

# Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association

Volume 5, Issue 2

PAPHA Newsletter

February 2011

## Annual Dinner/Auction Nears

By Rick Pratt

The annual museum Dinner/Auction fundraiser is on deck for Saturday, March 5.

Tickets are \$75.00 per person and an eight person table can be secured for \$800.00, \$1000.00 and \$1500.00.

A gourmet dinner of Quail and Rib eye steak will be served, there will be a silent auction and then the main event; a live auction.



A custom built lapstrake hulled sail boat, a chance to help us buy the historic Farley boat Tina, original art works including one painted that night of the affair and many, many more choice items will be auctioned to support the best museum in town.

This event is our major fund raiser and we need your support to make it work.

## Growing pains and pleasures

The new museum website is about to be launched.

PAPHA has outgrown the old website. The new one will be a lot more interactive and easier to keep up to date. It should be on line within two weeks.

Visitors will be able to watch videos, and view lots of historic photos from our extensive collection.

Donations and memberships can be handled with one click and pavers can be ordered easily. The museum is moving slowly into the 21st century.

Last year the museum set an all-time town record of \$82,000.00. This year we hope to beat that.



Call 361-749-3800, visit the PAPHA website, [www.portaransasmuseum.org](http://www.portaransasmuseum.org) or email [rickpratt45@gmail.com](mailto:rickpratt45@gmail.com) for reservations and information.

See you there and at the museum.

## Winter Lecture Series Remains Very Popular

By Rick Pratt

Join us at the museum every other Monday at 7PM for a glass of wine, then walk across the porch to the Community Center at 7:30 for a talk.

Our bi weekly lectures have played to sellout crowds.

• **Monday, Feb. 7:** Monday Night's lecture "Aransas Pass is King" by Dr. John Guthrie Ford was another sell out. The talk was extremely popular and

generated lots of questions.

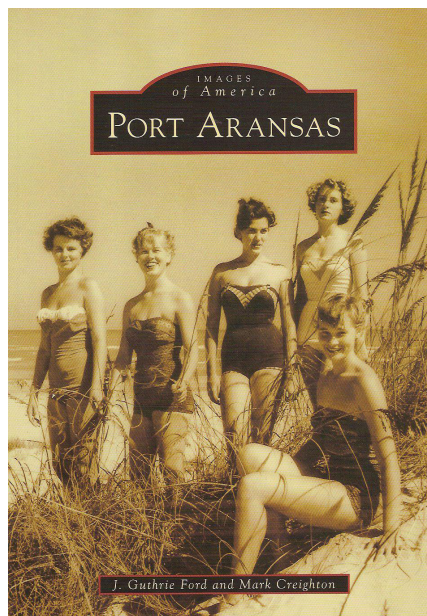
This was another great job on the part of Dr. Ford, who is a master at tying things together historically.

• **Friday, Feb. 18:** Rob Sawyer will present a talk on water fowl hunting in our region at the turn of the 20th century. Port Aransas was a major supplier of ducks to the tables and restaurants of America during this period.

Rob is about to publish two major books on the subject with Texas A&M press and this will be his first preview of these upcoming blockbusters! Don't miss it.

• **Monday, March 7:** Mark Creighton and Guthrie Ford don't sit still very well, and they have recently sent their new book "Images of America; Port

See 'LECTURE' on Page 6



### Inside this Issue:

North Jetty.....	Page 2
Book Signing.....	Page 2
Winner.....	Page 2
Port Theater.....	Page 3
Mathew's Place.....	Page 4
Little Chapel.....	Page 5
Photographic Database .....	Page 5
Dinner/Auction .....	Page 6

# The Curved North Jetty: Quixotic or Just Queer? ©

John Guthrie Ford

I once saw the curved north jetty as quixotically romantic: like the curving Karankawa Indian bow, standing against the wild Texas coast. That sentiment waned once I learned the story of this queer structure. To me, it is now a 9,241 foot example of how inept and foolish we human beings can be. See what you think.

