November 2016 Newsletter

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Calendar of Events

November 17
“The History of the Catholic Church in Galveston County”
Lisa May, Archivist, Archdiocese of Houston

*Meeting to be held at Old St. Mary’s Church
620 Main Street,
League City

December
No meeting

December 10
Historic Homes Tour
10am-5pm

A Special Welcome to our New Member
Garrett Maddox

November 17th Speaker

“The History of the Catholic Church in Galveston County”

League City Historical Society presents Lisa May, Director of Archives & Records for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Lisa May is the Director of Archives & Records for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. She received a B.A. in history from Whitman College in Washington State and an M.A. in history from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She worked in the Whitman and University of Massachusetts archives as a student, and at Michigan State University as a project archivist, before coming to Houston. At the Archdiocese, she has developed policies for sacramental records, microfilming, and parish records management, as well as archives collection and access policies. She is also a member of the Society of American Archivists, the Society of Southwest Archivists, the Archivists of the Houston Area (AHA!), and the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists.

The meeting will be held in the restored Old St. Mary’s Church, Main Street, League City TX. Old St Mary was restored by Ed Linck, Kemah Historical Society and Jerry Dornak, League City Historical Society from 1994-2011. In 2010, the Texas Historical Commission honored St. Mary Church with two historical markers. The first was for St. Mary Mission Church, which as a gothic revival structure is the only extant example of the original Mainland Missions. The second, a subject marker, recognizes Mainland Mission Churches. In 2014 they were awarded the Galveston Historical Foundation Sally B. Wallace Preservation Award and in 2015 they were given a Proclamation by the Mayor of League City.

St. Mary of League City is the only mission church left standing and remains a testimony to the impact the mainland mission churches had on the lives of the Catholic residents in Galveston County and proudly takes her place on Main Street as one of the focal points of the Historic District of League City, known to the community as “Old St. Mary’s.”

The League City Historical Society will meet at Old St. Mary Church
620 Main Street, League City for this special meeting
281-554-29916:45pm Social ~ 7:00pm Meeting
Meeting Minutes

October 27, 2016

Susan Pierce, Secretary

Vice President Mike Peterson welcomed everyone and introduced visitor, Daune Ortiz, the owner of The Salted Hippy Boutique, a new business on Main Street in League City.

Richard Lewis, the chairman of the 2017 nominating committee, presented the nominees. Richard said that the Directors are voted on in odd years and the Officers in even years.

The new slate of officers for 2107 is as follows:

President – Doug McKee
Vice President – Mike Peterson
Treasurer – Katie Benoit Hake
Secretary – Susan Pierce
Corresponding Secretary – Phyllis White

The Director position left vacant with Katie becoming Treasurer was filled by Diana Dornak the 2016 Treasurer. The election will be held at the November meeting.

Mike then introduced our speaker Joyce Zongrone. Joyce told of America’s own rich tradition of historical ghosts beginning with founding father, Benjamin Franklin. In 1884 a cleaning woman was startled by a ghostly figure rushing towards a bookshelf in the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia. Her description matched that of Franklin.

Joyce continued with the League City ghost that haunts the Carter/Patton home, on the corner of Michigan and 3rd Street, 224 N Michigan Ave. The owner felt as if someone was watching her while she stood at the stove in her kitchen. They later discovered that a young girl, about 25, died in the upstairs room during her stay in the hospital.

Around the corner at 621 3rd Street, the residents of a home which stood on the spot of an early house of prostitution heard voices speaking Spanish in the hall outside their bedroom. They found that a Spanish woman had been killed there and her murderer never found. The voice was probably the woman’s ghost looking for her killer.

Strange happenings have been recorded in the Dr. Dallas Home on East Wilkins Street. Legend has it that the doctor’s ghost can be seen descending the stairs with a medical bag in his hand along with other ghostly images.

At the T J and Mary Lelia Sherman Dick House at 720 2nd Street, the owners have heard fast footsteps running down the stairs and shutters opening and closing with extreme force among other unusual sounds.

The 1905 home of CAPT Anthony Gerit Meyer, previously located at Beaumont Street and Kansas Avenue, was relocated to 3rd Street and Kansas Avenue, behind the T J Dick Home in 2014. A photo taken early one morning has 51 white orbs moving towards the camera. It is thought that perhaps the orbs are the souls of some of the Captain’s shipmates, following him home from the sea.

Several members told of other ghostly happenings that they have experienced.

