The Lighthouses of Texas

October 30th Meeting

Author Steph McDougal, an historic preservation professional, will be our guest this month to talk about her first published book, "Lighthouses of Texas." She has contributed to other books, publications, journals and historical narratives, but with this book she has created a revealing look at an often overlooked part of Lone Star history. The author consults with nonprofit and government clients to help make their lives easier, and in her spare time, she is trying to get better at growing vegetables, sewing quilts, and playing bass guitar.

Not long after winning their independence from Mexico in 1836, Texans began clamoring for lighthouses. Hundreds of miles of barrier islands, shifting sandbars and shallow bays made the Texas coast treacherous at a time when few overland routes provided access to the new Republic. Beginning in 1852, 28 lighthouses were built along Texas' coastline, on land and over water. Lighthouse service was often a family affair, with husbands, wives, and children working together as keepers and assistants. For nearly 70 years, construction continued as coastal erosion, hurricanes, and wars regularly damaged or destroyed those lighthouses already built. As Texas' lighthouses were gradually automated throughout the 20th century, many were sold to private owners or abandoned. Today, several have been restored, and two — at Aransas Pass and Port Isabel — still function as an aid to navigation.

It all starts at 6:45 Thursday October 30th.

from the President...

Ronnie Richards

Editor's note: Our President Ronnie Richards is taking a well deserved vacation.

We do want to thank everyone for your support at our Annual Living History Dinner that was recently held at Butler’s Courtyard. Our special guest the famed pirate, Jean Lafitte, did not disappoint the enthusiastic crowd. Your support with your attendance and with the silent auction is much appreciated. The funds gathered from this fundraiser help to support our schoolhouse and museum for the year. We thank Ronnie Richards, Catharin and Richard Lewis and Katie Hake for all of their hard work in making this exciting event so successful.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursday when we have as our speaker, our very own, Steph McDougal who will discuss her book "Lighthouses of Texas." Steph is a dynamic speaker and also serves as a ‘resident at large’ member of the Historic Commission of the city of League City.

At our meeting this Thursday, we will be announcing our 2015 nominees for Officers and Board of Directors of the League City Historical Society. We will be voting on these nominees at our November meeting. Please note that our November meeting will be held on the third Thursday, November 20th due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Calendar

October 30
Steph McDougal
The Lighthouses of Texas
West Bay Common School Children’s Museum
210 Kansas Street, League City
6:45pm Social, 7:00pm Meeting

November 20
DeeAnn and Mike Peterson
The Capt. Meyer House Move & Restoration
There will be no meeting in December
September 25, 2014 Meeting
Ronnie Richards welcomed everyone. He announced that it’s time to start selecting candidates for next year. He has asked Richard Lewis to head that committee.

Raymond Bartels spoke to us about his book, a translation of a 2009 book concerning the Italians from North Italy who moved to Galveston County.

Our guest speaker was Susan Webb, known to the Lewises through the Country School Association and Ms. Webb’s portrayal of a schoolmarm in her travels. Ms. Webb gave a presentation on aprons and how aprons reflect history, tell stories, and can hold family memories. Aprons are ancient. Of course, aprons are worn most frequently as protection for clothing during work, but they are also worn as decoration for ceremonial events and as a fashion statement. Aprons are mentioned in the Bible and were worn by Egyptians, American Indians, Masons, tradesmen, religions figures, and military groups.

Ronnie reminded us that this year’s Living History Dinner will be held October 9th at Butler’s Courtyard, and will feature Jean Lafitte, the notorious pirate who lived in Galveston. Get your tickets quickly. If you have items you wish to donate for the silent auction, please take them immediately to Catharin Lewis at the museum. Donations will be acknowledged in the event program.

The meeting was adjourned.

OFFICERS & BOARD

Ronnie Richards President
Evelyn Garland Vice-President
Diana Dornak Treasurer
Susan Pierce Secretary
Phyllis White Corresponding Secretary
Jeff Hansen Director
Helen Hodges Director
Richard Lewis Director
Doug McKeel Director
Doris Teets Director
Joyce Zonronge Director
Joanna Sharp Dawson Immediate Past President
Catharin Lewis Museum Director

We want to welcome Melissa Aguilar on our part-time staff. She has a B.S. from Texas A&M University and started as a teacher for us in 2003 – 2004 working a short while to stay at home raising four children and helping out when I needed her. She is now here as an assistant Education Director to help with our programming needs and assist where needed in the daily operations of the museum. We are delighted to have new young blood added to our program with great ideas and lots of energy. She and Sarah Eubanks make a great team and are much appreciated for their support in our program.