In 1890, entrepreneurs in the town of Aransas Pass chartered the Aransas Pass Harbor Company to establish a major harbor in the immediate area. That goal, however, first required improving the Aransas Pass waterway, the maritime

## The Winner:

**The winners of the Port Aransas Museum Docent Dinner To Go were Don and Lyn Bornhorst of Mountain View, Kentucky. The couple has been Winter Texans for 20 years. The winning ticket was chosen by Georgia Neblett, who was the Mystery Chef of the gourmet meal for 6 of Stuffed Pork Tenderloin, Hot Curried Fruit, Wild Rice Medley, Salad and Dessert. It was delivered with a basket from A Mano and napkins, table cloth and a nice bottle of wine.**

route to the envisioned harbor. ("Improving the pass" meant construction of a jetty system to direct and deepen the pass' natural ship channel.) After several years of jetty work, Harbor Co. had achieved naught toward improving the pass, and so it sought new perspectives on jetty building. A response came from Lewis Haupt.

Civil engineer Haupt proposed a single curved jetty unattached to land (viz., unattached to neither Mustang nor San José Islands). Haupt justified the unusual curved and unattached features by observations of the hydrodynamic effects created by curved structures lying in the middle of flowing streams; hardly, one would think, a sufficient model of the changing tides and sweeping littoral currents of the Gulf of Mexico.

Nevertheless, Harbor Co. took the Haupt bait—after all, one jetty was certainly less costly than two. Working from the Gulf inwardly, construction of the Haupt jetty began in 1895, but work stopped with the structure only partially completed. The company was in the red and, additionally, the jetty was not improving the Aransas Pass. Harbor Co. eventually slid out of the picture altogether, and improvement of the pass fell to the U.S. Government.

When Lewis Haupt learned that, he

urged the Corps of Engineers to finish out his partially completed jetty; and despite evidence that the curved and unattached structure was not improving the pass, the Corps (for reasons unknown) agreed. Things then went from the inept to the absurd: the pass channel changed course by being sucked through the gap between the end of the Haupt jetty and San José Island—imagine the venerable and invaluable Aransas Pass being spoiled by one man's screwy ideas. With egg on its face, the Corps closed the gap by connecting the jetty to San José, giving us the north jetty we see today.

What about the other jetty? The Government actually showed the capacity to learn: The 7,385' south jetty was built firmly attached to Mustang Island...and it is as straight as an arrow!

**GLOSSARY - OLD TERMINAL RAILROAD:** line carrying the rocks used to build the Aransas Pass jetties. **LITTORAL (aka LONGSHORE) CURRENTS:** Gulf currents paralleling the shoreline. **INTRACOASTAL:** as in Intracoastal Waterway (notably not intercoastal).

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

## New Book Signing

The public is invited a book signing at the Art Center for the Islands at the next First Friday set for March 4.

One of the founding PAPHA Board Members and the organization facilitator, Beverly Charles, will be available to sign her new book, "How I Discovered My Mother Was A Goddess - A Daughter's Story" at the March event.

First Friday is held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Art Center.



