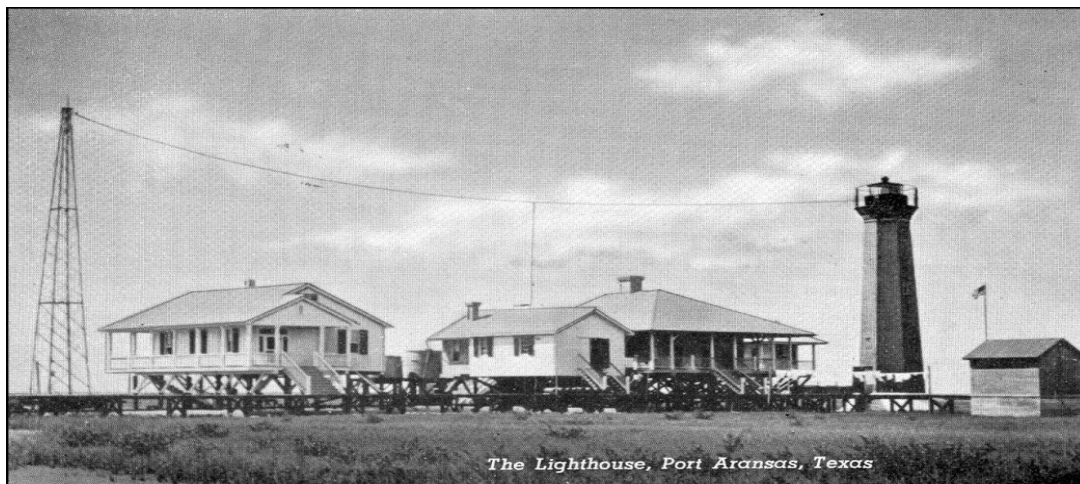


# THE EIGHT WONDERS OF PORT ARANSAS



## 1 - The Light House



To establish a seaport on the pass, a light was needed to mark it. Many ships and lives had been lost in attempting this often-treacherous pass. The pass was shifting rapidly to the south up to 250 feet per year. A movable light ship made sense. But local and national forces wanted a permanent structure.

Construction started in 1854, and the tower was first lighted in 1857. Mounted at the top of the tower was a fourth-order Fresnel lens which made the light visible 13 miles. This 57' brick tower lit the way into our pass for 99 years before being abandoned by the United States Coast Guard.

The tower was re-lit in 1989 by a new private owner (Charles Butt of HEB).

During the Civil War, the station became the target of confederate forces. In a daring raid, they set off two kegs of black powder, destroying the lens and damaging the tower. The Station was repaired and re-lit using a new fourth-order lens in 1864.

The original houses were destroyed by the 1916 hurricane and replaced by a single large house next to the tower. It was finished in time for the 1919 hurricane which caused much destruction to Port Aransas. This strong, beautiful building survived that storm and stands today. Standing alone until the 1920's a smaller north house, partially hidden behind the tower, was built. This allowed one more assistant keeper and family to move in for the opening of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel.

The back half of the north house and the Keeper's house on the south end were built in 1940 when the United States Light Service was dissolved and the United States Coast Guard took over all the light stations in the country.

Finally, the Coast Guard abandoned the station in 1954. By this point, the pass had shifted southward over a mile and a half before being captured by the Jetties.

## 2 - The Jetties



The Jetties were built to capture the pass, which was moving south at a rate up to 250' per year. Operating a seaport, or build a town, on this wild channel. was impossible

It would take five attempts and 50 years to finally bring it to a halt.

In 1862, a group of local businesses raised money to construct a rock wall

on the south side of the channel to prevent further movement. It lasted less than two years.

Next attempt was by the Army Engineers in 1870. Led by a man named Mansfield, it consisted of a single jetty on the south side of the channel. This slowed the southward movement down to about 70' per year.

Major Mansfield strongly suggested to the Engineers that a second jetty be built immediately on the north side, but was ignored. Over the years, the pass shifted slowly south and the Mansfield jetty fell apart.

Next, a private group hired a professor of engineering to design a new jetty. This new S-curved jetty, what he called a “Reaction Breakwater”, promised to solve their problem and cut costs in half. It would be built in an along the North side of the deep channel in the pass. It did not work, they went broke, and left the channel even more difficult to navigate.

The Government next hired a Rockport engineer named Picton, whose company built a brand-new south side jetty with the aid of a railroad, and connected the S curved North jetty to ST. Joseph’s Island, capturing the pass forever. The pink granite cap rocks (Marble Falls) you see today contributed to its success.

Work was mostly finished in 1910 when “Tarpon, Tx” became “Port Aransas, Tx”.

### 3 - The Tarpon Inn



Built in 1886, the Tarpon Inn is the oldest surviving structure on our island. Parts of it were built during the final phase of construction of the jetties, it is an icon of our waterfront and appears in thousands of photos.

Badly damaged in a fire and nearly destroyed by a severe hurricane, it keeps on coming back to life. You can still book a room and enjoy a fine meal

or drink at Roosevelt’s or the porch in front of the oldest part, the 1886 Bar. At night, watch out! The Tarpon Inn is haunted by several ghosts!

A stop inside the lobby is a must. One whole wall is covered with tarpon scales, signed and dated by fishermen, going back to the 1800’s. The back wall has a very special scale signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during his visit in 1937.