Looking back on September, we spent much time working on exhibits, general maintenance issues and curatorial work. We had 235 visitors in September from various parts of Houston, Humble and Richwood. We held six schoolhouse sessions for scouts, adult groups, private schools and a home school group. September brought in $1,205 in donations, program fees and gift shop sales.

We wish to thank the following people for their recent donations to our Museum Collection. All of these items are greatly appreciated and will be shared by future visitors and researchers alike. We want to thank Raymond Bartels for a copy of the newly translated version of “From Cercenasco to the World” by Mariagrazia Alliaudi and Silvio Genero. We also want to thank Joyce Zonronge for her donation of two oak chairs which will be used by all our visitors. A special thanks also to Sandra Malmgren for her collection of wash boards, 1940’s baby clothes, and newspaper clippings. We wish to thank Judy Monthy for military posters, programs, and digital copies of Art Hewitt and family photos for our archival collection. And thanks to Judy Monthy again for sharing Art Hewitt’s WWII
prisoner of war artifacts for a temporary exhibit now on display at the Museum until mid January. If you have anything that you would like to donate to the museum, please contact me at 281-554-2994. We are always looking for educational items across the country and local artifacts pertaining to League City’s history.

Our October and November calendars are filling fast with scheduled programs. We have a special “Stories in the Schoolhouse” program planned for October 31. There will be two sessions 9:30 – 10:30 and 11:30 – 12:30. This program is for children ages 3 – 5 years. There are also two Natural History Nights planned for November 11 entitled “Our Community” and December 9 entitled “Playing the Past”. Please tell friend with children ages 6 – 12 about our evening programs from 6 – 7:30. Registration is required for all to reserve the space. More information can be found on the museum webpage, www.OneRoomSchoolhouse.org.

We are hosting the Galveston County Historical Commission for a luncheon/meeting on November 5. I need some hostesses to help set up, greet and clean up for this event. The program is set for 11:00 – 1pm. If you are available to help that day, please contact me at the museum.

New Membership Yearbooks are now ready for pick-up at the museum for members. Be sure to stop by, pick up your copy and tour the “Aprons and the War” Exhibit.

Special Raffle! We are holding a raffle as a special fundraiser effort for the League City Historical Society and their projects such as the West Bay Common School Children’s Museum, the Oak Tree Registry and the Landmark Plaque program. Tickets are on sale at the museum for $5 each. The drawing will be held on December 7 at 3:00 pm. The raffle is for a an acrylic painting of a cottage by Evelyn Stebbins It is in its original framing and longs to find a new home. She studied under many nationally known watercolourists. Evelyn is known for her watercolour landscapes and urban scenes. She is an accomplished artist, with numerous one woman shows at major galleries in Houston. She was a signature member of the Texas Watercolor Society and held memberships in the Houston Art League and Southwestern Watercolor Society. Her gallery for twenty years was once located in Kemah’s first Schoolhouse. Evelyn at age 90 passed away on Monday March 5, 2012.

**Did you know that …?**

by Joyce Zongrone

Captain William Kidd, once thought to be a bloodthirsty pirate, was really a well-established ship captain and owner, a master mariner, married a rich widow, lived in a mansion on Wall Street in New York City, and owned what is now some of the world’s costliest real estate? In the 1600s, Dutch settlers built a wall to protect themselves from Indians and pirates. The path along the wall became a commercial thoroughfare joining the East River with the Hudson River on the west. That path was rightly named Wall Street. Early merchants built warehouses, shops, homes, a city hall and a church there. Pirate goods were traded openly in taverns near the town wall where wealthy American merchants waited in the early morning for their piece of the action.

Kidd’s Wall Street home boasted a Turkish carpet on the parlor floor, casks of Madeira in the wine cellar, scrolled dormers and fluted chimneys which were used as landmarks for ships seeking moorage.

From 1775-1790, New York was the US national capitol and a Federal Hall was built on Wall Street. Our nation’s first President, George Washington, was inaugurated on the steps of this building.

Born to a modest Scottish family in 1645, William Kidd went to sea like many other young men of his time. He migrated to New York around 1690 during a rebellion in which the self-proclaimed leader of the colony, Jacob Leister, refused to recognize the newly-appointed colonial governor, Colonel Henry Slaughter. Kidd joined forces with the governor and ferried guns and ammunition to help put down the rebellion.