South Pier 1951

PAPHA file photo

Movies you could see at the Port Theater in August 1960 in Port Aransas



# PORT Theatre

Port Aransas, Texas

**AUGUST 1960**



SUN JULY 31	MON 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6
						<p>Marlon Brando Anna Magnani in <b>THE FUGITIVE KIND</b></p>
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<p>AMAZING DRAMA OF THE ESCAPE THAT MADE THE WORLD GASP!</p> <p><b>"CONSPIRACY OF HEARTS"</b></p> <p>LILLI PALMER ALBERT LIEVEN</p>		<p>Cost. B. DeMille's st.</p> <p><b>GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH</b></p> <p>with HUTTON • Gene WILDE • Pauline BOSTON Betty LAMOUR • Vera GRADAME • Jane STEWART</p>		<p><b>JERRY LEWIS</b> AS THE <b>Belboy</b></p> 		<p>Guy Williams Henry Calvin in <b>THE SIGN OF ZORRO</b></p>
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<p>ROBERT ELEANOR MITCHUM • PARKER</p> <p><b>HOME FROM THE HILL</b></p>		<p>Jack Lord     Moby McCarthy</p> <p><b>WALK LIKE A DRAGON</b></p>		<p><b>Wake Me When It's Over</b></p> 		<p>Jeffrey Hunter Constance Towers in <b>SERGEANT RUTLEDGE</b> Color</p>
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
<p>DORIS ROCK DAY HUDSON</p> <p><b>PILLOW TALK</b></p>		<p>ROBERT TAYLOR • KILLERS OF KILIMANJARO</p>		<p>ALAN LADD JEANNE CRAIN</p> <p><b>GUNS of the TIMBERLAND</b></p>		<p>Brigitte Bardot Ronald Howard in <b>BABETTE GOES TO WAR</b></p>
28	29	30	31	SEPT. 1	2	SEPT. 3
<p>CARY GRANT • TONY CURTIS</p> <p><b>OPERATION PETTICOAT</b></p>		<p><b>FIVE BRANDED WOMEN</b></p>		<p>YUL BRYNNER GENA LOLLOBRIGIDA</p> <p><b>SOLOMON and SHEBA</b></p>		<p>CinemaScope Color Walter Reed Ziva Rodans in <b>MACUMBA LOVE</b> Color</p>
VICTOR CORNELIUS			EASTLAND, TEXAS			

# A Brief History of "Mathew's Place" and the Waterfront of Port Aransas

By Marcy Mathews Ward Thomas

3-15-1992, as prepared for Terry Stinson and his mom, Virginia Corn

Conclusion [Part 1 was published in last month's edition of the newsletter]

Sim opened the "Silver King Café" in January of 1929. In June of that year, his 8-year-old son, Beany, drowned off the front of the main wharf. Sim closed the doors and didn't open them again until 1933. All the restaurant equipment and stock were left intact (even the food).

Sometime around 1930 the Texas Land Commissioner and a man from Austin came to Port Aransas and confronted Sim with a claim to all of the property he had bought from the Young Estate. They claimed Sim's title to the land was invalid. Sim held a Guarantee Title from the Young Estate and threatened to fight the Land Commissioner and his friend all the way to the Supreme Court. The two men left the island and Sim never heard from them again. It was believed that the Land Commissioner and the man from Austin were working together buying and selling coastal property.

Sim reopened the "Silver King" in 1933 and operated it as a café, with fishing tackle, some marine hardware and a fishing guide chartering business included.

In 1934, W.W. Ousley and Sim went to the Pure Oil Co., where they negotiated for inclusion of fuel sales for the boats using the "Silver King" Docks. The fuel was stored in barrels in the storeroom

south of the main structure. Gas was then carried in five-gallon cans across the docks and then poured into the boat's fuel tanks, five gallons at a time.

Several members of the family worked for Sim including Teddy Mathews, my father; Dora Moore, Sim's sister and his brother Johnny. Teddy worked for Sim for 11 months and then took his boat out of his brother's business and went back to Barney's Place, which was owned and operated by Barney and Marie Farley. Dora worked for Sim, as his cook in the Silver King, until about 1938. Johnny also worked for Sim as a guide and construction expert.

In 1933, Port Aransas was struck by a hurricane, which did a good bit of damage to the island, including damage to the Municipal Dock on Sim's property. At that time, Jim Sims was City Commissioner and J. Hampton was City Judge. These two men hired Fred Farley, a friend of Sims, to tear down the Municipal Dock. Sim stopped Fred and began arguing with Jim Sims and Mr. Hampton. Sim finally hit

J. Hampton, but could not catch Jim Sims. Sim argued that the dock's construction on that site was never legal and that the dock was his property because it was located on land, which he did legally own. Sim's attorney,

Judge Sutherland advised Sim to build a fence at mean low tide, and shoot anyone who trespassed with intent to damage or destroy the dock.