Mike made the following announcements:

- Next month’s meeting will be on the third Thursday of November and will be held at Old St. Mary Church. The speaker will be Lisa May, director of Archives & Records for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Joyce Zongrone is writing an article about the restoration of the church for Coast Magazine.

- Mike reminded us of the Historic Homes Tour on December 10th. On December 9th there will be a celebration at Walding Station. Those attending are asked to bring nibble food.

- Holiday in The Park will be held the week prior and the League City Historical Society will have a booth. Phyllis White said that volunteers are needed to work and to bring baked goods.

The meeting was adjourned

Submitted by Kathie Nenninger for Susan Pierce
We have a brief report this month. October was a good month with over 450 visitors and sixteen schoolhouse sessions. Our class groups came from Spring, Houston, Friendswood and League City. The visitors were mixed ages, adults, 3rd, 4th and 9-12th Grades. In between classes, we continue to work on the collection and get the files digitized. We are making progress. Inventory is also being done and will continue through the month of November and December.

Our gardens and trees finally got some special attention thanks to Alvarez Lawn Services. His team did a wonderful job and worked two days doing all the catch up work needed with the trees, bushes and gardens. Now it should just need touch-up on a bi-weekly basis. We thank them for their very hard work.

Our annual Christmas decorating party is set for November 28 at 9am. We also need a team of volunteers to wash windows and build a step for the Icehouse. If you can help, please come. If we need more days, it will be Tuesday and Wednesday of that week also.
A.C. Gilbert: The Man Who Saved Christmas

Did you know that in 1918, during World War I, The Council of National Defense proposed a ban on toy production? This United States organization was formed to coordinate resources and industry in support of the war effort. Sacrifices were made on the home front by civilians who grew accustomed to doing without the finer things in life, but in 1918 the U.S. government asked for too much. They attempted to commandeer Christmas. If not for the efforts of American inventor Alfred Carlton Gilbert, every child’s favorite holiday may have been lost.

Gilbert, born in Salem, Oregon in 1884, developed a great talent in magic as a child. Later on during college, he would perform magic tricks to help pay for tuition, making as much as one hundred dollars a night. He developed the first boxed set of magic tricks and began selling them for five dollars apiece. Early in 1911, Gilbert conceived a new toy, the Erector Set. The idea came to him when he was attending Yale University while riding the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, watching steel girders raise new power lines. One night he and his wife cut out cardboard girders and worked with them until they fit together. A machinist converted the pieces into metal. His partner in Mysto-Manufacturing was not interested in this new idea, so Gilbert marketed it himself at the Toy Fair of 1913, changed the name of the company to the A.C. Gilbert Company in 1916 and won the Gold Medal for his Erector Set invention at the Panama Pacific Exhibition in 1916. He sold 30 million Erector sets over two decades. His motto was “boys today, men tomorrow.”

In April of 1917, when the United States officially entered World War I, Gilbert was asked by the Council of National Defense to convert his toy factory to make weapons and munitions to help with the war effort. Toward the end of 1918, the Council considered a ban on all toy production in an effort to utilize toy and other manufacturing facilities in the production of much needed supplies and armaments in support of the war. The Council hoped the ban would encourage people to buy more war bonds with the money they would have otherwise spent on Christmas toys. The Committee on Public Information created a campaign to essentially cancel Christmas encouraging parents to “buy bonds, not toys.”

The Toy Manufacturers of the U.S.A. appointed Gilbert to go to Washington and convince the Council to abort the planned ban. Alfred believed that toys were too important to give up. Not only did they educate children, but encouraged morale. Knowing that he would have only a few minutes to convince the stodgy men of the Council, he brought some of his toys to bring his point home. After passing the toys around, the Council members found themselves on the floor playing with them. The meeting ran past the scheduled few minutes to three hours. Alfred single handedly changed the minds of the government bureaucrats earning himself the nickname “The Man Who Saved Christmas,” proving toys were not just good, but necessary. The toy industry continued to produce toys through Christmas 1918.

Gilbert’s toy production expanded beyond erector and magic sets to include kits on glass blowing, magnets, electrical sets, chemistry sets, soldering sets, telescopes, microscopes and eventually “atomic energy kits,” complete with real radioactive material and working Geiger counters. In the late1930s, Gilbert purchased the American Flyer line of model trains and continued their production until 1967.

A.C. Gilbert continued to make toys until he died in 1961. He was credited with over 150 patents for educational toys, but he will always be remembered best as “The Man Who Saved Christmas” during the Great War.

In 2002 a movie based on A.C. Gilbert's life called The Man Who Saved Christmas was made for television.
League City Historical Society garnered its fourth Galveston Historical Foundation Sally B. Wallace Preservation Award this October.