In May 1691, two days after the mysterious death of her second husband, Kidd married the wealthy widow Sarah Bradley Cox Oort, 16 years his junior. Through her husband’s estate, Sarah owned five tracts of Manhattan real estate including 56 Wall Street and also inherited 38.5 acres of a tanning mill way in the city of Niew Haarlem (now Harlem) through the death of her brother, Samuel. Sarah and William had a daughter, Sarah, her fourth child, in 1692. Although Sarah had two daughters from her first marriage to William Cox, who drowned four years after they were married, the girls remained unnamed in her New York City will upon her death in September 1744, at which time she was married to her fourth husband, Christopher Rousby. Her third daughter Elizabeth Oort, became Elizabeth Kidd.

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**A Special Welcome to Our New Member**

Darryl Krogman
The Kidds were charter members of Manhattan’s oldest church, Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1698. Kidd, like the rest of his crew, was a common sailor, but he went on to become one of the most successful pirates of the 18th century. His early life was marked by poverty and hardship, but his talents as a sailor and his reputation as a bold and cunning pirate soon made him a wanted man.

After five years of relative peace, Kidd was ready for a change. In 1696, Kidd became a privateer for Britain, who was at the time, at war with France. The English King William III signed a secret royal commission allowing Kidd to attack and capture enemy vessels, confiscate their goods and divide the spoils amongst investors. King William got a ten percent share. So Kidd sailed off in the sunset on his newly outfitted fully rigged sailing ship, the Adventure Galley.

After three years of plundering at sea, Kidd’s demise began. In 1698, he attacked an Armenian merchant ship from the English East India Company, sailing under a French pass. Thus began the 300-year-old miscarriage of justice. Because Kidd’s and his elite London backers were rivals of the multinational English East India Company, the Company itself pulled strings to have him arrested. His consortium of investors remained silent for fear of reprisal and losing access to their exportation of exotic goods from the Indian sub-continent. King William III, who gave the royal commission to Kidd, remained in the shadows. After all, how would it appear for a sitting British monarch to directly contradict former Queen Elizabeth, who gave the Company a Royal Charter in 1600? The English East India Company colluded with the Admiralty, hiding crucial pieces of evidence, such as Kidd’s letterpress receipts for pirate plunder. The public was tricked into believing Kidd was guilty of piracy.

Kidd was hanged in 1701, at age 56, in a gibbet over the Thames River as warning to future pirates. His body was left to hang until it decomposed. His wife, Sarah, stood by him throughout his three-year incarceration and trial. After his death, she returned to New York and remarried three years later.

More than 300 years after his death author Richard Zacks while researching his book, The Pirate Hunter, found the hidden and misplaced documents in the Public Record Office in London.

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**The Treacherous World of Jean Laffite**

by Joyce Zongrone

LCHS and its guests enjoyed a recent visit from one of the world’s most charming and infamous swashbucklers, Jean Laffite, at the Annual Living History Dinner. Galvestonian Jim Nonus charmed a full house of believers with a dagger, sword and dragoon pistol at his side. Laffite captivated the audience with stories of his adventures on the open seas, making it especially known that he was a privateer, not a pirate.

He recounted his unwavering patriotism at the Battle of New Orleans where his men and weapons helped turn the tide against the British, ensuring the survival of a fledgling United States. Still in its infancy and reeling from the stalemate of the War of 1812, Laffite and his men guaranteed a resounding victory as they fought alongside General Andrew Jackson in 1815.

Fresh from that victory and betrayed by Jackson, Laffite and his entourage usurped control of Galveston in April 1817 from French pirate Louis Aury. But the thrill of accomplishments waned when the love of his life, his wife Madeleine, died in 1820, after only one year of marriage and shortly after the birth of their son, Jean Pierre, who would later die before reaching his teenage years.

So, alone in his luxurious home in Galveston, Maison Rouge, Laffite mourned the death of his beloved and suffered the rejection of the country he defended. Once again ousted from his home, Laffite burned it and the entire encampment when he left Galveston in 1820 and roamed the Gulf until his death three years later. After being mortally wounded in battle, Laffite left this Earth sometime after dawn in February 1823. His surviving crew buried him somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico, finally returning the corsair of the Gulf to the place he loved most.

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**League City Historic District**

**Commission Report**

LCHS Rep. to the LCHDC

...Fay Dudney

September 18, 2014

The request to demolish a non contributing residence in the Historic District, to be replaced by a new house was tabled for 30 days. The owner was asked to submit demolishing and repairing costs as well as photographs of the interior and better pictures of the exterior.

The October meeting has been cancelled and rescheduled for November 20, 2014 at 6:00 P.M.