



WARNINGS:
NOT A NAVIGATIONAL PRODUCT.
CONSULT A PUBLISHED CHART.
TOUR DESIGNED FOR OUTBOARD
MOTOR BOATS ONLY.

P.A.P.H.A. Historic Water Tour©

Corpus Christi ship channel, 1926

Aransas Pass

Harbor

Island

San Jose Island

Port Aransas Preservation & Historical Association Historic Water Tour©

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BE ADVISED Points 8-11 are located along a shallow, narrow waterway flanked by oyster beds and sandbars. To visit this area you are advised to operate an outboard motor boat no longer than 21-ft and have an up-to-date marine chart. **This product is not intended for navigational purposes.**

The Big Picture For a historic lay of the land, envision Harbor Island without the dividing Aransas Channel (**PT 13**). Now, ferryboats cross a deep ship channel where once was just a shallow (2-5') arm of Corpus Christi Bay. So, how did vessels get from the Aransas Pass to Corpus Christi before the ship channel was dug? Let your eyes follow the water route starting at **PT 2**, continuing through **PT 8**, and coming down to **PT 12**. Were you to continue sailing straight rather than following the curved yellow arrow, you would enter Corpus Christi Bay on whose west shore lie the city and port. Sailing this route was a hazardous undertaking, requiring expert navigation, and that provided some Mustang Islanders a livelihood as ship pilots. As you take this water tour you will sail back through time, beginning with the settling of Mustang Is. in the mid-1850s.

Departing Port Aransas Harbor PT 1 The area south of the two breakwaters built in 1973, has been referred to as “the cove” or “Turtle Cove” since the 1870s. As it continues to do today, the cove provided a convenient place to moor vessels and shelter them from heavy weather.

Ship channel traffic permitting, pause at **PT 2** and look down the magnificent Aransas Pass. (Aransas is from the Spanish Aránzazu, meaning a dangerous undertaking) Weather and traffic permitting, cruise over and look at the massive rock jetties; politically, their construction was a nightmare that extended from 1895 to 1919.

Continue north and stand off **PT 3**, the Aransas Pass Light Station, as it was named in 1857 when it began operation, is now the privately owned Lydia Ann Lighthouse.

Look directly across the channel to **PT 4**. This was the location of the Aransas Pass in 1857. The pass moved southwardly, via erosion, until stopped by riprap circa 1888. When the pass moved the lighthouse was no longer useful as a guide through it, but the lighthouse still served the purpose of informing sailors where they were in relation to the long and homogeneous Texas coastline. The Confederates partially destroyed the lighthouse in 1862 to deny its use to the Union Navy. Lighthouse operations began again in 1867.

Continue north in the Lydia Ann channel, **PT 5**. To starboard is a point that was once an island. East of it, **PT 6**, is where “Aransas” was located, the only town to exist on San José, a privately owned island. Founded in 1845, Aransas was destroyed during the Civil War and never rebuilt. No trace of it has been found.

PT 7 marks Quarantine Shore. Small pox was the concern in the 1870s, and ships with a case aboard were isolated there.

PT 8 is the Corpus Christi Bayou (bayou means outlet). (Enter only in an outboard motorboat and after consulting a chart) To starboard is Shellbank Island, **PT 9**. Rebel artillery was emplaced there in 1862 to deny the bayou to the Union Navy. It was neutralized as the Federals sailed through later that August to attack Corpus Christi.

PT 10 is several old pilings, 3-4 feet high. This was the dock where the rocks used to build the jetties were loaded onto barges starting circa 1895. The rocks got to this dock by a trestled railroad coming across Redfish Bay.

PT 11 is the channel you are in, the Morris & Cummings Cut. It is a natural waterway caused by tidal water draining from inland bays. In 1874, the Morris and Cummings Co. dredged the channel to improve it as the route to Corpus Christi.

Steering east into the Aransas Channel, to starboard are the bridges carrying familiar State Highway 361, **PT 12**, which opened in 1959. This channel, **PT 13**, was dredged and opened in 1911. It served a seaport located on Harbor Island (coming up). The dredge spoil later provided land for the installation of roadways, including SH 361.

In 1912 the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railroad was laid on trestles to service the Harbor Island seaport. Some tops of the trestles, **PT 14**, are still visible just off the channel (shallow, use caution).

A cotton export port opened on Harbor in 1912, **PT 15**. Anticipating the work this seaport would provide, the townsfolk changed the town name in 1910 from Tarpon to Port Aransas. *We're glad you're back safely!*