Another interesting thing that happened after the 1933 hurricane occurred when the Dredge Texas cleared the channel between Mustang and St. Joseph Islands. The spoil was pumped onto the area between today's Tortuga Flats Restaurant and Fisherman's Wharf. Sim would not allow any of the spoil to be pumped on to his property.

During the late 1920's to late 1930's Barney Farley owned and managed a fishing tackle and charter business from "Barney's Place." This "Place" was located at approximately the site where Fisherman's Wharf is today. Barney had leased this waterfront property from the Aransas Holding Company. He constructed his building and ran his business until sometime in 1938. In 1938, Jim Ellis' claim to riparian rights to the property on which "Barney's Place" stood was upheld in court. Barney lost his lease.

Because Barney had run a successful and widely known business Sim decided to seek a partnership with him. Sometime in 1938 Barney moved into the Silver King, renamed it Barney's Place.

In 1937 President, Franklin D. Roosevelt came to Port Aransas on a fishing

trip. Barney Farley had made all of the arrangements for guides, boats, etc. Don Farley and Teddy Mathews were the boatmen Barney chose to be the President's guides. While at Port Aransas the President stayed aboard his yacht. He came into the dock on Teddy's boat, but did not come on shore.

Barney had told everyone that President Roosevelt had told him that if he could ever do anything for him, to let him know. Sim was in the process of securing the necessary permits to enlarge and improve the wharves and increase the number of boat slips extending westward. There was much local opposition to Sim's plans. He had already been granted permits from the U.S. Engineers in Corpus Christi, Galveston and New Orleans, all of which was unknown to the local petitioners who were fighting to keep the dock on the westward side of the Silver King a Municipal Dock. Sim prevailed upon Marie Farley, Barney's wife, to write to the President asking his help in obtaining a Federal permit and enclosing his plans for expansion of the docks and Slips. Barney's name was signed to the letter. In a matter of days, the permit was granted by way of a telegram from the President saying necessary papers were forthcoming.

See 'MATHEW'S' on Page 5

## 'MATHEWS' ————— Cont. from page 1

Barney Farley and Sim Mathews were in business together for about one year.

When their partnership was dissolve, Sim changed the name again, this time to Mathews Place. For a while, the business was managed for Sim by Paul Olsen. From 1939 until Sim's death in 1947 Dora Mathews Moore and her husband Bill managed Mathews Place for \$200.00/monthly. They also owned half of the stock, which included fishing tackle and hardware. After Sim's death in 1947 Bill and Dora continued to manage Mathews Place for Vera, Sim's widow. The Moores and Vera split the profits. This arrangement continued until the death of Bill and Dora's son Malcolm in 1956.

Between 1956 and 1961, Mathews Place was run by Edwin Mathews and Woody Ousley. In 1961, Johnny Mathews rebuilt the docks for Edwin.

During the years between 1933 and 1963, the Port Aransas pilots Association's office was located in a small structure on top of Mathews

Place. The office had a good view of all water traffic coming in from the Gulf of Mexico, passing by Port Aransas and going on into Corpus Christi via the channel. The office was reached by climbing a metal ladder leading up the side of the building with steps continuing across the roof to the office.

In 1963 Vera Mathews sold Mathews Place to a Mr. Plumlee.

Plumlee added a restaurant over the water and on top of the docks Johnnie had rebuilt in 1961. Johnny advised Plumlee that the docks were not suitable for the foundation of a heavy structure. In 1970 hurricane Celia blew the restaurant away but left the original building, which Sim Mathews had built out of cypress, standing little harmed.

Before hurricane Celia, Mr. Plumlee sold Mathews Place to Frank Zock for his son-in-law Bill Powers. The Boatmen of Port Aransas did not like the business methods of Bill Powers and so they moved en masse to the Enco Marina.

## The Little Chapel

By Rick Pratt

The little chapel on the hill sits on the highest spot in old town at a dizzying 26' above the sea. It was conceived by and built for the sitting Poet Laureate of Texas, Aline Carter in the 1930s.

The museum-led Chapel Tours have become quite popular and are always booked well in advance. Pepper Pendzinski built this idea into a great reality. Her tours are fun and informative.