The 1905 Captain Anthony Gerit Meyer home was relocated in January 2013 from its original site at Beaumont St. and Kansas Ave. to 721 Third St. and Kansas Ave. in the League City Historic District, for restoration and preservation by League City Historical Society Vice President Michael Peterson and wife Deann. Deann is the great-granddaughter of CAPT Meyer.

CAPT Meyer came to the US in 1884 from Holland. The family arrived at Ellis Island and lived for a while in New York where Anthony worked as a tailor. When he was 11 years old, he ran away from home and became a cabin boy on a sailing ship for four years travelling to the Orient.

After working odd jobs in various cities in the Southwest, he ended up in the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush. In 1897-8, he roomed with author Jack London. In the early 1900s, he worked on the Panama Canal as a railroad brakeman and engineer. His son John Meyer was born in 1922 in Houston. In 1926 he moved to League City with his family to work for Humble Oil at the Webster Tank Farm. Never giving up his love of the sea, he joined the Merchant Marine during World War II at age 62 on a waiver and served again during the Korean War. His death certificate lists heart attack at age 82.

The Meyer home, built in 1905 with reclaimed wood from the 1900 Storm, resided amidst ten acres of orange, grapefruit and pecan trees for 100 years. When a developer bought the property the Petersons decided to save the home.

The house was moved one mile north of its original location in January 2013. The 2nd floor had to be removed and was reconstructed to meet city codes and windstorm guidelines. Its restoration took three years. The original façade of the home was recreated along with three gables matching the roof's original pitch. Wood sash windows were ordered to recreate the vintage windows. Matching siding was installed to resemble the original. First floor interior structural walls, floors and ceilings were kept intact. Existing sheetrock, plumbing and wiring were replaced to meet building codes. The original Heart Pine floors salvaged from 2nd floor replaced downstairs damaged flooring keeping the same patina throughout the first floor. Second level flooring was replaced with custom-milled 110-year-old matching Heart Pine. Custom board and batten, bead board and shiplap were used in various rooms to recreate the unique look of the era. The project took three full years costing $200,000 including the $36,000 moving fee. Contractors completed the structural portion as Mike and Deann completed many of the other restoration requirements.

The fully restored home made its public debut in December 2015, during the League City Historic Homes Tour, hosting over 400 visitors.

Other Society and League City awards include: The 1927 Salmon Icehouse/1936 Barbershop Museum 2015; Old St. Mary Church, Stewardship Award for Jerry Dornak and Ed Linck, 2015; The Joseph P. Giacchino Home, 2014; and the West Bay Common School Museum, 2013.
Clear Horizon's students placed flags on veteran's graves at Fairview Cemetery on November 6th. They were assisted by teacher Sharlene Kahlich, Deborah Gammon and Melodey Hauch of the Fairview Cemetery Group.
League City Historical Society

HISTORIC HOMES TOUR
Saturday, December 10, 2016

10am to 5pm
Advance Tickets $13  •  Day of Event $15

Available at West Bay Common School Children’s Museum - 210 N. Kansas Ave.
or League City Regional Chamber of Commerce - 319 E. Galveston St. Ste B.

Directions to homes and sites provided with ticket.

West Bay Common School
Children’s Museum
210 N. Kansas Ave.

The Diebold Home
813 Third St.

The Dibrell-Coons-Henderson Home
720 Third St.

The Grace Gardens Home
712 Third St.

The Stationmaster’s Home
Park & Second St.

The Platzer-Donaldson Home
914 Second St.

**Quilts will be on display on porches at many homes in the historic area during the Homes Tour.

For more information call 281-554-2994
or visit our website leaguecityhistory.org
Thank you for being a member of the League City Historical Society. It is time to renew membership for 2016. Dues for various types of memberships are as listed below.

To renew your membership, choose the membership level that is best for you, complete the form below and mail to LCHS, P. O. Box 1642, League City, TX 77574. You may also bring renewal and check to the next meeting.

Note: If you have paid your dues in October 2015 or later, you are current for the year 2016.

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Please update your membership information.

Name: ____________________________________________
(If Family Membership, please include names of family members.)

Address ____________________________________________

City ___________________________ State ___________ Zip ___________

Phone: Home Phone _________________ Cell Phone: ______________________

e-mail address: _______________________________________________

☐ Check if your name, address or e-mail has changed recently.

☐ Check if you would like to receive your newsletter, meeting minutes and/or meeting notices by e-mail, to help save on postage.