200 East Cotter Ave

### 4 - The University of Texas Marine Science Institute



Established in 1941, this institution brought advanced science to our island. Thousands of scientists have been trained here to push the envelope of marine science forward, working from pole to pole.

The institute now houses the NERR, (National Estuarine Research

Reserve, Mission Aransas.) The Mission-Aransas Reserve is a large, contiguous complex of wetland, terrestrial and marine environments named for the two rivers flowing into it. The Reserve's 185,708 acres is representative of western Gulf estuaries. Its extensive public and private lands include coastal prairie, oak motte, riparian, freshwater and salt marsh habitats.

UTMSI houses the ARK (Amos Rehabilitation Keep) and conducts undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral classes. Visitors can enjoy numerous exhibits and the newly opened Patton Visitors Center with a special interactive kids' section.

**750 Channel View Drive**

## **5 - The Port Aransas Museum**



The Port Aransas Historical Museum opened in 2008. The building that houses the museum was brought to the island as a kit house around 1915 or 1916. After the hurricane of 1919 it was used as a replacement for the Life Saving Station (now Coast Guard) building that was wiped out by that terrible storm.

The “new” Coast Guard station opened in 1924. The kit house was then sold to a local family in the 1930s, moved, and became the home for several prominent Port Aransas families for over 70-plus years. The last family to own it (the Morrisons of San Antonio, TX.), donated the fine old structure to the Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association to become a museum for our town.

It was moved for at least the third time to be the museum.  
Step inside and re-visit our island history through pictures, exhibits and movies.  
Watch Farley boats fishing, see the president catch his 80 lb tarpon and watch folks playing on the beach in the 1920's. Admission is free,  
**Corner of Alister and Brundrett**

## **6 - The Farley Boat Works**



The Farley family arrived here in the 1880's and established homes and a business. An early member became the town's first taxidermist and provided specimens from our area to the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1915, new Farleys arrived and opened our first boat shop. It would last until 1970. Farley Boats were the nautical icon of our island...everyone, including the president of the United States, fished from one of these fine tarpon skiffs.

The Farley shop turned out hundreds of boats. Their boats were designed and built specifically to meet the local conditions, and were ideal for the job. The Farleys became even more important to our future as a sport fishing town. They would build the "boat of your dreams" from fishing boats to speedboats and yachts.

Step inside and see a pictorial history of our life on the sea and a chronicle of the Farley builders alongside a preserved 1930's tarpon skiff, the *Tina* and the 1967 *Starfish*. The Port Aransas Museum re-established the Farley Boat Works in 2011, building boats once again. If you wish to build one yourself, sign up and our team will guide you through the process to build your own Farley boat.

**716 W Ave C**

## **7 - Chapel in the Dunes**



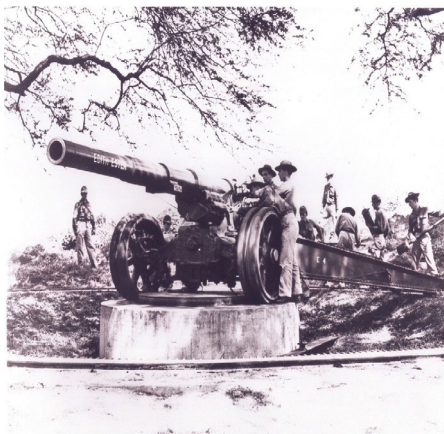
On top of one of the highest dunes in Port Aransas, is a beautiful tiny chapel built in 1937 by Aline Carter for bible services for island children. To boost attendance, Aline added Sunday ice cream socials after each service. Mrs. Carter, who wore long white dresses, was given the nickname "the Angel lady" by the children.

Mrs. Carter was a remarkable person in many ways. She wrote two books of poetry, and was named Poet Laureate of Texas. She was also an artist, musician, and astronomer. She built an observatory on top of her house in San Antonio, teaching astronomy to hundreds of children there and on the dune here.

In the 1970's, Texas artist John Cobb was inspired to paint the ceiling of the little chapel, depicting scenes from the Bible. He mixed his own paints and painted in the ancient manner, almost living in the chapel during this 3-year labor. Port Aransas Museum conducts tours of the Little Chapel.

207 11<sup>th</sup> St

## 8-The WWII Gun Emplacements



During WWII, moving around on this island was restricted, fishing boats were commandeered and outfitted with guns for patrol, barracks were built on the island, and only a portion of the beach was available to use. Remaining beaches were patrolled by the Coastal Defense of US Coast Guard by horse, jeep, on foot by soldiers with attack dogs, and by planes. German Submarines were sighted in our waters and had already sunk many ships in the Eastern Gulf. Concern developed for Harbor Island with some of the Strategic Oil Reserve being a possible target for the enemy.

The Coastal Defense then built 2 concrete and steel Panama mounts in the dunes for two 155mm gun along with a siting tower behind them and one near avenue G. During target practice, locals said "houses shook and occasionally, windows would break". One local boy delivered his mom's fried pies to soldiers manning the guns and was allowed to slide down the barrel for fun. After the war ended, the guns were removed but the mounts are still there. You can climb up and see both mounts, but stay on the paths and watch out for rattlesnakes during the warm months!!

**On E. Cotter in the dunes across from UTMSI (look for the Historic Marker)**