A newly produced video of the chapel history and an interview with the man who painted the ceiling is now available at the museum. Come by and watch it.

The little chapel is truly one of the wonders of Port Aransas. Don't miss the chance to visit it with Pepper. Call the museum at 749-3800 for reservations.

## Photographic Database

By Rick Pratt

Our marvelous and immensely valuable database of historical photos of Port A has grown to 10,000!

This astounding milestone is the sole accomplishment of Mark Creighton, the museum archivist. He has been steadily building this collection for more than 20 years now and what a gem it is.

The museum exhibits are based largely on this wonderful bunch of pictures. We simply could not work without the collection.

Now Mark has formed a team of folks to do video interviews with folks here on the island who may have direct memories of what we now consider historic events.

Mark Creighton, Mark Young and John Guthrie Ford have made a list of folks that should be interviewed and are working hard to get the job done.

Guthrie Ford has set up a project to have these video interviews transcribed into the written word so that researchers can better use them.

Once transcribed into word format, the interviews can be searched easily on computer, and cross references can be established, making the entire collection immensely more valuable.

Transcribers are Carole Simanek, Claire Jones and Gary Ramsey.

Claire is a senior honors student at PAHS and did her first transcription as a senior project.

Carol recently retired from the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, and still spends two days a week working with Dr. Paul Montagna at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, when she is not at the museum.

Gary is a museum docent who retired from the FBI. He recently completed transcribing early census data for Mustang Island which was handwritten in tiny letters with a dip pen. The result of this difficult labor is on exhibit in the museum and is a treasure trove of information about our island.

Great folks doing great work.

## Extra Extra Extra

Extra copies of the Centennial edition by the *South Jetty* newspaper, are available for purchase, with all proceeds benefitting the Port Aransas Museum. The keepsake issue coincided with our Centennial Celebration.

It features the history of businesses, organizations, churches, schools and a history of Port Aransas by historian and author John Guthrie Ford.

The extra Centennial publication sells for \$5 at the Museum, Art Center For The Islands and the Port A Gallery.

Please join the  
**Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association**  
**Saturday, March 5th**  
**For the 3rd Annual Dinner and Live Auction**  
**Benefiting the Port Aransas Museum**  
**Dinner ~ Silent Auction ~ Live Auction ~ Bar**  
**Drinks 6pm on the Community Center porch,**  
**408 N. Alister St.**

**Tickets-\$75/person, Tables-\$800, \$1000, \$1,500**

The event will begin at 6pm with Cocktails on the porch of the Community Center. The dinner includes dinner catered by Miss K, with premium wines at your table, an open bar all night and beautiful décor by the team of Cage/Henry of Coastal Closet.

A silent auction prepared by Port A Gallery awaits patrons.

The live auction will include vastly improved acoustics and sound system. The event is to launch fundraising to purchase restored Farley Boat, "Tina", and raise funds for restoration of the historic Farley Boat Works.

**Make new friends and have a ball supporting the Port Aransas Museum!**

RSVP to 361-749-7300 or  
[portamuseum@centurytel.net](mailto:portamuseum@centurytel.net)  
 Tickets/Tables can be bought at  
[www.portaransasmuseum.org](http://www.portaransasmuseum.org)



12' Whitehall Wooden Sailboat Featured Auction Item

**Port Aransas Preservation & Historical Association is a Texas 501(c)(3) non-profit organization**

**'LECTURE'** ————— Cont. from page 1

Aransas Texas", off to the publisher.

It is loaded with wonderful photos of our town and island from the past 120 years, all captioned and put into context.

It will be launched at the museum lecture Monday March 7th. Come hear Mark and Guthrie's presentation and get a signed copy of their new book hot off the presses.

It also will be available for purchase at the Museum and at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Editor and Co-publisher of the South Jetty newspaper Mary Judson will speak on

Monday, March 14.

The final lecture in this year's series will be on Monday, March 21: Rick Pratt, "Everything comes by boat" ... lighthouse essays.