material radiated out to create shallow water domains crucial to the

survival of various fishes and mollusks. Hurricanes also opened water passes through the Island that infused the backwaters with nutrient rich Gulf water

When did all this happen? Deposit on the submerged shoals began five millennia ago, and the Mustang Island of today had her general configuration about when Christ was born. Will the Island be around for another two thousand

years? Well, if the Al Gores are correct about unabated global warming, then No. Rising Gulf waters will drastically reduce Mustang's area, if not flood it all together—and this could happen, we are told, in a century or so. (Whoa! With that devastating prediction I can think of nothing better than icing a few down and going fishing—hey, that sounds pretty good. Thanks Al!)



This board was found when getting the museum house ready to move. Anybody have any info? Contact Betty Bundy at 361-749-3406.

## Board makes big decisions; calendar schedule set

The meeting was held in the JELM Youth Room with nine members present and Sharon Stricker presiding. Minutes and Treasurer's Report were accepted.

<b>September Income</b>	<b>\$39,092.26</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$12,674.83</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$68,995.82</b>

Sharon yielded floor to Jerry VanBevern who distributed who distributed a statement of PAPHA's Financial Position in lieu of a formal audit. He explained the auditing process and the sort of records and information needed for a non-profit organization to satisfy auditors and IRS requirements.

### Old Business:

1. Treasurer Bruce Reynolds distributed a summary of the status of the Museum renovation, estimating a completion date around end of October.

2. Estimates from two firms on museum development have been made and at least two others have been

contacted. For the informal opening of museum "homemade" exhibits, e.g., histories of Port Aransas pioneer families, would be prepared plus continuous PowerPoint slideshow of photos from PAPHAarchives. Betty Bundy said original Mercer Logs had been given to the museum, as promised by Eva Rae Mercer Westmoreland, who recently passed away.

3. Grants/Fund Raising: PAPHA did not receive a grant from Summerly Foundation; the grants applications sent to Trull and Coastal Bend Foundations are pending. Idea of corporate/business memorial brick as type of permanent advertising was discussed with decision on how to recognize corporate donations postponed.

4. Jane Gnazzo briefed the Board on upcoming October 23rd fundraiser at Boo Hauser's in San Antonio. General discussion on establishing and recognizing large donations and categories for such donations.

5. History's Mysteries Ghost Tours will be held on Halloween Friday, Oct. 31 – two tours at 6 & 8pm in partnership with the City of Port Aransas Parks and Recreation Department.

6. Nov. 25th is potential date for museum preview, with an Open House or House Warming in early December. More docents will be needed when museum opens.

7. Old Town Festival; scheduled for Mar. 7th, needs a coordinator for the event, Pam Greene will chair the parade. Contributor for wine still needed.

8. Form for recording time/travel/other in-kind of Board members was distributed for comment.

### New Business:

1. Discussion on qualities needed for potential Board members and job descriptions for officers and Board members.

2. Betty Bundy was named the PAPHA Research Coordinator.