

**COLLEGEPORT DAY
SATURDAY, MAY 28, 2022
MOPAC HOUSE**

BBQ Dinner Served at 12:00 Noon

PLEASE BRING SIDE DISHES OR DESSERTS.

RSVP number attending or regrets by e-mail to: gfranzen@tisd.net

**Please Send Donations To:
Mopac House Foundation
P. O. Box 175**

Collegeport, TX 77428

Or make your contribution at the door.

Please Register upon arrival.

Bring lawn chairs for additional seating if you wish to spread out a bit.

Invite family or friends who may not be on our mail list!

Remaining barbecue will be sold at the pit after dinner.

THANKS TO ALL WHO MAKE OUR HOMECOMING A SUCCESS!

We Look Forward To Seeing You!

In Memoriam

Donald Bonneau
Billy Christmas
Howard Christmas
Larry Wayne Corporon
Elva Jean Wells Ellis

Annie Katherine Calk Green
Merle Bruce Kay
Frederick R. Law, Jr.
Vlasta Ledwig
Larry Shane Mahon
Jerry Wayne Moates

Benjamin Arthur Neichoy
Ted Pennington, Jr.
Mary Louise Wells Tanner
Bessie Bagley Whitfield
Willard Van Williams

***Obituaries for our folk may be read at:**

https://usgenwebsites.org/TXMatagorda/collegeport/collegeport_day_2022.htm

Use the following link to read more about Collegeport:

<http://www.usgenwebsites.org/TXMatagorda/collegeport/collegeport.htm>



Believed to be the first Collegeport Day Celebration (ca. 1909)

Collegeport Day commemorates the establishment of the Town of Collegeport. The Grand Opening of the town was held at the Hotel Collegeport on May 25, 1908 with brass bands and speeches by dignitaries. The hotel had a spacious dining room which was 32'x48'. Open porches extending the length of both the south and west fronts which were each 120' long, captured breezes and provided shade. With a view of the Tres-Palacios Bay, it was a magnificent setting for this opening event.

Each year since then, residents and friends have gathered to commemorate this founding day. Percy Corporon recalled in his memoir that his first Collegeport Day was observed in May of 1910 on the open-air Collegeport pavilion. Attendees were seated by their state of origin--his being Kansas, which had the most representatives present. A Sunflower, their state flower designated the Kansas table. Collegeport Day began as a founders' day celebration in the early years of the town. Many disillusioned settlers left due to a failed economy around 1915, but many returned time and time again to renew old friendships, making this homecoming an ongoing tradition.

The homecoming was also observed at the First Church of Collegeport—Federated (also known as the “Community House.”)

The Mopac House came to be in 1935 and was constructed of materials salvaged from the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway station, a gift to the community from the railroad. Harry Austin Clapp was instrumental in securing this donation. Since then, Collegeport residents and friends have gathered here to celebrate our beginnings and to remember past residents and friends. The traditional barbecued beef dinner began in 1945 when M. S. “Jack” Holsworth donated the beef. Numerous individuals and families have been donors through the years. The Collegeport Day homecoming is celebrated the LAST Saturday in May. Collegeport Day 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings, but resumed again in 2021.

The Town of Collegeport came about as a promotion scheme of the Burton D. Hurd Land Company. Hurd advertised the development in mid-western newspapers luring potential settlers with promises of mild winters and year-round growing conditions. Collegeport was billed as “An Ideal Health and Pleasure Resort” that offered year-round boating, bathing, hunting and fishing. The emphasis was to help colonize the Gulf Coast area. The excursion parties of “home-seekers,” as they were called, were housed at the Hotel Collegeport and were entertained by Hurd’s agents who showed and sold them land.



Front Entrance of Hotel Collegeport



Hotel Collegeport East end of South Wing

Photos of Hotel Collegeport courtesy of City by the Sea Museum, Palacios, TX

Just as Hurd opened the town of Collegeport, he laid out another town called Portsmouth. John and Ida O'Neil operated a hotel there for a number of years. Hurd entertained his Excursion Parties with trips to Portsmouth by sailboat, and meals at the O'Neil's hotel. The hotel was also frequented by parties of hunters and fishermen, and exists as a memorable chapter of Collegeport history. Much earlier on this site, Palacios Point was founded in 1838 on Half-Moon Point, the junction of Matagorda Bay and the Tres-Palacios Bay. The waters were of sufficient depth that large vessels could dock to deliver and take on cargo. Charles Siringo tells in his books ***A Texas Cowboy*** and ***Riata and Spurs***, about cattle being shipped through Palacios Point. A ship of the Morgan Line landed twice a week to load out cattle bound for the Louisiana market. After the Civil War, up until

about 1870 it was feasible to ship cattle this way. It later became more profitable to drive the cattle North to Kansas and other markets. Due to title disputes, the port failed to develop further and after the 1975 storm, the townsite was abandoned. In about 1889, remaining buildings were salvaged and lumber was moved to the Pilkington Slough where it was used by J. E. Pierce to construct his ranch house.



John & Ida O'Neil Proprietors



Hotel at Portsmouth



Ida & John O'Neil

Memories of Old Hotel at Portsmouth by Abel B. Pierce

In the opinion of Lee M. (Tick) Pierce and Abel B. (John Henry) Pierce, Jr. of Blessing, the subject photo (upper right) depicts the old hotel at Portsmouth or Palacios Point, south of Collegeport. It was operated by Mr. and Mrs. O'Neal (or O'Neille per Ruth Harrison Pierce). (In I.E. Robertson Survey, Ab. 85).

The Pierce family spend many happy

weekends having traveled there by boat from Palacios or by auto from Blessing by Collegeport over dirt roads and deep sand (when Oyster Lake was dry enough to allow crossing. This was before the Intracoastal Canal came to be.) We swam in Matagorda Bay, dodged "cabbageheads" and consumed quantities of shrimp, "lassoed" by our dad (Abel B. Pierce, Sr.) with a cast net.

Special memories:

- 1) Sleeping on "corn-shuck" mattresses in upstairs bedrooms; every move waking you up with the "rustling,"
- 2) An old foot pump organ in the "lobby" down-stairs that the "kiddies" tried to play until one pedal "broke-down." To conceal the disaster, we propped it up with one of Mrs. O'Neal's baking powder

biscuits which were, however, very good eating.)

Tick Pierce even identified the room on the right-hand side of the balcony as where he slept.



Portsmouth was also referred to as "Jungle Town."
The caption in this photo reads "In the Jungle Palacios Point Tex"



One of Hurd's Excursion Parties at Portsmouth



Half Moon Reef Light House
near Collegeport

Esther Smith, a graduate of Bay City High School in 1926, and later the wife of Bay City Tribune editor Carey Smith, recalled that their senior class trip to Portsmouth and the O'Neil's hotel was a memorable one. They also visited the Half Moon Reef Lighthouse while there. It was located a short distance from the point where the hotel was located. You may see the restored Light House which is now located near the Civic Center in Port Lavaca. The lighthouse was moved ashore by the Bauer Dredging Company by barge. The lighthouse was restored by an Eagle Scout in Port Lavaca.



The Fay Bowen at Portsmouth, Texas



Portsmouth Beach



The Beach at Portsmouth

Credits:

Historic Matagorda County Volume I

Bobbie Gaspard, Joan Gaspard and Patrick Porter

City by the Sea Museum

Mopac House Foundation Archives

Merck Family Archives

Portsmouth Photos courtesy of

City by the Sea Museum--Palacios, TX